December is the one issue where each year, we cover pretty much the same major themes of poverty, homelessness, oppression, crime, punishment, prisons, morality, religion in society and human services, the family and children, philanthropy, social advocacy, and societal collapse. However, this year, we skipped the societal collapse section. Nonetheless, we had enough material on these topics, and a few odds and ends, for a triple issue.

We remind new subscribers that the previous TIPS issue, still available, was a virtual textbook on Social Role Valorization.

Table of Contents

Poverty & the Poor .................................................. -2-
The Gulf Between The Haves & Have-Nots ......................... -4-
Homelessness ...................................................... -5-
Crime ................................................................. -7-
Drugs & Crime ....................................................... -9-
Police & Security Issues .......................................... -9-
Punishment .......................................................... -10-
The Jail & Prison Scene ............................................. -11-
Hobo, Drunk, Poverty, Homelessness &/or Jailhouse Songs & Poetry -16-
The Family ............................................................ -18-
Baby-Making or Baby-Getting .................................... -18-
Fecundity ............................................................... -18-
New "Ethical Dilemmas" Created by Modernistic Reproduction Practices -18-
The Deconstruction of the Family ................................ -19-
Family/Marital Stability .......................................... -19-
Violence Between Spouses or Lovers .............................. -20-
Issues Related to Adoption & Fostering ......................... -20-
The Relevance of Children Having Intact Families ............. -21-
Parental Engagement with Child-Rearing ........................ -22-
Child-Junking ....................................................... -24-
Children Being Declared "Mental" in Order to Explain Away Poor Child-Rearing -25-
Child Formation ..................................................... -26-
**Poverty & the Poor**

*Bellows, B. L. (1993).* *Benevolence among slaveholders: Assisting the poor in Charleston, 1670-1860.* Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press. This is an interesting book focusing on one place—Charleston, South Carolina—and its charities, from its founding up through the start of the Civil War. The book traces Charleston’s own economic fortunes and cycles of growth and decline, and how charity was reconciled with the practice of slaveholding, since the wealthy and upper classes that were largely involved in charity also held slaves. As with probably many similar places, Charleston had a long history of charitable programs and institutions, often founded by people of religious fervor, though always ending up falling far short of their envisioned accomplishments. The book is a sad tale of the continuing recapitulation of human service history themes of enlargement, need overwhelming capacity to respond to it, a charitable spirit becoming disillusioned with the depravity of the poor, ongoing severe devaluation (e.g., of "blacks") even in the midst of very noble service, etc.

According to Bellows (p. 77), there are two important criteria in public (i.e., tax money) spending for the poor: (a) the perception among taxpayers that their taxes actually relieve suffering while not encouraging idleness and laziness, and (b) the perception among the poor that public relief (such as welfare) is not a substitute for work.

*Funiciello, T. (1993).* *Tyranny of kindness: Dismantling the welfare system to end poverty in America.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press. A 1993 book by Funiciello attempts to be something like an expose of what is usually called "organized charity," at least as far as agencies concerned with poverty are concerned. She calls this the "poverty industry."

Funiciello (1993) documents how service agencies have a vested interest in exaggerating the problems that they supposedly address, even claiming that rates of impairment or hardship are increasing when they are actually declining, in order to get more money from government and other funders.

Funiciello (1993) documents that much money that is collected via appeals that "all of the money" goes "directly to the needy" is in fact used for agency operating expenses, to pay staff, etc. For instance, the Hands Across America campaign in 1986-87 to raise money for the poor in the US cost $16 million to put on, and barely raised $15 million in contributions (pp. 214-215). Funiciello (p. 221) also claims that very little of the money raised went for food or housing for the poor, and none of it went into the pockets of poor people, but to social welfare agencies instead.

Funiciello (p. 213) notes the paradox that while proposals are made, and even laws passed, to outlaw public begging by poor individuals, so-called charities that purport to benefit the poor not only
beg on the streets (as via billboards and collection cans), but even follow potential donors into their homes, as via mailings, television advertisements, telephone solicitations, etc.

Funiciello (p. 239) also notes that many people are reluctant to give money to an individual beggar for fear that it might be used for drugs or drink—yet these same people might donate to a "charity" that is not even obligated to report its annual liquor bill to any funder, and that may hold lavish "fund-raising" parties where liquor flows freely, and which are tax-deductible—de facto meaning that taxpayers pay for them.

* The poor in the US are increasingly being concentrated in urban areas. For instance, 86% of all the poor in Wisconsin live in the Milwaukee area (SPS, 19/2/99).

* In 1999, Indonesian workers, producing Nike sneakers that were selling for $140, received $28 a month (Time, 19/4/99).

* We have noted before that the move to an electronic economy is further marginalizing many lowly people who do not have the competency or the equipment to deal with "electronic money" and money transfers. Yet another step in this direction has been to eliminate the option—used mostly by poor people—to pay their bills in person, usually in cash, at various locales. For instance, where one used to be able to pay one’s utility and phone bills at a bank, the bank may no longer provide this service; or, if it continues the service, it may now charge a fee for it. While the intent behind such developments may not be to further marginalize—and indeed, impoverish—the already poor and marginalized, that is their effect.

* The unreality of wealth and poverty in the modern world is underlined by the US presidential couple. By Fall 1999, while having assets of about $1.5 million, they had debts of $5.5 million which certainly puts them vastly below the vast majority of Americans who are below the poverty line. But this is the difference between high class and low class poverty: the high class poor live off other people’s money in big style, while the low class poor either make it on their own or only live off others in little ways/style.

* A new definition of poverty is "lack of choices" (Dialogue, Winter 98). Yet, some poor people are freer than some of the wealthiest people who may have the illusion of "choice," but are under the control of all sorts of forces which they have invited into their lives.

* One mother on welfare said that if she did not show up at the welfare office 45 minutes before it opens, she would be sitting and waiting there all day (Newsweek, 23/8/99). This illustrates what we call the wound of life-wasting.

* Every once in a while, utopian liberals tell us about this or that country that has managed to eliminate class distinctions and even poverty, only for us to discover later that such class distinctions and poor groups still existed but were well hidden and received no publicity. China was supposed to be one of those countries, but now we learn that it has a very large population of rootless migrant workers who are deeply devalued by the sedentary population. They are grossly discriminated against on the labor market, and receive hardly any of the benefits that ordinary laborers receive (e.g., AP in SHJ, 1 Oct. 99).

* The notion that unemployed people automatically and self-motivatedly do everything they possibly can in order to find employment is politically correct nonsense. There are now enough data available to be able to say that when unemployment benefits are very generous, as they are in many European countries, they constitute an incentive to some people to be unemployed, and unemployment rates are thereby heightened. Generally, only a proportion of the unemployed are truly energetic in looking for work, and it is usually people from the middle classes with a strong work ethic who are the most energetic in looking for work when they lose their jobs (Newsweek, 28/6/99).

* Ed Banfield, a Univ. of Chicago and Harvard Professor, became a pariah to the liberals when, in 1970, he foretold the failure of the war on poverty. He said that there was an urban underclass who were so "present-oriented" that they were impulsive, and attached no value to work, self-
improvement, sacrifice, service, family or community. They would tend to drop out of school and have children out of wedlock, and governmental programs would not have much impact on these behaviors. Even having been proven right will never be forgiven him (Newsweek, 18/10/99).

*According to some authorities, welfare checks in the US ghetto culture are considered to be an entitlement, and taking a job that does not pay a great deal above the welfare level is considered "working for free." In fact, getting any kind of job may be interpreted as "selling out to the man." To the degree that this is true, it is certainly a nightmare of a welfare mentality (Newsweek, 26/5/97).

*We continue our reportage of US welfare reform of the 1990s. Over a period of 6 years, welfare rolls plunged 48% to a 30-year low, and 2/3rds of former welfare recipients have found jobs. One remarkable thing is that the decline has taken place without any changes in job training spending. In some states, welfare rolls have even declined as much as 84%. Also, after the poverty rate of children had risen 52% between 1978-93, it fell 15% between 1993-97, which is a remarkably big drop for such a short period.

Apparently, many poor people who were once on welfare and are now working are still poor, because their jobs are poorly paid. This is one of the critiques of the liberals, as if being the working poor were not infinitely better than being the unemployed poor and the possibly unemployable ones (e.g., SHA, 5 Sept. 99). However, it is obvious from the media that the liberals would rather have the poor unemployed on the dole (e.g., AP in Indianapolis Star, 18/6/99; source item from Joe Osburn).

Not surprisingly, liberals have even taken recourse to disputing the success data, but just about the only datum that they seem to have on their side is that about 75% of former welfare recipients who join the workforce do not have health insurance (SHI, 18/10/99).

Even as US welfare rolls shrank, there was also a major drop in people availing themselves of food stamps, though one might have expected the opposite. By 1999, only about 40% of eligible families applied and received food stamps. Instead of rejoicing at such motivation to be off the dole, this once again scandalized the liberals, and the government promptly took steps to encourage people to actualize their food stamp eligibility, showing how government policies systematically incent dependency--and then expresses wonderment when people end up habitually dependent (DFN, 19/7/99).

A significant minority of welfare recipients very obviously are so unsocialized and/or mentally debilitating that they simply will not or cannot seek, gain or hold a job, and in fact may not even be able to work even outside of a paying job. Welfare professionals refer to them by the misleading euphemism "the hard to serve." One argument is that some of the hardest-core unemployed should be shifted from welfare to the disability category which, for all practical purposes, will make them eligible for life-long social security pensions and exemptions from work demands. Of course, this merely shifts public expenditures from one category to another (Time, 16/8/99), and conceals the true unemployment rate.

The Gulf Between The Haves & Have-Nots

*Since the early 1500s, there has been discourse about the so-called "deserving poor" and "undeserving poor," but who has ever heard a discussion about the "undeserving rich"?

*The gap between the rich and the poor in the US is now greater than at any time since the Great Depression (Newsweek, 20/9/99).

*With the stock market boom in the last years of the 1990s, so many people have gotten rich (largely by doing nothing) that in yuppie circles, the discourse often was whether one had or had not reached one's "two commas," i.e., whether one had made millionaire or not. Also, this has fueled the fantasies and expectations of college students, 77% of whom expect to end up as millionaires, and 61% of whom expect that they will retire between ages 40 and 50 (Newsweek, July 99). Also in other ways, the career aspirations of American teenagers are outright insane, becoming physicians being second-highest rated, and unfortunately law was third, psychology fourth, and art fifth. Virtually nobody wanted to do anything resembling real labor, the only exception being that more people wanted to be beauticians (probably mostly females) than electronic engineers (SHI, 24/8/99).
In 1982, there were only 13 billionaires in the US, but by 1999, there were 268, and some of them have more personal wealth than all of China produces in a single year. Bill Gates alone has more wealth than all of the 45% of households on the bottom of the US economy. In fact, the top 1% of American households has more wealth than the bottom 95% (SHA, 30/10/99).

The world’s three richest men own more money than 43 of the world’s poorest countries with a total of 600 million people (Time, 26/7/99).

In 1999, Syracuse got ready to auction off 500 city properties because their owners had failed to pay years’ worth of taxes on them. Lo and behold, it became public for the first time that some of the wealthiest politicians, business people and community groups in the city were many among those who had failed to pay their taxes—including undoubtedly many people complaining about welfare cheats.

When business moguls (even still relatively young ones) get extruded by their firms, they may be given consolation money (“severance packages”) worth hundreds of millions of dollars. One mogul got $5 million a year for life, and his wife $3.5 million a year for life after he dies (Newsweek, 16/11/98).

Newsweek (14/6/99) carried an amazing and eye-opening article about the Silicon Valley town of Woodside in California (about 30 miles south of San Francisco) which is inhabited by multi-multi-millionaires of relatively recent vintage who have lost all sense of both material and other values. It is inhabited by about 250,000 millionaires, their numbers going up daily. Homes sell for an average of $1.5 million, and the local stores will sell a small bottle of balsamic vinegar for $1,500. One resident has a garage for 20 automobiles. One woman has 48 rack feet of clothing. All we can say is that we would like to pick garbage in that neighborhood.

Tens of thousands of people are day-trading now full-time to whom basically this is a new pursuit, not to mention innumerable ones who do it part-time (Newsweek, 9 Aug. 99). One also hears of people who had been well established in very ordinary and more meaningful occupations, from the manual trades to human services, abandoning these in order to make a fast buck on the financial market. When even clinical psychologists and psychiatrists abandon these professions to become day traders, one can only wonder why they went into human services in the first place. This includes the renowned psychiatrist Ari Kiev, who became a trading coach (Time, Aug. 99). One of the few good things about day trading is that a large number of smart-alecky people who have obviously more money than sense are getting fleeced.

Time did a cover story (9 Nov. 98) on "corporate welfare" on which we have written many times before.

Andy Rooney said on "60 Minutes" (5/1999), "Capitalism tells us that if each person grabs all they can, everyone will be better off." To this he added, "This can’t work, can it?"

A mean-spirited but funny cartoon had a woman say to her dogs, "I would share my sandwich with you but it would only lead you to a life of begging." Whereupon one of the dogs taught the other, "This is a compassionate conservative" (SHI, 25/8/99).

Homelessness

In 1987, the leading newspapers in the US published about 850 articles on homelessness. By 1996, this number had declined to 200. Also, the number of people who believe that homelessness is a major problem declined by 50% between 1991 and 1999. All this despite the fact that homelessness actually increased. In some cities it even quadrupled between 1985-97. Between 1985-98, demand for emergency shelter space increased by close to 600%. By that time, at least 50 US cities had anti-vagrancy laws on the books, which amounts to outlawing homelessness (Time, 8/99).

The Office of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities of the State of New York claimed in 1998-99 that it was aware of only 62 homeless "developmentally disabled" persons in all
of the state! Rather than proving that the state had never dumped retarded people into homelessness, it proved exactly the opposite, namely that it was not aware of the many homeless retarded persons in the state (Quality Care, Summer 99).

*We learned that for years, the greater Syracuse area has been receiving large federal grants annually to address problems of homelessness. For instance, in 1996, it received the equivalent of $12,000 per homeless person! However, most of this money has been going to separate agencies to be consumed by them. For instance, in 1999, a case management agency alone got close to $700,000, while a measly $80,000 went to an emergency shelter program (SHJ, 28/12/98).

*In 1999, we first learned that there are so-called "damp" hostels or shelters for people so addicted to alcohol that they will not abstain under any circumstances. A common practice of such shelters is to permit such persons to bring their liquor into the shelter, as long as they drink it outside. One such shelter in Toronto slept its guests on mattresses on a basement floor, but a supervisor in all earnestness kept telling the guests to treat the place like their own home (source information from Janet Klees).

*Some poor people steal expensive shopping carts to take their purchases home, then abandon the cart, and steal another one next time. Of course, this gives poor people a bad reputation. On the other hand, some homeless people steal a shopping cart in order to move their possessions around with it, and will hang on to it unless they get caught, it gets stolen from them, or they lose it if they are arrested for some other offense. Because in Los Angeles, homeless people have gotten jailed for up to 60 days for illegally possessing shopping carts, the Catholic Worker community has been giving away 100 street-legal carts a year for years.

*In more and more locales, there are now newspapers published, printed and sold by homeless (or "precariously housed") people. The main idea is to get money by selling something plausible rather than panhandling. Many people are willing to buy such a newspaper though they may not read it.

*There is a big paradox in welfare rolls declining dramatically, but homelessness continuing to increase. This underlines that homelessness is only in part due to economic factors; much of it is the result of people having been rendered disfunctional by the insanities of modernism.

*Natural catastrophes can make huge numbers of people homeless overnight. However, in poor countries, their homelessness can persist for years. E.g., a 1998 hurricane made many people homeless in Honduras, and many children have stayed homeless ever since.

*On the one hand, being offered seminars on the classic works of Western culture is not exactly what would be high on a list of needs of poor and homeless people, but on the other hand, it is certainly very role-valorizing. Two professors at Notre Dame University are meeting with about 100 students once a week to this purpose. Over the years, some of the students died of AIDS, some became seriously ill, some became pregnant, and a few appeared to have been prompted toward rehabilitation by the experience. Furthermore, the greatest beneficiaries appear to have been the professors who got their eyes opened, consistent with our teaching that people who lose contact with the lowly are highly at risk of losing their souls (NY Times, 7 March 99; source item from Joe Osburn).

*There once was a time when Christians believed in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and taking in the homeless. Now, the Protestant Rescue Mission in Syracuse has a big building with a big sign on it that says, "Homeless Intervention Services Center," and no one laughs or cries.

*During the days of the traveling medicine shows, the pitch doctors would spiel to vagrants and migrant workers wherever there was a large enough assembly of them. One pitch doctor would tell them, "If you go to those high-powered doctors, you know what they'll do to you? They'll cut open your umbilicus and yank out your tweedium!" This was very effective, and the skid-row crowd would fork over their last dollar to avoid having to go to "real" doctors (Medicine Show, Calhoun, 1976).
*Here are a few more hobo jokes.

No. 1. "Unless you give me a little aid, Mrs. Vanastorbilt, I am afraid I shall have to resort to something which it shocks me to contemplate doing." Mrs. Vanastorbilt handed him a five dollar bill, and asked compassionately, "What is it, my poor man, that I saved you from?" "Work, madam," mournfully.

No. 2. Lady: "Can’t you find work?"
Tramp: "Yessum; but everyone wants a reference from my last employer."
Lady: "And can’t you get one?"
Tramp: "No, mum. Yer see, he’s been dead twenty-eight years."

No. 3. "That woman never turns away a hungry man."
"Ah, genuinely charitable!"
"Hardly that. She says, ‘Are you so hungry you want to saw some wood for a dinner?’ And the answer is, ‘No’."

*Even though country music star Boxcar Willie apparently only looked at boxcars but never rode in them, there is still some nostalgia about his death in 1999.

**Crime**

*A sensational study reported in early 1999 that the reduction in crime in the US was due to large-scale abortion (since 1973) of babies who would have furnished a disproportionate number of criminals. The authors also claimed that some of the locales with the highest abortion rates also had the highest drops in crime rates (NRLN, 10 Aug. 99). This finding scandalized both pro- and anti-abortion parties. For instance, it stirred up a storm of vituperation from the left, even though it was they all along who argued that unwanted children would be troubled children. This once again brings out their hypocrisy. Liberals could not believe that policing and imprisoning could have had anything to do with the drop in crimes in the 1990s, and so some scholars came up with the hypothesis that the drop was due to there being fewer younger males, due to the wave of abortions that started in the 1970s. The authors claimed that their conclusion was to be merely descriptive and not meant to promote abortion, but some critics have seen it thusly, and have also seen in it a subtle endorsement of eugenics, in part because the authors interpreted their results as providing better "quality of life" to the unaborted children, and that the children who were aborted were essentially unwanted children who would have fared badly all around (NC Register, 22/8/99). (Interestingly, very similar claims had once been made on behalf of sterilization of the unfit.) But one problem with the study was that its very title trumpeted "Legalized Abortion and Crime," rather than merely reporting the alleged correlations.

*While the number of abortions in the US has been decreasing in recent years (good news), the rate and number of such among African-Americans have been increasing. If the two professors cited above are right, this will mean ever less crime 15-25 years later than there would have been otherwise (NRLN, 10 Aug. 99).

*Girls aged 12-19 are reportedly the most victimized population segment in the US. Among the reasons are alcohol, drugs, feelings of invulnerability, and being pushed prematurely into a sexual identity (SHI, 19/1/99).

*We reported on identity theft before, which continues to rise, though apparently entirely confined to scams to exploit one’s credit instrumentalities. One credit bureau alone received 350,000 complaints by people whose credit means had been stolen (Time, 25/10/99).

*One other form of identity theft has been for someone to make up a web site in one’s name and pretend that one is into kinky sex. As a result, one may start getting contacts from people who want to do what the impostor claimed one wanted, and one may even get stalked (Newsweek, 8 Feb. 99).

*American jewelers are being beset by thousands of gang members, mostly illegal immigrants from Colombia and other Latin American nations. Despite their illegal status and their crime wave, it seems virtually impossible to legally get rid of them. They have committed hundreds of jewelry robbings in recent years, also involving hundreds of murders (Newsweek, 6 Sept. 99).
*Colombian crooks illegally in the US are apparently also behind a pattern of theft of blank airline tickets from travel agents which they then fill out and either use, or demand refunds from the airlines. There seems to be a lesson in this: Once drugs criminalized a good portion of Colombians, it was only a small step for them to enter other crimes on a large scale.

*On one single flight from Phoenix, AZ, to Atlanta, 102 of the 186 passengers were found to be illegal immigrants, and apparently, this is a very common phenomenon.

*Career criminals and organized criminal groups are beginning to muscle in on health care corporations, and are devising schemes for health care fraud as by "renting patients," illegal billings, etc. (AARP Bulletin, 12/99). Altogether, fraud is estimated to cost Medicare alone $13 billion a year in the US. This is an amazingly large number.

*There is a neighborhood in Chicago in which 261 registered sex offenders live. It is the same area in which for several years, young women involved in prostitution or drugs have been raped, strangled and bludgeoned, but DNA evidence has revealed that not one but at least four such serial killers are at work, and none of them are yet registered offenders (Newsweek, 6 Sept. 99).

*While a study shows that smoking mothers are twice as likely to have criminally violent sons, some people are assuming that this is due to the smoking rather than to the poor maternal self-control and maternal decadence that brought that smoking on in the first place (Time, 29/3/99). Instead, as is de rigueur these days, they blame the smoke for damaging the children's brains.

*A peculiar thing has been happening in South Africa. Since liberation from apartheid, the number of rapes has reportedly increased at least 50-fold, and possibly even several hundred-fold because only one in 35 is said to be reported. If this figure is true, there are 1.6 million rapes a year there, and thus the highest rate in the world, triple that of the US. Apparently it is "white" women who are disproportionately raped by "black" men, who may see this as "pay-back time" for apartheid. At the same time, the HIV rate is believed to be 40% among males age 20-29. Apparently, there is a widespread superstition in South Africa that having sex with a virgin will cure HIV. All of this underlines how so often, one evil will merely be succeeded by another (Time, 1 Nov. 99; Newsweek, 15/11/99).

*Crazy modernistic people commit some crazy modernistic crimes. A kidney dialysis patient in Illinois was told by his nurse that he could not drink fluids while being dialyzed, so when his treatment was over he went out, got his gun, came back, shot the nurse 3 times, and then shot himself dead (SM, 24/3/99).

*A 67-year-old woman who had some health problems overheard her 42-year-old daughter talking to her boyfriend about putting the mother into a nursing home--upon which the mother picked up a gun, shot her daughter in the head, and also tried to shoot the boyfriend (AP in SHJ, 10 March 99). She may find prison more congenial than the nursing home.

*Burger rage? In Syracuse, 3 women placed an order at a McDonald's, and when told that they had to wait for just a few minutes while their salad was being made, they went berserk and attacked the staff, scratching their faces and bodies, trying to throw pots of hot coffee at them, and even resisted arrest when police officers arrived (SHJ, 11/8/99).

*A Syracuse University student collided his car with another, and when the local fire department arrived to aid him, it discovered that the driver was the same student who had participated only a week earlier in a drunken riot on the edge of the campus in the middle of the night (involving hundreds of unruly students), during which he and his associates had inflicted about $1,000 worth of damage on the very same fire engine by throwing bottles at it (SHJ, 11 May 99).

*Juvenile crime between the hours of 3 and 8 pm is triple that during other times, informing us that it is unsupervised children--often of working parents--who are getting into trouble. Ironically, one after-school program trying to occupy children in Los Angeles is called A Place Called Home (Newsweek, 10 May 99).
*England and Wales have overtaken the US in several categories of crime, such as robbery and burglary, and Britain is catching up quickly on murder and rape (AW, 17/10/98). One could almost call this a perverse form of good news.

*In San Diego, city police are no longer allowed to investigate home burglaries unless there is a known suspect, because otherwise, the chances of identifying and catching the burglar are so low as to be considered a waste of police effort, and police departments in other cities were considering similar measures (AP in SHJ, 28/7/99).

*New York State unfortunately has begun to pay for shrink services for victims of crimes, which will probably mean that yet more people will be referred to yet more "advanced" shrinkery, and end up on shrink mind drugs (AP in SHJ, 8 Sept, 1999).

*Some other educated fool has predicted that people will soon no longer use cash, and that this will mean the end of crime.

Drugs & Crime

*Almost 80% of the people behind bars in the US are there in connection with alcohol or drug use or traffic, which certainly constitutes a powerful statement about the impact that dope has been having on American society. However, there is one more scandal to all of this, namely the claim by shrink and similar circles that they have something called "drug treatment" that could actually succeed in breaking such people from their drug-using or -dealing habits, and virtually no one is calling them on this pretense (SHI, 20/10/99).

Some people have argued that the answer is very simple: more or less give people all the illegal drugs they crave, and then they will presumably not commit those crimes that are being committed in connection with the pursuit of these drugs. However, no one has pointed out so far that this might also mean that one would have to develop something like opium houses where people can space out, and asylums for drug-addicted people who, given free drugs, would have no other way of living. Of course, such opium asylums would be much cheaper than prisons, and their residents would probably die off much earlier than they do in prisons.

*There are many theories why the crime rates have been falling, and they may all be true. One is that the crack wave has crested, and other drugs are less prone to bring people to violence.

*The world learned recently that the Serbians are world champions at blaming everybody else when they commit an atrocity. A 19-year-old youth in New York City got caught selling crack, and when sentenced to a prison term, threw himself out of the courtroom window to his death. His mother had the perfect Serbian-style explanation: "this happened because we are black and poor" (Time, 1 Feb. 99).

*We all know that selling illegal drugs is itself illegal, but lo and behold, we learned for the first time that it is also illegal to sell fake illegal drugs (e.g., sugar instead of cocaine), which completely baffles us. If everybody sold fake illegal drugs instead of real ones, we would not have a drug problem, so actually this practice should be incentivized rather than punished. In Syracuse, several people were arrested in a short period of time for this laudable practice (SHJ, 27/8/99).

*Amazingly, Time (1 Feb. 99) has called dealing in street drugs a "victimless crime."

Police & Security Issues

*Lest people forget, we keep reporting over and over that police forces and prison work tend to attract a very disproportionate number of psychopathic people. E.g., New York State discovered that 38 of its prison employees were systematically collecting pay for hours during which they did not work (SHJ, 10 Nov. 99).

*A very disconcerting development is that when somebody (usually a disturbed person) begins to threaten suicide, and the police find out about it, they are apt to send in not a clergy member or
shrink, but a SWAT team, and an intense standoff may begin. Typically, the surrounding area is evacuated, which adds drama to the scenario. Also, it is extremely likely that all friends and relatives will be prevented from talking to the person, which in some cases would be the best thing, and might calm the person. The scenario sometimes ends up with the suicidal person being gunned down by the police, because the SWAT people are really reflex-trained assassins who look upon their work a little bit the way hunters look upon going after prey. The victim's death may then be interpreted as "suicide by proxy." All this reminds us a bit of cartoon detective Fearless Fosdick who shot people through the head when he perceived them commencing to eat a can of tainted beans, lest they die of food poisoning.

*In England, the police have started to use noxious sprays to subdue mentally disturbed people. This has been called another form of "chemical straitjacket." The spray causes all sorts of problems, which can include asthma attacks, heart attacks, etc. Apparently, the spray is often a "shortcut" where talking a person into calmness would also work but take longer. Personnel in mental facilities have also started using the spray. The good news is that at least, the victims do not get shot, as often happens in the US, or wrestled onto the ground and suffocated, as often happens in mental services.

*The police state is here! In the US now, coldly cruel "pain compliance" holds can be applied by police to nonviolent nonresistors, and hardly anyone complains. For instance, this "procedure" has been applied to people who passively sit down in front of abortion clinics.

*Home burglar alarms that are wired to the police have proven to be an absolute nuisance, because they constantly keep going off (usually while also making noxious noises on the street), and in Syracuse at least, each such call uses up an average of 21 minutes of two police officers. In 1996, we had a total of 12,000 such false alarms--33 per day! The police began to charge a fine for each false alarm, and lo and behold, this has become a major source of income for the local government.

**Punishment**

*According to the Chicago Tribune, there has been an epidemic (plague) of so-called prosecutorial misconduct all over the US, particularly in homicide cases. Almost 400 homicide convictions have been thrown out on appeal because prosecutors had concealed evidence, or presented evidence that they knew to be false. This included 67 convictions ending in a death sentence, of whom 30 had to be freed when higher courts reviewed the prosecutions. On the average, four people a year are wrongly convicted of capital crimes in the US every year. Yet others have been freed from death row due to DNA testing showing that they could not have committed the crime of which they were convicted. Even when reprimanded, prosecutors rarely confess and repent. Once again, this is lawing running amok (Hospitality, 3/99; Thursday's Obligation, Spring 99). Since 1976, 75 people condemned to die were found to be innocent of the crime at issue (Newsweek, 9/9/98). However, many were bad characters, which is why they fell under suspicion in the first place.

*In the US, people with IQs as low as 70 have been sentenced to death, in some cases because they did commit heinous crimes, and in other cases because they stupidly let themselves be maneuvered into confessions. However, as long as "due process" was observed, it will be difficult to say that their legal rights were violated, even if an injustice was committed.

*For many hundreds of years, it was believed that certain citizenship rights should be contingent on one's behaving like a citizen, and carrying out a responsible and productive citizen role. Now, civil libertarians are up in arms over the fact that convicted felons (mostly in prison) do not have the right to vote (Newsweek, 6 Sept. 99). We are also told that almost 4 million adult citizens in the US are not allowed to vote because of a crime that they have committed, and that this includes 1.4 million Afro-American men. It has now been proposed that they all be allowed to vote because there is such low voter participation as it is (SHJ, 23/10/98).

*One of the several dangers in attaching special penalties to so-called hate crimes when the same crime committed for other motives is already illegal and punishable is that juries and judges may have to begin to scrutinize every crime to find out why it was committed, and gear the punishment to the motive rather than the act. This politicizes criminal justice even more than it already is, and also
constitutes a yet further mentalization in our culture—something which the mental experts of course would love because it would mean vast numbers of expert testimony jobs for them. On top of that comes the additional complication that one needs to decide which group may not be hated, and which one may. Generally, hate crimes are defined in terms of the politically correct minorities, but who has ever heard of hate crimes against groups such as wealthy Caucasian Catholic Republican businessmen? As we said before, our advice to all people about to commit a crime is to do it while grimly keeping their mouth shut and later never explaining why they did it.

If, for some reason, one happens to have committed a crime against a member of a super-protected minority, another way to take out extra insurance is to swiftly commit the same crime as well against a member of the ordinary public, or even a member of the privileged classes. This way, one can always claim to be an equal opportunity robber, assassin, or whatever, rather than a “hate criminal.”

How far this effort has gone to punish motives rather than acts is illustrated by the following vignette. After watching the ultra-violent movie “Natural Born Killers,” a young couple felt inspired thereby to go out and kill a few people for pleasure. Lawyers for the victims started probing the motives of the producer of the film, Oliver Stone, presumably with the aim of being in a vastly better suing position if they could show that Stone had some kind of unworthy motive in making the film. Apparently, Stone had left himself open by saying something to the effect that he "wanted to do something that was completely nihilistic" (Newsweek, 2 Aug. 99).

*Here is the kind of thing that turns people against the insanity defense. A man murdered his ex-girlfriend and wounded her new boyfriend, then shot himself, suffering some brain damage. The shrinks ruled him so incompetent as to be not even capable of talking to his lawyer, and the man got off free—upon which he enrolled in college and started raking up a B+ average, working toward a doctorate in psychology (AP in SHJ, 22/12/98).

*One national US crime-fighting strategy, called Project Exile, is to give a prison term of 5 years without parole to anyone caught committing a crime while carrying a weapon. The name alludes to the fact that it would remove such offenders from the local community in which most of them have been habitual offenders. Reportedly, many of the smarter criminals at least, particularly drug dealers, have thereby been motivated to commit crimes without carrying pistols anymore, and in locales that have implemented the project, murders reportedly have been dramatically reduced. One disadvantage is that such offenders would all be tried in federal court, once again transferring civic functions from local and state to the national government (Time, 16/8/99). Also, vast federal sums are being given to local US Attorney Offices (e.g., $500,000 in Syracuse alone) to implement Project Exile.

*One phenomenon that contributes to citizens being very fearful of becoming crime victims is that the criminal justice system is strongly tilted in favor of the rights of criminals, and victims know that even if their assailant is caught, the chances are relatively remote that he or she will suffer serious consequences. For instance, for every hundred felonies against private citizens, only 15 suspects are ever convicted, only 5 of these 15 receive a prison sentence of more than a year, and none of them is likely to serve the full length of whatever sentence he or she receives; and even though crime rates are said to be down, there are still an astonishing 8 million victims of violent crimes every year in the US alone. Because victims do not receive significant redress from the court system, many people have concluded that it will take nothing less than a constitutional amendment specifying a Bill of Rights for crime victims (SHJ, 9/9/99).

*Immediately after the electric chair was first "successfully" applied on 6 Aug. 1890 at the Auburn prison in Auburn, NY, the emperor of Abyssinia ordered 3 of them! After they arrived, it was discovered that they did not work because there was no electricity in Abyssinia. Thereupon the emperor had one of the sturdy chairs modified to serve as his throne. We would say that this constituted a social role valorization of condemned criminals, in that if the other 2 chairs were used as intended, the condemned would die on royal thrones.

The Jail & Prison Scene

Most of the items below that cite no source are from the 12/98 issue of Atlantic Monthly.
After 1980, the rate of criminal incarceration in the US shot up sharply. The incarcerated population in the US of ca. 1.8 million is distributed with roughly 1.1 million in state custody, 600,000 in local jails, and 100,000 in federal custody. People who end up in prison had a very high rate of previous unemployment, and thus removing them both from the labor force and from the unemployment figures contributed greatly to the reduction of both the labor force and of the official unemployment rates (Newsweek, 28/6/99). In other words, the current economic boom may be fueled in part by incarceration. About 90% of the criminally detained are men, and of the women, about 75% have children. There are now about 1.1 men per hundred adult men incarcerated in the US. About one out of every 14 African-Americans is now incarcerated, and the rate is believed to be headed toward 25% of African-American men spending some time of their lives in prisons. An estimated 70% of US prison inmates are more or less illiterate, and somewhere between 60-80% have been dope users. Amazingly, for many prison inmates, the prison below the level of high-security is the neatest, cleanest and most well ordered place in which they will ever live. Many prisoners claim that they do not belong in prison, but that most of their fellow prisoners do. Roughly 80,000 prisoners sent back to prison in California in 1997 were parole violators, which suggests that there were good reasons why they were incarcerated in the first place.

As reported before, one of the greatest pleasures among prisoners is to "serve" or "gas" (i.e., throw excrement, urine and spittle at) an officer. This is why in some prisons, hoods are being placed on some of the nastiest prisoners to keep them from biting or spitting on officers. Yet some prison guards voluntarily incur great risks. Large proportions of prisoners have HIV or hepatitis, and many are violent, and yet in many prisons, unarmed officers will circulate among the prisoners, and even try to physically separate them when they get into fights or riots.

Only a few hundred yards from California's infamous Folsom State Prison stands another new prison, commonly known as "New Folsom." Unlike the old Folsom, it does not have gigantic stone walls, but a "death-wire electrified fence" very similar to what some of the Nazi concentration camps had. Its 3,000 inmates are "very hard cases," more than 1,000 of them having committed at least one murder.

Because prisons are such dangerous places, prisoners have formed many kinds of gangs for mutual protection, and these gangs often de facto run the prison. Furthermore, there has been a near-merger between street gangs and prison gangs, and the prison culture is thereby being carried back to the streets of the cities.

*This item reports on the privatization of prisons and the commodification of prisoners.

CBS "60 Minutes" carried a program on private prisons (2 May 99) that was astonishing. The Correction Association of America is now the biggest private prison firm with operations in many states. In order to make money, such private medium-security prisons have been accepting maximum-security prisoners, particularly from the District of Columbia. Also somewhat jarring was to hear prison places discussed as "beds," as in a hospital. Some local communities that had given private prison firms large financial incentives to come there are now very sorry, which serves them right.

In 1991, New York State sold its infamous Attica Prison to a private prison corporation for $200 million so as to be able to fill gaps in the state budget, but the bond which the private corporation had to issue will eventually cost the state $700 million.

Some of the big-name financial giants of the US, including American Express and Merrill Lynch, have been heavy financial investors in private prison corporations. Private prisons have proliferated particularly in Texas, to the extent that the third-largest prison of the State of Hawaii is now in a small town in Texas! US prison corporations are even operating prisons abroad, as in England, Scotland and Australia. Some private prison corporation executives earn $500,000 a year.

There are now so-called bed-brokers who help public authorities decide where to put a prisoner, with the broker being paid anywhere between $2.50-5.50 per prisoner-day! One would think that these huge sums could have been spent on improving prisons.

Because of the huge commercial interest that the private prison business has built up, it would be extremely difficult to ever reduce the US imprisonment rate even if the crime rate were to fall dramatically. What most likely would happen is that ever lesser crimes would be deemed worthy of a prison sentence. This would have been less likely to happen if prisons had remained public.

One amusing development of all this has been that it was discovered that because no one anticipated that there would ever be private prisons, breaking out of a private prison had never been made illegal. This meant that local law officers could not participate in efforts to recapture such
escapees, even if they are dangerous. This is why states have started to pass laws making such escapes illegal.

The Atlantic Monthly of 12/98 (from which the above data are also taken) had as its cover story "The Prison-Industrial Complex." It pointed out that after having lost their formerly productive economy, entire regions in the US have now been economically skewed toward incarceration. Furthermore, incarceration increasingly being handed to private companies is creating an extremely powerful lobby that is corrupting the criminal justice system.

*One rationale for sending prisoners from one state all the way across the country to serve their sentence in another state is that some prisoners have too much influence over fellow prisoners not only within their prison, but also within other prisons in the same state. Thus, a gang leader in an eastern prison may be sentenced to a prison in the southwest where he has no influence. This has now led to a very lively trade, where some states will even trade off X number of prisoners of one certain type versus Y number of another from another state, or one prisoner with a long sentence against so many prisoners with a short one (SPS, 30/4/99).

*Even though there is now a huge interstate traffic of prisoners, there are fewer federal regulations of that than of interstate shipment of cattle. Prisoners may be transported around the country for as long as a month, from one vehicle to another or one vehicle to one airplane to another. Escape rates are very high during such transportation.

*Even within states, prisoners may be sent far from home. New York State has prisons everywhere, including in locations called Wallkill, Fishkill, and Arthurkill. ("Kill" is a Dutch word for a creek, but a bad image nonetheless for a prison.) The state has a tendency to send its prisoners far away from the cities where they are from and where their families reside. E.g., the bulk of prisoners from the New York City area are being sent to prisons scattered in beautiful northern New York State where they have become a mainstay of the poverty-ridden local economy. Some people have called this the state's Siberia. Almost everyone in that area now seems to have at least one relative who works for the correctional system.

To visit their imprisoned family members, relatives from New York City board special buses in Manhattan on Friday night (perhaps even 2 am Saturday) and travel all night to arrive in time for visiting hours on Saturday. About 800 people do this every weekend.

*An 80-year-old woman in New York City had been visiting her son in prison five hours away by car, every single week for 18 years, missing her weekly ride only 3 times. She has to leave her home at 1 o'clock on a Thursday morning to visit him, with the entire round-trip taking up to 20 hours. The woman is diabetic, has to inject herself with insulin during the trip, and has also had a colostomy. She has to pay $20 for each trip, which is half the usual fare. Her son has been a hardened career criminal who finally committed some awful sexual and other crimes, but who has maintained to this day that he has been railroaded (Time, 8 Feb. 99).

*The State of Ga. has made available to a private for-profit garbage disposal company 36 prisoners as laborers, charging the firm only enough money to pay for the transportation and the guards, with the prisoners themselves getting nothing (Hospitality, 8/99). Bad image, etc., but probably beats stone-crushing.

*Amazingly, the telephone companies make huge profits on telephone lines to prisons. A pay phone at a prison can generate as much as $15,000 a year, which has prompted some phone companies to install such phones at no charge. The phone companies have also been charging higher rates to jail and prison phones—including to collect calls from prisons—than to their other customers. The phone companies are giving states/prisons huge kick-backs on these phone lines (1/99 clipping from Jan Doody).

*The State of Illinois put the construction of a new juvenile prison and a women's prison up for grabs to the highest bidder among local communities. Initially, 27 communities applied for the juvenile prison, though a few factors other than the largest amount of local subsidies offered were taken into account (Fall 1999 documentation from Howard Blackman).
*High-security prisons for disturbed prisoners in the US now cost $225,000 per "bed."

*There are fewer than 70,000 people in mental institutions in the US, but jails and prisons have become the dumping grounds of the mentally disturbed. On a given day in the US, there are about 300,000 "mentally ill" or mentally retarded people in jails and prisons, which is more than in all the mental facilities in the country. There are more mentally disturbed people just in Los Angeles County Jail than in any US psychiatric facility! In Louisiana, one prisoner in 14 is "mentally ill." Furthermore, in California, the most populous state, the law limits a commitment to a mental facility to three days. In order to be allowed to stay longer, one first has to commit a crime.

In addition, an estimated 550,000 mentally handicapped people who are currently on probation once spent time in a jail or prison (AP in SHJ, 12/7/99). This adds up to about 850,000, plus "mental" people who were once incarcerated but are no longer on probation. IF ALL THIS DOES NOT AMOUNT TO THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE MENTALLY DISORDERED POPULATION, WE HARDLY KNOW WHAT SUCH A TERM WOULD MEAN.

In these kinds of detention, the mentally disordered tend to get worse rather than better. However, the shrink establishments seem to have absolutely nothing to offer other than "medication," which is really prescribed mind dope. One man reported that being put on lithium got him so shaky that he "went off" (i.e., had a blow-up). All this is mindful of the old practice of driving out insanity through insanity.

Furthermore, the shrinks are conveying the impression that all these problems would be solved if only the mentally disordered were given more time with psychiatrists, whereas what psychiatrists themselves actually want is to give them less time and merely prescribe dope.

It is also amusing to observe that one of the solutions that was being advocated was 300-person "group homes" and multi-purpose service centers with both residential and day service components, right out of the pre-normalization dark ages.

The entire scene is beset by innumerable insanities, most of these by allegedly sane people (CBS "60 Minutes," 12 March 99).

*In 1994, New York State opened a high-security prison for 36 mentally retarded persons in the north-central part of the state. Ironically, the facility is named "Center for Intensive Treatment." There had been an institution (which had previously been a veterans' hospital) for the retarded in the area, but deinstitutionalization was creating an economic panic because the institution was the largest employer in the area. The new prison "saved the community." All the residents have violent pasts, most frequently either in the areas of personal assaults, sex offenses or arson. Actually, high security for mentally retarded persons is vastly lower than equivalent security for ordinary prisoners. A second such center with double the capacity is planned to open elsewhere in the state in the year 2000 (10/98 clipping from Susan Ruff).

*An analysis of the NY State budget revealed that the state increased its funding for prisons by almost the same amount of money it cut for higher education (SHA, 6 Dec. 98). We suspect that similar trade-offs have occurred in other places.

*New Castle (Ind.) State Developmental Center (for the retarded), which formerly had served people with epilepsy, closed in 8/98, and was to be converted into a prison.

*A prison in California is called the Deuel Vocation Institute.

*Increasingly, prisons are using devices that allow them to administer painful and incapacitating electric shocks to prisoners, such as stun belts, stun guns, shock batons and electric shields. They can administer shocks from up to 100 yards away. They began to be used in 1984, and have percolated down from high-security prisons to the local jail level. Stun belts can be attached so that a prisoner cannot remove them, and electric shock can then be administered by pressing a button from a safe distance, as much as 300 feet away. An 8-second shock knocks a person unconscious to the floor and often induces urination and defecation. Quite obviously, being in control of a button that can administer a most noxious pain to an unpleasant and disliked prisoner is vastly too much temptation to detentive officers. Over 40 US firms manufacture these devices and very gleefully sell them abroad where they are heavily used for torture. But then, the US Commerce Department has permitted the sale abroad of thumb screws and blackjacks as well (CW, 6/99).
*Relatedly, an investigation in California concluded that the fatal or near-fatal shooting of 31 prisoners by guards over a 6-year period in just one prison was "unjustified" in 75% of instances (AP in SHJ, 27/11/97).

*A 1990s version of the 19th century "tranquilizer chair" of the insane asylums (a restraining chair) is now sold as a "violent prisoner chair."

*US jails and prisons present a most peculiar paradox in regard to the health care of prisoners. On the one hand, they are notorious for their poor attention to the medical needs of prisoners--virtually a deadmaking policy. For instance, care of prisoners with AIDS in NY State prisons is so bad that it has been proposed to transfer their imprisonment to the State Health Department (SHJ, 8 March 99). On the other hand, when a prisoner refuses life-saving medical measures, prisons may apply coercion and impose them. For instance, when one man in an Iowa jail decided that he no longer wanted to submit to twice-a-week hemodialysis, the jail and prison people got frantic because if a judge upheld this decision--as one did--then even though this person would die within a week, other prisoners might also want to refuse medical treatments in the hope that this would get them released from jail or prison, perhaps to a hospital or hospice. And having a death occur in jail or prison because of medical neglect is vastly more acceptable to the prison system than having to preside--so to speak--over a predicted and planned death other than capital punishment (Des Moines Register, 26/2/99; source item from Rod Braun).

*Let's face it, there will always be brutality by police and prison personnel, and we certainly cannot report, or comment on, all the news along these lines that we receive. The only question is how much, when, and under what circumstances. Brutality-free conditions are extremely fragile. But how could it possibly be otherwise, given the very essence of this kind of work?

*One prisoner in Massachusetts made nearly 10,000 phone calls from prison during a 10-month period, including 3,000 calls to a girlfriend whom he had trained to run his pre-prison business. Thereby, he was able to actually manage a large real estate business from behind bars. This is not an isolated incident, and is something that is very hard for ordinary sane citizens to understand. On the one hand, one hears of absurdly fanatic security measures in prisons, and extreme efforts to isolate a prisoner from all contact (even with a lawyer), and then on the other hand, one hears stories like this. For instance, in another case, a prisoner sentenced for murder, and placed in a so-called super-max prison, managed to run a good part of the prison plus gangs in his home city far away (SPS, 30/4/99). Another person imprisoned for stalking continued to stalk his victims via a total of 224 calls from prison (CBS "60 Minutes," 30/1/99). Again, we point out that things like that can turn people against prisoners, and raise demands for inhumane restrictions upon them.

*Here is yet another thing that could turn one against prisoners. Inmates convicted of serious assaults or murders often post pictures of the scene of their crime on their cell walls, and even on the Internet. Yet further, a New York court ruled that a murderer is entitled (has "rights") to pictures of the crime scene showing the women he shot twice through the head (AP in SHJ, 26/11/98).

*Prisoners in the US are not allowed to send out correspondence in code. Correspondence chess is played by sending a form of code. For instance, "e4" means "king pawn from king pawn 2 to king pawn 4." Absurdly, a number of prisoners in different parts of the US have been forced to discontinue playing correspondence chess because of this rule.

*In Australia, a peculiar craze has broken out among prison inmates, namely chopping off part of one's ears (1/99 clipping from John Armstrong). Maybe some bleeding heart gave them too many art classes.

*Imagine a scenario where police come to the door of a secure prison cell and announce to the prisoner inside, "you are under arrest." Yet this has started to happen with increasing frequency!

*We were struck by the fact that some residential facilities (including nursing homes) would likely protest that they are not prisons, and yet the newspapers will report that someone "escaped" from them. For instance, there is an Elmcrest Children's Center in Syracuse only a few blocks away
from where the TIPS editor lives, and when a 15- and 16-year-old absconded from it, the police charged them with "felony escape," and this is how it was reported in the newspaper--and in a headline yet (SHJ, 4 Nov. 98).

*According to some studies, imprisonment does make a huge contribution to crime reduction. The premature release of each prisoner reportedly results in an average of 15 crimes over the next year. Of course, there are others who believe that there is no connection between incarceration and drug use (e.g., Newsweek, 6 Sept. 99). If it is true that imprisonment decreases crime, then it would be faulty to reason that a decrease in the crime rate should result in the lowering of the imprisonment rate, as some people have argued.

*A program that received a lot of attention in the late 1970s-early 1980s brought juvenile offenders to an adult prison for a day, where they were berated and told about prison life by prison inmates. The theory and hope was that by frightening the youngsters about prison, they would cease committing offenses. A widely-viewed documentary on this program, called "Scared Straight," was made in 1978 at the state prison in Rahway, New Jersey. During the 1980s, it was reported that such scare strategies did not work in keeping youngsters from ending up in prison. But in 1998, a follow-up documentary, called "Scared Straight: 20 Years Later," was made and shown. It tracked down all the youngsters (about 13 in number) and the members of the "lifers' group" (the prison inmates) who had been filmed in 1978. One of the youngsters--who had said in 1978 that he wanted to be a career thief--had ended up in prison for most of his adult life, which he said was due mostly to his addiction to drugs which compelled him to steal. Another one had had a rocky life and died of AIDS in the early 1990s. The other 11 were almost all married with children, and holding down respectable jobs. Some had had difficulty completing school and further trouble with the law, but none had continued in a life of crime. To a person (three of the youngsters were girls), they all testified that they remembered the day in prison very clearly, and that it had left such a powerful impression on them that they felt it changed their lives.

Of the original prisoners, several had been released and had families and jobs. Some admitted to an ongoing struggle to not use alcohol and drugs, and they all felt that their participation in the Scared Straight program had in some way given back something good to the society they had harmed. Several of them were dead, including from AIDS they had contracted in prison. Two had been out of prison, but committed more crimes and ended up back behind bars.

There is no doubt that such an intense emotional experience would leave a strong impression on the youngsters, so it is possible that they were literally scared straight. Some of them had also undergone religious conversions, and it was their faith that kept them out of trouble. And all stressed the importance of their obligations to their families, especially their children.

This was only a small sample of the many thousands of youngsters who have participated in similar programs since then, so it may not represent the experience of all others. But a probation officer and social worker interviewed for the follow-up stated that 80% of their clients who go through this program stay out of further trouble, versus about 40% of those who do not.

This leaves us puzzling about why the early results were claimed to be poor. Was it a reluctance by some parties to admit that harsh measures with some youngsters were effective and justified? Did they go by what the youngsters said immediately after experiencing the day in prison, rather than by what actually happened to them from then on? For instance, many of the youngsters showed adolescent bravado, not wanting to appear scared to their peers.

The Scared Straight program continues today, and in some locales, the youngsters make repeated trips to the prison because some of the inmates have become individual mentors to the young offenders. For some, this is the only concerned and involved adult male in their lives. This raises the troubling issue of the undoubtedly positive influence of a consistent, caring adult who has high expectations and makes strong demands for positive behavior--but who, at the same time, is an incarcerated convict, perhaps to remain incarcerated for life. To what extent will the youngsters model themselves on their convict-mentors?

Hobo, Drunk, Poverty, Homelessness &/or Jailhouse Songs & Poetry

Karen Barker has come to our rescue with not merely one but several hobo and prison songs.
The Prisoner’s Song

Oh, I wish I had someone to love me, someone to call me their own.
Oh, I wish I had someone to live with, ‘cause I’m tired of livin’ alone.
Oh, please meet me tonight in the moonlight, please meet me tonight all alone,
For I have a fair story to tell you, it’s a story that’s never been told.
I’ll be carried to the Newfield tomorrow, leavin’ my poor darlin’ alone,
With the cold prison bars all around me, and my head on a pillow of stone.
Now I have a grand ship on the ocean, all mounted with silver and gold,
And before my poor darlin’ would suffer, oh, that ship would be anchored and sold.
Now if I had wings like an angel, over these prison walls I would fly,
And I’d fly to the arms of my darlin’, and there I’d be willin’ to die.

Paddy On the Railway

In 18 hundred & 41
I put me corduroy breeches on
I put me corduroy breeches on
To work upon the railway.
Filly-me-oori-oori-ay
(or Pasty-oori-oori-ay) (3 times)
To work upon the railway (last line of each v.)
In 18 hundred & 42
I left the Old World for the new
Bad cess to the luck that brought me thru
To work upon the railway.
When Pat left Ireland to come here
And spend his latter days in cheer
His bosses they did drink strong beer
While Pat worked on the railway.
It’s “Pat, do this!” & “Pat, do that!”
Without a stocking or cravat
And nothing but an old straw hat
To work upon the railway.
And when Pat lays him down to sleep
The wiry bugs around him creep
And the divil a bit can poor Pat sleep
While working upon the railway.
In 18 hundred & 43
’Twas then I met sweet Biddy McGee
And an elegant wife she’s made for me
While working on the railway.
In 18 hundred & 46
They pelted me with stones & sticks
And I was in wan hell of a fix
From working on the railway.
In 18 hundred & 47
Sweet Biddy she died & went to Heaven
If she left one child, she left 11
To work upon the railway.
In 18 hundred & 48
I learned to take me whiskey straight
’Tis an elegant drink & can’t be bate
For working on the railway.

Hallelujah, Bum Again

A famous hobo song found scribbled on the wall of a Kansas City jail where ‘One-Finger Ellis’ had spent the night, recovering from an overdose of rotgut whiskey.

Oh, why don’t I work like other men do?
How the hell can I work when the skies are so blue!

Chorus: Hallelujah! I’m a bum,
Hallelujah! Bum again,
Hallelujah! Give’s a hand-out,
Revive us again.

(Previous stanza is repeated)

If I was to work and save all I earn,
I could buy me a bar and have money to burn.
Oh, the winter is over and we’re all out of jail;
We are tired of walking and hungry as hell.
Oh, I ride box cars and I ride fast mails,
When it’s cold in the winter I sleep in the jails.
I passed by a saloon and I hear someone snore,
And I found the bartender asleep on the floor.
I stayed there and drank till a fly-mug came in,
And he put me to sleep with a sap on the chin.
Next morning in court I was still in a haze,
When the judge looked at me, he said, “Thirty days.”
When the springtime does come, oh won’t we have fun?
We’ll throw up our jobs and go on the bum.
Oh, springtime has come,
and I’m just out of jail.
Ain’t got no money, it all went for bail.
I came to a house and I knocked at the door,
And the old lady says, “I have saw you before.”
"Why don’t you work like other men do?"
"How the hell we going to work when there ain’t no work to do?"
Some day a long train will run over my head,
And the sawbones will say, "Old One-Finger’s dead."
Dump The Bosses Off Your Back, By John Brill
(Tune: "Take It to the Lord in Prayer")

Are you poor, forlorn and hungry? Are you almost split asunder?
Are there lots of things you lack? Loaded like a long-eared jack?
Is your life made up of misery? Boob—why don’t you buck like thunder?
Then dump the bosses off your back. And dump the bosses off your back?
Are your clothes all patched and tattered? All the agonies you suffer,
Are you living in a shack? You can end with one good whack—
Would you have your troubles scattered? Stiffen up, you orn’ry duffer—
Then dump the bosses off your back. And dump the bosses off your back.

This was a "wobbly" song, i.e., sung after WWI by the Marxist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union. However, one does not have to be a wobbly to appreciate the sentiments.

The Family

Baby-Making or Baby-Getting

*Apparently, one relatively frequent kind of child abduction consists of women sneaking into hospitals and stealing newborn babies. One response has been recommendations that newspapers should no longer announce births (SHA, 9 May 99).

Fecundity

*In 1999, the US birth rate became the lowest that it had ever been since national statistics started to be kept in 1909. What we are hardly being told is that as with most European countries, our reproduction is below replacement level, and population growth is therefore entirely due to immigration, though most people appear to assume that it is heavily due to reproduction (SHJ, 29/4/99).

*In Britain, there will be as many pensioners as children under 16 in 2007 or 2008, which apparently has never happened before (Guardian, 29/5/99).

*It is predicted that in just a few years, more adults will be preoccupied with taking care of their parents than their children (Time, 14/6/99).

*Media mogul Ted Turner, who has 5 children, told a conference on economic growth that in order to contain urban expansion, families should only have one child (CW, 11/98).

New "Ethical Dilemmas" Created by Modernistic Reproduction Practices

*Sport fanatics can buy a computer program that tells them when to have or not to have sex so that the delivery will not take place during a Super Bowl game (Time, 1 Feb. 99).

*Another aspect of the new "ethical dilemmas" that come with having thrown off the "old morality" is the question whether and when to tell a child that it was conceived in some manner other than the old-fashioned way, and has a sperm donor father who is not his mother’s husband, nor is even known to her. In a fugue of stupidity, advice columnist Ann Landers said yes (even to young children, such as a 9-year-old) and that doing so will hopefully "encourage the child to ask questions" (Syracuse Herald-Journal, 16 March 1999, p. C2). One wonders what could be the point of doing so, other than to perhaps shake the child’s sense of security, which sounds to us like the parents are putting their own desires (e.g., to "get it off their chest") above the needs of the child.

*Here is another new "ethical dilemma": Should a birth certificate list a surrogate mother, or only the woman who donated the egg or the fertilized embryo?
The Deconstruction of the Family

*In some quarters one of the many -isms, next to fascism, etc., is "familism."

*A study concluded that the major aim of 20 of the textbooks widely used in college courses on marriage and family is to kill off marriage, in that they present it as an archaic and oppressive institution. The message is also conveyed that if one has children at all, it makes more sense to have them without the encumbrances of marriage and family commitments (FT, 12/97).

*A panel of scholars who looked at American textbooks in high schools concluded that they have medicalized many important issues, and have been treating marriage and family as "health issues," pretty much in the same category as bicycle safety helmets, getting enough sleep, and recycling waste. One textbook sandwiches the chapter on marriage between "Mental disorders and Suicide" and "Digestion and Excretion" (AP in SHJ, 24/9/98). One can hardly blame the textbook writers. After all, they are not allowed to promote morality, heterosexual engagement is no longer PC, and the law has changed the very meaning of the term "marriage."

*The Florida Supreme Court ruled in 1998 that grandparents had no right to visit, or be visited by, their grandchildren, even when the grandchild is parentless. This is yet another example of state-arranged family collapse and decommunitization (SHJ, 13/11/98).

*France now allows any two people of any sex to set up housekeeping together, enter into a "civil solidarity pact," and thereby receive marital benefits such as associated with taxes, inheritance, housing, welfare, etc. (SHJ, 14/10/99).

*Once the concept of marriage and family are in any way compromised, then there will be no end to how they will be defined. The latest is the polyamorist "family," which consists of sexual partners in addition to a husband and wife, such as perhaps two husbands and a wife, two wives and one husband, two husbands and two wives, etc., etc. Already there is also such a thing as a "polypride movement," and people who are members of such arrangements are forming "support groups." All this once again is promoted under the banner of "choice" (Time, 15/11/99). According to Time, a lot of these "families" are also deeply involved in New Age "flim-flam."

Family/Marital Stability

*While most Americans say they want to get married, more of them shack up without getting married. However, the average live-in relationship lasts only about 19 months, and about 75% of all the children born to such couples will end up in single-parent households (Newsweek, 2 Nov. 98).

*According to one study which liberals have not liked at all, unmarried couples who lived together have higher rates of domestic violence, and of physical and sexual abuse of children. The adults also have triple the rate of depression that married adults do. Those who later marry someone else have a 46% higher divorce rate. One hypothesis is that getting used to living in a low-commitment relationship makes one more tolerant of divorce (Time, 15/2/99).

*Not out of economic necessity, but merely for lust of possessions and wealth, and for the satisfying of personal ambitions, more and more American couples (and couples in developed countries elsewhere) are living apart, sometimes far apart, for the sake of their jobs. This entails tremendous stresses, and many end up on shrink drugs (Newsweek, 18/10/99).

Note: unmarried couples don’t stay together, married ones separate, and unseparated married ones do not live together. Is all this telling us something?

*There are now 15 million stepmothers in the US, all but a tiny fraction due to divorces, and 55% of them will only last a few years. This has spawned an entire psychopop genre on how to be a stepmother. Some of these stepmothers are characterized as the "whoops, I forgot to have kids so I will get some by marriage" type. What is a major advice line of the gurus to such women? "Run, do not walk, to a support group" (Time, 3 May 99).
*In Britain, the divorce rate is at an all-time high. At 40%, it is five times what it was 25 years ago. A third of babies are born to unwed mothers, which is more than four times what it was 25 years ago. The government got panicked and announced a plan of pro-family strategies, including a non-religious version of the baptism ceremony, and a longer waiting period between the issuance of marriage licenses and weddings. Other strategies are under discussion. One reason the government is alarmed is because there is rising crime and drug abuse which is finally being seen as a fruit of family collapse (Toronto Star, 7 Nov. 98; source item from Kathryn Smith).

*In a poll, 34% of US Republicans said that they would cheat on their spouses if they were given $55 million. We are not sure whether this is good news or bad news, and we suspect that more people would be quite prepared to cheat for free, or at least for much, much less (Time, 19/10/98).

*Lusty Liverpudlians? It was found by blood test that in parts of Liverpool, England, about 25% of children had a biological father other than the one of record (Time, 19/10/98).

*Children of broken couplings are particularly confused at Christmas time, when the question comes up which parent to celebrate the feast with (Zeit, 22/12/98).

*A wife bought a German shepherd (dog, that is) without her husband’s knowledge, and the husband decided he did not want the dog. The wife now demands that he accept the dog or she will leave with their daughter and the dog both (“love my dog or I’m leaving”). The wife also says that taking care of the house is very difficult now that she has the dog to take care of as well (Ladies' Home Journal in Syracuse Herald-Journal, 30 March 99, p. D2). Along the same lines, a newspaper ad for apartments shows a picture of a big dog and says that you need this apartment rental guide "because your live-in boyfriend said 'me or the dog'. Now you need a pet-friendly apartment" (Indianapolis Star, 28 February 1999). Here is another instance where the relationship with the less demanding pet is preferred over that with the more demanding human, perhaps also reflective of the animal-as-human culture. People like this shouldn’t marry humans but dogs, the way a man married his dog Spunky, as we reported a few years back.

*According to Time (25/10/99), once lawyers enter a marital dispute, chances increase dramatically that the marriage is moving toward a divorce. After all, there is very little benefit to lawyers in marital harmony.

*We recently learned of a young couple getting married that had, between them, five sets of parents, which was extremely bewildering to all involved parties, particularly with many of these parties not being on good terms.

*A father of 12 children had to give back his "parent of the year" award when it was discovered that he was part of a cult that engaged in prostitution, child sex abuse and child pornography (AP in SHJ, 6 Aug. 99).

Violence Between Spouses or Lovers

*Marriage counselors and other advice gurus keep telling women to flee abusive relationships with men, but according to one study, both men and women have a higher chance of being killed by their lovers after leaving the relationship, with women being 25 times(!) more likely to be severely attacked than those who stay (SHA, 6 Dec. 98).

Issues Related to Adoption & Fostering

*The good news: In 1998, Americans adopted 16,000 children from other countries, and half of these from races other than their own (Time, 3 May 99; Newsweek, 4 Oct. 99).

*Michael Dorris had been called the "multi-cultural literature poster child" and he and his wife the "poster couple of multiculturalism." (We had never heard of this literary couple.) He adopted 3 "multi-cultural children" while still unmarried, and the couple adopted 3 more after they got
married. Suddenly, upon being accused of sexually abusing one of his children, he committed suicide. Much mystery! (Newsweek, 28/4/97).

*Some child agencies place siblings into separate adoptive homes rather than trying to keep them together. The US Supreme Court refused to declare it a right for adoptable children to be kept together (AP in SHJ, 23/3/99).

*An unmarried Iowa couple who had given up their baby for adoption went back to court several years later after they had gotten married and fought a 2.5 year battle to have the adoption undone—which, amazingly, the court agreed to. Six years later, they divorced. The news about the nullified adoption at one time made the front pages, but the news about the couple's divorce was a small back page item. We had commented before that undoing adoptions will turn people against adopting babies in America, and has probably had much to do with people adopting babies from abroad, particularly from Third World countries (AP in SHJ, 6 Oct. 99).

*An increasing number of adopted children have been trying to find their birth parents, and have developed a theory that they have a legal right to do so. At the same time, a lot of birth mothers who thought that their identity would remain forever anonymous believe that they have a continued right to remain anonymous, and not to be identified to the biological child that they gave up (e.g., Newsweek, 22/2/99). This is a good example of a collision of claims to rights.

*It was discovered that New York State, and the City of New York, had accepted hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government for foster care services, but failed to provide the services. A whistle blower brought this to light (SHJ, 11 Nov. 98).

The Relevance of Children Having Intact Families

*We have mentioned repeatedly that Daniel Moynihan, before he became a US senator and while he was still a social scientist, warned the nation about the collapse of the Afro-American community due to its high rate of pregnancy out of wedlock and the low rate of stable family formation. He was largely ignored or castigated. Social scientists, if they responded at all, claimed that the changes were not really all that significant if they were real at all, that Moynihan's predictions were nonsense, or that with civil rights legislation passed, things would get better. However, his predictions came true. More amazing is that in recent years, the rate of pregnancy out of wedlock for America overall is actually higher than it was in the Afro-American community of the mid-1960s. To the degree that this has become business as usual now, we have another example of a Moynihanism, namely the down-defining of deviancy, in which social scientists also participate.

*As of about 1998, 1.42 million children in the US are being raised by their grandparents, a major cause being loss or absence of parents due to alcohol and drugs, AIDS, incarceration and mental problems. Children are apparently better off with grandparents than with their parents because grandparents tend to be more of the old school that believes in actually rearing children, not merely cohabitating with them.

*There is going on a highly ideologized research war between pro- and anti-family parties. On one side are scholars who claim that past research shows that children do not need fathers, or even parents, families, or schools, or that these are not important in shaping a child, or that there is no negative impact of a mother working full-time; plus there are scholars conducting and reporting research that these claims are true. E.g., an article in the 6/99 issue of the American Psychologist (the flagship publication of the American Psychological Association), entitled "Deconstructing the Essential Father," claimed that "the data" do not support the idea "that fathers are essential to child well-being." In fact, fathers cause a lot of trouble. The mother having money was deemed more important to her children's adjustment than that they had a father present. Therefore, there should also be a "large scale" expansion of welfare to support mothers who have no men, or got rid of the fathers of their children. On the other side are scholars holding the opposite view. E.g., a study of 200,000 children that came out about the same time reported that children who had no father listed on their birth certificates were twice as likely to die in the first year of life (NC Register, 22/8/99). Another study reported that regardless of how much time children were being cared for by strangers,
children still were heavily influenced by their families (SHJ, 7 Sept. 99). Because the media are generally anti-family, they have given much publicity to the anti-family theorizing and research. We offer a more radical solution: Since it is human beings who cause other human beings problems, human beings should be eliminated (with large-scale government funds, of course), first and foremost by no one ever having any children, and preferably not even sex because sex merely leads to endless hassles in relationships. We are sure that research could be conducted that would sustain us.

*One thing that is not going to be very helpful is the media glorifying single parenthood, as by depicting mothers who succeed heroically in raising one or more children without a husband. An example is "Judging Amy," a series starting on American TV in Fall 99 which quickly became the season's highest-rated new drama.

*PC scholars have also rushed to "prove" that children of single mothers score about the same on school readiness tests as children from intact families. Of course, when a child is still of preschool age, the father may not have been gone as long as with older children of single mothers (Time, 18/10/99).

*Growing up with only a mother is vastly worse than growing up with two parents who work full-time. In the US, the latter children get an average of 19-22 hours of parent contact time a week, while the former only get 9 (Time, 23/11/98).

Parental Engagement with Child-Rearing

*Breast-feeding has been shown to bestow innumerable advantages on both mother and child, including a 5-point IQ advantage to the child. Yet fewer women breast-feed their babies in the US than almost anywhere in the world (Newsweek, 1 June 99; AP in SHJ, 23/9/99).

*About 7 million US children under 13 are home alone after school. While the liberal left tells us how good that is, and that many children "absolutely thrive" on this liberty, the statistics tell us that violent crimes by children triple within the first hour after school, and that until their parents come home, children are twice as likely to smoke, drink, or use street drugs (Newsweek, 29/11/99).

*A 1998 book by Judith Rich-Harris, The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do; Parents Matter Less Than You Think and Peers Matter More, seems to be the perfect book for modernistic people of our day, in that it argues that nothing that parents do changes how children grow up and what they become. At most, parents supposedly can affect how the child behaves at home, and the emotions the child develops toward the parent. Amazingly, even people who one might have thought to be experts have acclaimed the book as a "turning point in the story of psychology," and have pretended that it is based on solid science. This book legitimizes all sorts of things such as letting children run wild, giving them "choice" and "self-determination," getting divorced because this will not change the child’s developmental course, spending less or no time with the child, putting unruly children on drugs instead of giving them structure and/or manipulating their environment, and so on. According to Harris, one should not be inhibited from having children by one’s concerns about how much effort they are, because it doesn’t really matter whether one has them reared by a nanny, put in a day care center, or even sent to a boarding school. What will really happen to the child is determined in part by the child’s genes, and the rest pretty much by the child’s peer culture.

Her argument has been boiled down to "parents don’t matter," except for their genes. However, when one considers the Littleton massacre, one is struck by the fact that if the parents had made it their business to know what the two killer boys were up to, the killings would almost certainly not have happened—in fact, the boys would not have hyped themselves into their peculiar subculture and its mentality.

The book made not only headlines but cover stories, like those of Newsweek of 7 Sept. 98. That issue of Newsweek is reportedly being brought by legions of people to their shrinks as relevant evidence.

While the book got much press, the reviewers may have been more positive in the psychological literature than the popular one. For instance, in 8/98, Harris received the George Miller Award from the American Psychological Association for her work. It so happened that Miller, after whom the
award was named, was the very professor who told Harris 37 years earlier to leave the Harvard doctoral program because she lacked originality (B&C, 3/99).

We would say that if parents are no longer engaged, then of course, they will have little influence on children.

This woman will have much to answer for for absolving and legitimizing parental disengagement.

*Parents increasingly are failing to intervene in fights among siblings, reportedly because they do not know what to do (Time, 22/3/99). We believe that this is merely another manifestation of parents withdrawing from child-rearing responsibilities.

*It is amazing to contemplate that the very author of "Parent Effectiveness Training," developed in the 1960s, promoted the idea that parent-child and child-adult relationships should be democratic.

*After colleges and universities withdrew from the in loco parentis role in the 1960s, they also ceased notifying parents of college students that their children were involved in decadent or illegal behavior even though in most cases, those same parents were expected to pay for the children's education. It took an amendment to federal confidentiality laws in 1998 to enable colleges and universities to once again inform parents when their children violate drug and alcohol regulations, or commit sex or other offenses. Students overwhelmingly oppose parental notification, not surprisingly. Their attitude seems to be largely "fork it over, mom and dad, and leave me alone." However, not surprisingly, those campuses that now inform parents have seen a dramatic improvement in student behavior (AP in SHJ, 11 Oct. 99).

*After the Vietnam war, the US by-and-by took in about a quarter million Hmong refugees from Laos. At home, Hmong parents kept good control of their children, but in the US, they have begun to run wild and form gangs that apparently specialized particularly in gang rape. The Hmong parents have indicated that they are afraid to discipline their child as they would have done at home for fear of being charged with child abuse. Obviously, this is another example of the children's rights lobby creating vastly more social problems than it is solving by setting the generations against each other (AP in SHJ, 14/10/99).

*A leading child abuse expert in Syracuse is a 40-year-old woman physician who constantly gets subpoenaed to provide expert testimony in child abuse court cases. She has a husband and two children, but it was jarring to read that when her 8-year-old son got sick, he had to come and spend the day at her office because he had no place to go--and apparently nobody working on the rather long story drew any connections (SHJ, 12 May 99).

*For hundreds of years, women of the upper classes in the Western world often hired wet nurses to breast-feed their babies. It recently struck us how similar this practice was to working couples these days farming out their children to be reared by paid strangers in day care.

*The toy industry is planning to let people design dolls to look like a child's mother, so that "latchkey children" can be comforted by carrying their mother around in doll form (Newsweek, 2 Nov. 98).

*According to a survey of children, only 42% thought that their mothers liked their jobs, while 69% of the mothers claimed they did. Also, only 10% of children wanted more time with their parents, but 34% said they wished their parents would act less tired and stressed from their work. Of course, the great advantage of having parents out of the way as far as children are concerned is that they can then do as they please (Time, 18/10/99).

*What is a real mystery is how the experts resolve the studies that claim that having working parents doesn't harm children, with the obvious abandonment of children by their parents (as documented in the book Ask the Children) as being typical for American high school pupils.

*More and more, when teenagers are being discussed, we read references in the news media to the film, "Lord of the Flies." The film dealt with the motif of a break-down of civilization among youths when deprived of adult supervision.
*A firm has begun to lease drug-sniffing dogs to parents who want to find out whether their children are on drugs and stashing drugs away somewhere at home or in family cars. There is talk of franchising such a service nationwide (Newsweek, 26/7/99). At least such parents are not abdicating.

Child-Junking

There is always a certain amount of parental incompetence in child-rearing, but much as the culture of modernism makes a big contribution to parental disengagement, so it also renders many people incompetent as parents. In turn, parental incompetence is one of several proximate causes of child junking.

*In 9/99, an unborn baby was put up for auction on the Internet, and bidding quickly rose to 6 figures before officials stopped the auction, though claiming it had merely been a hoax. Only a week earlier, a kidney had been put up for auction and brought in a $5.7 million offer.

*Here is another dramatic instance of the breakdown in parental competence in our culture. An 8-year-old girl with inoperable brain tumor in Rochester, NY, began to lose continence--upon which her parents began to whip her severely with a leather riding crop (SPS, 23/4/99). Perhaps they felt that their parental entitlements had been violated.

*German states are seriously considering reintroducing an old custom, namely places where mothers can anonymously drop off their unwanted babies (source clipping from Susanne Hartfiel).

*Pittsburgh, PA, is one city where the above scheme has actually been approved. Immediately, the local Tribune-Review newspaper (28/10/99) suggested that there should also be established drop-off points for the unwanted elderly, unwanted neighbor children, unwanted lawyers, and for relatives who overstayed their visits (from Guy Caruso).

*Harvesting what one sows. A German study showed that children are no longer being raised, but something like "being let grow up." Hardly anything is demanded of them that they do not like. They are perceived as autonomous personalities who have to shape their own life course, with parents, kindergartens and schools merely providing support (AW, 14/11/98). Almost at the same time, the news informs us that fewer and fewer teachers in Germany (as elsewhere) are able to endure; they "burn out." In many cases, the stresses of teaching unsocialized children convert themselves into health problems. The only other occupational group with a similar level of stress symptoms is police officers (AW, 10/10/99). Obviously, neither teachers nor parents know any more where to draw lines within a larger context of "a world of uncertain values."

*Television ads now propagandize that four-year-olds should be told about drugs, and TV programs for children will flash on free phone numbers for the child viewers to call if they feel neglected. Also, we have seen one film for children ("Matilda") which depicted the parents as utterly disgusting creatures, and the child as virtually omnipotent.

*We documented before the depiction of children as monsters in film. "The Butcher Boy" is another of this genre, "a pint-size Jack the Ripper" (Newsweek, 13/4/98).

*On the average, an American child between ages 6-12 will each year see 30,000 TV commercials, but spend only 64 hours reading at home (Time, 16/8/99).

*Juvenile literature, according to one reviewer, has increasingly "emphasized the ghastly and grotesque." One wonders what is going on here.

*An Ohio woman asked an assembly of teen girls, "How many of you read magazines like Cosmo, Seventeen, Vogue?" A majority of the girls raised their hand. "Are you looking for your identity in these trashy magazines," the woman continued. "Who can wear the clothes those models wear? Nobody. So why do you read them? Do you really think you can trust what they say about sex, love, or relationships? They don't care about you and they don't know anything about love
either" (NC Reg., 4 July 99). More people need to say things like that to youths these days—even if some of them could wear the same clothes as the models.

*We have heard a new argument as to why children should not be prevented from hearing the worst of the contemporary pop music with all the s, f and n words: "kids nowadays listen to that type of music all the time anyway." One parent’s answer is to insist that when they do listen to this sort of music, they do it in the privacy of their own bedroom, or with a personal headset, or at least at a low decibel level (SHJ, 8 March 99). It is a little bit like insisting that when you kill Jews, you should do it neatly and quietly.

*A Canadian judge ruled that a law making the possession of child pornography a crime was null and void because there was no evidence that such possession resulted in harm to children (AP in SHJ, 25/1/99).

*Apparently, the American Library Association joined the American Civil Liberties Union in opposing any restriction of access to pornography by children via computers and the Internet. Further, the argument here apparently is not so much the difficulty of restricting access as that children have a right to access such material (SHJ, 17/8/99).

*According to some reports, some PC child welfare departments across the US are not merely putting foster children with homosexual foster parents, but are even actively seeking out the latter. Often, these are children who had been abused and victimized in various ways before. Furthermore, the children are often then exposed to PC propaganda on sex issues which—after all—can be categorized as de facto religious ones. Some children were placed with foster parents who are members of Act Up, the militant homosexual organization that has engaged in the desecration of churches and taking part in public parades while naked and wearing nothing but condoms, and these members then "educate" their foster children on sexual issues (4/99 circular material).

*A 7/98 article in one of the more prestigious psychological journals asserted that people were "prejudiced" against pedophilia, which henceforth should no longer be called sexual abuse but merely "adult-child sex, a value-neutral term," as long as the children consented to the act and there was no evidence of negative effects. Of course, this implies that children are capable of giving such an informed consent.

**Children Being Declared "Mental" in Order to Explain Away Poor Child-Rearing**

*A sleep researcher noted that 20 years ago, children were alert and energetic all day long, but nowadays arrive in school drowsy, and sleep there during class, or at least do not function very well. Despite the evidence that children managed it very well 20 years ago, the bio-shrinks have been busy trying to biologize the new phenomenon, and have proposed that schools start an hour later every day (SHJ, 25/3/99).

*There have always been disobedient and rebellious children who behave badly, but a few years ago, the American Psychiatric Association began to mentalize the condition and named it the "opposition defiant disorder," appropriately acronymed as ODD, and such children have begun to be called ODD children. Alarmingly, the mental people tell us that somewhere between 6-22% of all school children "have ODD." Furthermore, as they are in the habit of doing, they are invoking genetics as a major cause.

*We have all been surfeited with the diagnosis of "attention-deficit disorder," but in 8/99, we first ran across a youth being interpreted as "suffering from extreme attention-deficit disorder," though behaviorally we would have interpreted him to be merely an extremely ill-behaved and unsocialized child, and that others suffered from him.

*Problems that used to be handled by teachers are increasingly being handed over to shrinks. By 1998, about a million prescriptions for anti-depressants were being written for children and teens, and the shrinks are rubbing their hands with their estimates that as many as 5% of American pre-teens and adolescents "suffer from clinical depression," and that this is "something they cannot outgrow."
A sub-headline in *Time* (31/5/99) repeated the prevailing shrink wisdom that "drugs like Prozac, Paxil and Luvox can work wonders for clinically depressed kids." Among indices of eligibility for mind drugs, the National Association for Mental Illness listed talking too much, and unrealistically high self-esteem, e.g., thinking one is God or close to God, for which latter probably the high school girl in Littleton would have qualified who, in the face of a gun barrel pointed at her, professed her faith in Christ and was shot dead for it. The above article told the story of one girl who went into a funk after her parents separated, and the answer was to put her on mind drugs, which seems to be the solution to failing marriages and divorce. It is also alarming to consider the battery of diagnoses that gets thrown at children. One eight-year-old was "diagnosed" as having attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, serious depression, and anxiety. No wonder some children then receive not only one but a whole battery of mind drugs, perhaps taking as many as 30 pills a day, sometimes until they go completely to pieces. Some children themselves have called their condition one of "medications stupor." Altogether, someone has said that we now have an institutional drug culture in the hallways of All-American High (*Time*, 31/5/99).

Interestingly, there are hardly any mind drugs that have been tested on children; and considering that these children are being kept on these drugs for years, one should also recall that even adult mind drugs have rarely been tested for longer than three months. One of the few tests of adult drugs on children revealed that placebos alone had a 33% improvement rate.

**Child Formation**

*Educators have always fought tooth and claw against the now hundred-year-old wisdom that children have absorbent minds and can learn to read at age 2 and 3. They therefore have worked very hard at preventing children to learn valuable skills early in life, some of which can never be equally well learned--if at all--later, such as foreign languages. Now, commercialism is bypassing the educational establishment and is teaching babies to use computers. Child care centers are discovering that children age 2 and 3 already arrive with basic computer skills that they learned at home, in part due to software being sold for an ever younger audience, now going down to age 6 months. Even newborns are being targeted with mostly passive displays. In some child care centers, infants get at least 30 minutes of computer work a day. For some reason, more people are becoming convinced of infant mental potential by their computer work than by anything that was ever demonstrated the old-fashioned way by the Montessorians. However, whatever infants learn from computers is all in the virtual world, and lacks any other sensory and proprioceptive reality. We may soon have a generation of children who have not gone through the important phase of grabbing, shaking, pushing, dropping, and otherwise manipulating objects in 3-dimensional space (SHJ, 23/4/99).

*There is irony in the fact that the current cohort of teenagers is taller, healthier, and wealthier than any previous one but also holds the record for poor conduct (*Newsweek*, 10 May 99), and half lived through parental divorces. Almost all teenagers spend about 10 hours a week riveted to audio and/or video feeders, and only about 4 hours doing chores, and 3.5 hours studying. About 60% also spend about four hours a week at parties. When they come home, only 25% can expect to find a parent there most of the time.

*How can one grow up normal, or live a normal life as an adult, when one watches TV for 4.25 hours every day, and in fact, when that is the average for an entire nation, as was the case with Mexico in 1998. Only minutes behind was Japan, with the average American watching 238 minutes a day (SHJ, 15/4/99).

The latest (1999) proposal to curtail teenagers' amount of TV watching is to hook the TV set up to something like a treadmill which they must vigorously work in order to earn TV viewing time. Experts have gushed over this invention, calling it by the stereotyped craze term "exciting." It is rather pitiful that parents would resort to these devices instead of just simply exerting parental authority and pulling the plug.

*Another taboo got broken when we watched the PBS "Nature" program at 8 pm in 4/99, and to our shock saw previews of another program in which a man ripped the clothes off a woman in a sexual frenzy. What this means is that children can no longer watch an 8 o'clock PBS "Nature" program. Soon, there will be nothing left for them to watch--which may be just as well.
*There are all sorts of video games which children play that are extremely violent, usually unbeknownst to their parents. In one of these, the players try to run down pedestrians with their vehicles, including old ladies with walkers, and players that complete all levels of the game end up having killed 33,000 people. Some people have these games enter their imagination, hearing its music when it is not on, and dreaming of playing these games while they are sleeping. Liberal pundits have said that fortunately, children who play these games often and long enough get bored by them, as if this were a great consolation. We are also being told that these games raise children's IQs by improving their spatial skills, though everybody apparently agrees that this is at the expense of social skills (Time, 10 May 99).

Yet amazingly, almost all teens nowadays play video games, and 70% do it for up to 4 hours a day, with boys outnumbering girls 3 to 1 in this cohort. Almost 60% of parents have no rules governing the playing of such games, and of those that do, the rules are not observed by half of the teens.

On the Internet, a large proportion of teenagers take recourse to entertainment sites that call for violence against parents (such as slitting their throats), and hardly any parents have any idea that this is going on. Someone has called this a "virtual reality without adults." About 60% of Americans would like to see restrictions placed on the Internet, but nobody listens to citizens anymore these days, and even if they voted for such things, the courts would overrule them (Newsweek, 10 May 99).

*From the 7 June 99 issue of Newsweek, we learned that a despicable game born in the filth of modernistic sexuality is being played by boys as young as age 4 all over the US. The game is "girl trap," and is a fantasy about capturing and tying up a girl so "she can be ours." Some of the fantasies include inflicting bizarre tortures and mutilations on the girl, and even death.

*Civilization (8/99) ran an article entitled "Sedated by Stuff," referring to modernistic parents literally inundating their children with material objects. Such parents appear to be under a compulsion, screaming out, "Stop me before I buy again. I can't help it." This is not only doing bad things to individual children, but to entire child networks. As one child put it, "No one will come to my house because I don't have Nintendo." Shrinks supposedly are telling horror stories about children drowning in plastic tokens of parental affection. One reason parents can't stop is that they themselves grew up in a consumer society, and buying for their children is simply part of their entire "lifestyle of buying" in general. It is also utterly amazing to learn how much money teenagers are spending weekly, namely about $100 on the average, derived partially from allowances and partially from part-time jobs (Newsweek, 10 May 99). American girls age 10-18 possess an average of 12 pairs of shoes each, at an average cost of $56 each (SHJ, 18/3/99). Isn't this hard to believe? It is staggering to contemplate that if children put all their money into savings accounts instead of spending virtually all of it all the time, they would probably be able to finance their college education. After all, $100 a week adds up to about $5,000 a year, and even with lesser amounts, 6-7 years of such savings could add up to maybe $20,000.

*The peculiar genre of books, guidelines, etc. "for dummies" has spawned a corresponding small avalanche of such products "for geniuses," some of them titled Instant Genius, with the respective topic as a subtitle.

*The whole nation was somewhat amazed when Hillary Clinton claimed that her husband had suffered child abuse when, in fact, she was referring to his mother and his grandmother arguing with each other in his presence.

*In 1998, the US Congress passed a "birth defects prevention act," authorizing big money for states to set up databases on deformed children. Nevada became the first state to try to set up such a database, and some people are very concerned how this information might be used to the disadvantage of the registered children (LA, 7/99).

Miscellaneous Child News & Analysis

*In Philadelphia in 1911, an agency called Juvenile Aid Society (JAS) grew out of an organization of young Jewish women who did charity work in the slums. The JAS was formed in
order to help children (especially Jewish ones) who were in distress, and see to their upbringing. It was a voluntary agency, not a government-run one, and at its height took care of 450 children. It assisted struggling parents with cash grants and/or housekeeping help, but its main strategy was placement of children in foster care, so that they would not end up in orphanages or worse. A large number of volunteers and a small number of paid staff inspected the homes into which children were placed, and visited the children monthly. The board members were as active as the other volunteers, making a personal commitment to visit children and assess foster families, and to establish connections with the children and families. Some of the volunteers were the most privileged Jewish women of Philadelphia, and yet attended devotedly to a certain number of children each, sometimes following the same child for decades, attending to the smallest details, and often spending their own money on these details. They could do this with utter freedom and flexibility because there was no bureaucratism in their "agency." Like so many small voluntary agencies, it eventually became part of a huge one, with most of these larger ones being either totally or in large part supported by government funds with all the regulations that attached thereto, and with paid staff doing all the important work. Some of these agencies were simply replaced by government bodies, even though the private voluntary agencies are still better at finding foster families and supervising them than the mammoth and well-funded government bodies that are supposedly more equitable and that allow no such thing as religious philosophy or instruction. (Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine, 20 June 1999; source item from Margaret W. Sager).

*The better part of the 25/10/99 issue of Time was devoted to an in-depth observation of what was supposedly a typical American high school in a heavily Catholic area on the outskirts of St. Louis, and we had to conclude that if this was indeed a typical high school, America was doomed. Several themes struck us particularly: the way so many of these children are essentially abandoned by their parents, even when they come from what are said to be intact families; the lack of manners and civility among this class; the large amount of drinking that goes on, not to mention drugs; the exhibitionistic way that the girls dress both in and out of school; how much promiscuity there is, with half the seniors admitting to being "sexually active" (we also wonder how much sex those have who are not said to be sexually active); the way so many parents approve of this promiscuity, as long as the children are "careful"; how many of the children have mental problems, and how many of them are on shrink drugs--in some classes, 20%; the fantasy world in which so many of these youths live, probably fueled by their minds having been absorbed into the media (as one pupil said "some day I want to be a teacher, but right now I don't want to learn"); conformity in this class of persons that insists on unbridled individualism; the lack of ability tracking, fervently desired by the liberals, now means that the bright children are bored in school while the slow ones get lost; homework not being expected any more from the children; the plight of the teachers in this kind of school, where their authority is being challenged literally daily, where many pupils do not bother to come to class on time, where many students curse them, and where they have very little disciplinary discretion or even recourse; and finally, the high rate of deaths due to driving accidents, often involving alcohol. One reason why the children are so abandoned is that in so many cases, both their parents work, but the abandonment goes far beyond that. A lot of the youths work, but little of their earnings get saved, most of it being spent on cars, clothes, sound equipment, etc. Sometimes, the youths hardly see their parents anymore. Many see shrinks, but thank goodness, one youth quit because she realized that "he made me wallow in myself."

*There is now a new decadent class, the so-called tweens, a term coined for children between ages 8-14. They are beginning to model themselves on their decadent older teenage peers and on decadent pop youth models. Expensive consumption ranks very high in this class. Reading about their patterns of consumption, their rating of models, and their aspirations, as documented in a long Newsweek cover story (18/10/99), can make one sick and despairing.

*Exposed to ever more sex hormones in the environment, and to the sexualization of the culture around them, girls are maturing sexually earlier than ever before.

*As columnist Lance Morrow put it, adolescence has become increasingly disconnected from the adult world and from realistic expectations and aspirations of assuming a responsible place there. Children see less to grow up to, and adults increasingly are regressing to adolescence (Time, 31/5/99).
*According to a poll, teenagers themselves do not think that there is anything wrong with them; 81% think that things are going very well, compared to 72% in 1993 (Time, 10 May 99). This is bad news!

Reflections on the Littleton-Type Phenomenon & Related Kinds of Youth Violence

We have bided our time to comment on the 4/99 high school massacre in Littleton, Colorado, in order to think about it, and observe related and subsequent developments. We plan to run a special feature on the school system (especially its collapse) in a future issue.

*The Columbine High School in Littleton, CO, had actually acquired quite a bit of publicity well prior to the massacre. As far back as in 1991, it had been featured in a "20/20" TV broadcast as providing "death education" to its pupils. One pupil later blamed her attempts at suicide on that course. Some of the manuals that accompany these types of programs tell students how to evade and mislead their parents (LA, 7/99). The fact that the father of one of the murdered pupils employed Dr. Kevorkian's lawyer as his own in suing the school district for negligence is also very revealing.

*What the media reveals but did not tell was that the whole Littleton community and high school seems to be decadent and surrendered to the culture of modernism. From the description of the high school culture itself, one gets a picture of total externality by the students. In part, this was manifested by their attire, and apparently the school administration had been too scared of their wealthy parents to do anything about it. Some of the students on the day of the massacre, though not among the conspirators, were wearing military camouflage clothes. Despite the fact that it was still not exactly hot season, many of the girls wore inexcusably provocative clothing.

Even in his high school ID photo, one of the Littleton killers wore a T-shirt that proclaimed "killer" on it. One student whose mind was possessed by the media, and who had a cell phone, instead of calling the police or his/her parents, called the TV station in order to describe what was going on. The station put the student on live coverage which immediately revealed the location of some of the students who were hiding in the building—information that the gunmen could potentially have picked up and used to hunt them down. At some of the funerals, there was incredibly trite rhetoric and a despicable playing of the Titanic love song and other sentimental and pop type of music and songs, showing that the media is controlling as much the victims as the killers.

The stupidity and shallowness of this is underlined by the fact that the two killers at Columbine High (and their larger gothic gang) had apparently modelled their trench coat "uniforms" on the attire worn by Titanic star Leo DiCaprio in the film "The Basketball Diaries" in which he wore a trench coat in a dream sequence murder spree in a high school. (By the way, Leo announced that he "deplores violence of any kind" (SHJ, 10 May 99).) The killers may also have watched the film "The Matrix" that was a No. 1 box office hit at the very time of the Littleton massacre. In it, the heroes don black trench coats, collect an arsenal of firearms, and perpetrate an elegant slow-motion bloodbath, mowing down about a dozen people.

An article in Books & Culture (9/99) made the point that incessant exposure to a media world has made it very difficult for young people to distinguish between fiction and reality, make-believe and the real thing. In fact, in "The Matrix," there is even a discussion in which the question comes up, "is this real." The answer could have come from Pontius Pilate ("what is truth?"), the relativists, and the constructivists. "What is real? How do you define real?" To this, we would add that the blurring between the media and reality is borne out by the fact that young people actually believe that even the most decadent pop performers are fine people who should be taken as models, and imitated.

For some youths, the massacre became a PR opportunity to write and publicly perform sappy grief songs. The progressive parents of the Littleton shooters obviously believed in "choice" and "self-determination" for their children, because they did not tell them that they could not hang out with other freaky kids, could not buy and wear bizarre clothing, and apparently never thought to look at what their sons were doing with their computers.

"Value clarification" and "self-esteem" programs were big. Altogether, Columbine High was virtually the epitome of the modernistic privileged high school.

*It is our opinion that many anti-depressant shrink drugs elicit violence in some people (an "adverse effect"). One of the Littleton killers was on one of these drugs.
*A good example of lawbreakers having all sorts of rights while their potential victims do not is that juveniles who commit crimes may not be identified to school officials by the police. For instance, one of the Littleton killers had been known to police to have made death threats before he ran amok, but school officials had not been informed (SHA, 2 May 99).

*It was amazing to see Vice President Gore and his spouse speak to the Littleton mourners, considering that only a few years earlier, Mother Teresa had looked both of them straight in the eye (and the presidential couple as well) and prophesied that any society that kills its unborn children must expect to be washed in violence.

*About 2 dozen families of Columbine High have filed notice of intent to sue, blaming the school and police for negligence!! These are parents of the mentality that makes for Littleton phenomena, and who have learned nothing from the tragedy!

*Columbine High School in Littleton has, not surprisingly, become a tourist attraction, drawing people from all over the country who come and gawk at its outsides (Time, 16/8/99).

*One of the depressing things about modernism is that extremely few people invent new atrocities, while everyone else mindlessly copy-cats the inventors. The Littleton killers were original in action, but even they enacted largely what they had seen on the boob tube. Once an atrocity gets big publicity, an endless stream of pitiful copycatters imitate it, perhaps with minor twists of novelty.

*Interestingly, while we are being reassured that killings and violence in the schools have actually declined, we are not being given equal coverage of the fact that threats of school violence and bombings skyrocketed after the Littleton massacre, becoming epidemic and normative. Threats may not take life or limb but they certainly thoroughly disable the educational process. After Littleton, there were schools in the Syracuse area that have had as many as four bomb threats a week for weeks on end. Within a few weeks after Littleton, there were close to 400 threats of bombs or violence to schools in NY State alone. Sometimes, entire school systems in the greater Syracuse area are closed down because the threat does not specify which school is the alleged target. What the national public had not been told is that schools as well as other public facilities also began to receive anthrax threats, over 100 in 1998, including to 4 schools in Indianapolis alone, and at least 2 schools in Syracuse in 1999. It all started with abortion clinics, and anti-abortion groups, getting such threats, and then spread to other facilities (Newsweek, 22/3/99). This pattern resumed in the Fall 99 term. Many people who call in bomb threats are marginal youths, and the sight of a whole school (or whole school system) being evacuated is so "empowering" that it becomes addictive, making the same youths call in threats day after day until they get caught. After many of the Syracuse area schools were evacuated almost every day for weeks because of prank bomb threats, a Syracuse high school student who had to evacuate most of these days finally said, "it's gone a little too far." We take this to signify the normalization of school bombing threats. To the student, this was "a little too much," but we say that if this does not constitute disablement of public education, we hardly know what language is good for anymore.

Another trick is to merely start a rumor of an impending bombing or shooting, thereby getting much the same effect without risking getting disciplined. One such rumor in a Syracuse area school caused 45% of the pupils to stay home one day in 12/99.

*Particularly amusing was the fact that when shortly after the Littleton massacre, the lieutenant governor of New York went to a school near the state's capital to talk with students about school violence, she had to cut short her visit because of a phoned-in bomb threat (AP in SHJ, 13/5/99).

*Another juvenile sport that became epidemic immediately after the Littleton massacre was for youths to buy so-called "bomb bags," a 25-cent toy that seems to be harmless but makes a loud bang when it is exploded in an enclosed space such as a school bus or classroom—which is what happened for days all over the Syracuse school district and its buses after Littleton. The little bags usually come with a military scene on their cover. There is also a stink bomb version thereof.

*It is also revealing that in an Oregon high school, Eagle scout-type pupils had formed a gang that pulled off 20 hold-up's with a gun. On their last heist, they stole a car and held up an Italian
restaurant demanding, "open the fucking drawer!" The way they got caught was that shortly after saying this, one of the boys shot himself accidentally in the scrotum—a most satisfactory bit of news even to a nonviolent person (Time, 26/4/99). However, the bad news is that if the Eagle scouts are now doing this, where is all this going to end? This is also a reminder that the pleasant 15-year-old church-going clean-cut boy who shot up his fellow students in Conyers, Georgia (wounding six but killing none), was also a Boy Scout. As everybody pointed out afterwards, "he aimed low," and maybe that is the difference between Boy Scouts and others going on shooting rampages.

*The terror of the Columbine High massacre continues to function like a magnet for other juvenile kooks who keep calling in threats to Columbine, forcing it to evacuate repeatedly since it opened again in Fall 99. One such kook (who turned out to be a Boy Scout) threatened to "finish the job." Another juvenile kook e-mailed a threat all the way from Florida. We have the feeling that modernism has additional drama in store for Columbine High School.

*A gang of about a dozen pupils who plotted a massacre at a Cleveland high school had been wearing clown make-up. A parent described them as "well-mannered kids who listen to rock and play video games" (Time, 8 Nov. 99). Almost sounds like Scouts!

*One of the killer boys in Jonesboro, Arkansas, now age 15, who killed five people in 3/98 (and who may also have inspired the Littleton killers), was complaining about his supposed "life sentence" that he will not be able to have sex with a girl for at least 7 years (which is when he will be set free at age 21), and that he felt lonely because, after all, "I lost friends too" (Time, 16/8/99). It reminds us of the man who murdered both his parents and then threw himself at the mercy of the court with the argument that he was an orphan. However, because what counts with people these days is celebrity status regardless for what reason, we predict that he will be able to have sex with a different woman every day until his misdeed is forgotten.

*We detect three major themes in the media coverage of the Littleton-type school violence.
   1. Genetics plays a major role in making children violent, a corollary of this message being that parents should not be blamed. One thing that this assertion does not explain is why all these genetic effects are exploding now and were not on the scene previously.
   2. The problem can be fixed at least in part by what we call end-point measures, such as metal screening devices and armed guards in schools.
   3. The majority of Americans appear to think that it was the government that should do something about this problem, and is in a position to do so successfully.

*The inability of modernistic people to understand their own modernistic culture was amazingly underlined when in 12/99, a teenager went on a shooting spree in a high school in the Netherlands, wounding 5, and much of the country said "but things like these only happen in America. It can't be happening here" (e.g., AP in SPS, 8 Dec. 99). These are the same people who are world leaders in euthanasia! This happened after an editorial in the Syracuse Herald-Journal (22/4/99) headlined, "Littleton’s Horror: It could only happen in US," attributing the event to easy access to guns. The Netherlands has a very strict gun law!

*With copy-cat or at least Littleton-inspired school violence occurring in 30 US states, and in many of these in multiple locations, within a matter of days after the Littleton massacre, President Clinton's bright idea was to combat these developments with more laws and more money, including money for emergency teams "to help communities respond when tragedy strikes" (SHA, 25/4/99). He also began to urge school boards to apply for federal grants that would put armed police officers into schools.

*One of the many explanations of what made the Littleton shooters into cold-blooded killers is that it was not the pop culture, but that they were "plain crazy," which of course is merely another strategy for exonerating the pop culture (e.g., Newsweek, 26/7/99).

*Tipper, the wife of Vice President Gore, speculated that one reason one of the young boys turned into a killer was that he might have quit taking his prescribed anti-depressant (Time, 10 May
As mentioned, we believe that it was the other way around. At any rate, shrinking children is a major solution.

*One columnist said that the Littleton massacre shows that even good families can produce bad children, demonstrated by the fact that all four parents of the two killers were holding full-time jobs (Salter column, in SHJ, 4 May 99). The press being liberal, the irony of children of full-time working parents going postal escaped her.

*After the Littleton massacre, the town was flooded with shrinks who wanted to shrink everybody for grief, but to their great disappointment they discovered that many youths and adults preferred to talk to clergy instead (NC Register, 23/5/99). Even schools across the nation where no killings had taken place imported armies of "counselors," rather than teaching virtues and morals.

*One thing that psychologists (among others) did after the Littleton massacre was to go all over the area offering to give talks or conversations about such violence, but we have serious doubts whether all of this PPP activity would prevent even one such incident. Of course, the shrinks pretended that it would. These are the same people who call on other people who do other things to address problems to prove the validity of their approaches with, or from, research!

*Shrink types are certainly no help in all of this because they go looking for end-point mental states rather than societal root causes. One criminologist went so far as to say that violent music and movies cannot be blamed because, ultimately, "people are responsible," which at least is a step forward in not junking the construct of personal responsibility as the liberal left usually does.

*One columnist, writing in the wake of the Littleton massacre, asserted earnestly that youth violence could be stopped via "attitude change" (SHA, 12 Sept. 99). Value changes? Perish the thought!

*Louisiana passed a law requiring public school children to address teachers as Mr., Mrs., Ms., Ma'am or Sir (Time, 19/7/99). While this is a peculiar way to shape attitudes, it is the kind of thing liberal educators at schools like Columbine High would not dare require without a law, or probably even consider desirable.

*While running amok is just about the worst school problem, it is certainly not the most common, which at least in New York State is foulmouthedness by the pupils; teachers report it to be the single most common disruptive classroom behavior. Normatively, profane students, who seem to have more rights than well-behaved ones, are also disrespectful of teachers and adults, to say nothing of fellow students who have not much in the way of rights in this regard. However, teachers have very little recourse in respect to discipline, which is one reason they burn out so much. Of course, once a student graduates, having learned that one can get away with profanity, this behavior will not stop overnight but will be carried into the workplace--where there is vastly more discretion to get rid of someone who is foulmouthed or even just plain mouthy. Of course, many of the youths are merely mouthing what they hear from their kind of entertainment media, such as one hears played by their car audio systems from blocks away (SPS, 23/4/99).

*From a 10 May 99 article in Newsweek, we learned for the first time that proper child-rearing has suddenly become "prevention," apparently in response to children running murderously amok, as in Littleton. Also, more and more parents seem to feel entitled to have other people straighten out their ill-reared children (Newsweek, 10 May 99).

*In response to the Littleton massacre, many people have been claiming that it is genetic make-up that inclines people toward violence, and have therefore said that parents should not be blamed for the genetic factors that make their children violent (29/4/99, evening news).

*One news commentator said that the nature of violence had changed, rather than that society had changed to the degree that it now produces people who commit the kind of violence that an earlier society had not produced.
*An avalanche of laws are being proposed or passed to keep children from blowing up their
schools, and to keep other children from disabling the schools by threatening to do so. This includes
things such as taking away the children's driving licenses, imprisoning them, fining them, refining
the false bomb threat laws to include biological and chemical agents, and expanding the applicability
of these laws to school buses, playgrounds, athletic fields, parking lots, etc., etc. Because apparently
no one ever thought that anybody would ever threaten to blow up a school, such threats were
apparently not illegal in at least many states, and so states began to make laws declaring such threats,
or planting phony bombs on school property, illegal—and everybody started jumping up and down
with satisfaction that something was being done about the problem. In many schools, pupils are no
longer allowed to bring in bags, such as they used to carry their books in. Some schools ban certain
types of coats and hats either because they might conceal weapons or signal a belligerent attitude.
Students are also required to wear ID badges, and surveillance and video cameras may be anywhere.
Some of the latter are real, others are phony, and no one can be sure which is which. One school
in Chicago had 500 video cameras installed for $1 million. At the doors there may be metal
detectors. Students no longer merely have fire drills but "armed intruder drills" and "lock-down
situations." Local SWAT teams may practice in the schools during evening hours and on weekends.
Classrooms are now likely to have panic buttons, and ever more security officers, possibly armed,
are being hired. Security officers may also occasionally frisk students with hand-held metal detectors.
Some police departments have installed school hot lines, but found that anonymous callers would call
in intentionally malicious reports on students rather than productive tips. Some schools are now
installing literally scores of TV monitors, which also means that somebody has to monitor the
monitors. Scores of metal detectors were purchased by one high school. Spaces within schools are
increasingly being locked, and an increasing number of emergency exits are installed so that everyone
can rapidly exit the building during an emergency. One school that for $250,000 installed new door
locks, emergency exits, lots of metal detectors, etc., enunciated a new goal for American education:
for each student "to be able to leave the school alive each day"! All of this would have been literally
inconceivable only a short time ago, but with deviancy being normalized, this will all soon be taken
for granted, and any collapse of the school system or of society will be denied. All these measures
are what we call end-point responses that fail to address underlying problems and causes.

*In the Fall 99 after Littleton, high school students might come back to school and encounter
signs such as "Welcome to Allen High School. Upon entering these premises all carry-in items are
subject to search." Note that the "Welcome" message under these circumstances is taken straight out
of the PR media culture. When these people go to hell, they will find a "welcome" sign there, music
around the clock in every room, "have a good day" and happy face signs everywhere, there will be
sulfurous hugging demons, and Demon Joygerm telling bitter jokes about God.

*Upon reopening in Fall of '99, Columbine High School installed a "safe room," for students
"overcome by emotion." We suspect that the "safe room" is the vestibule to the counselor's office,
which in turn is the vestibule of the shrink's office, entry into which results in being put on shrink
dope.

*Altogether, school violence has been a blessing for several economic sectors: security
personnel, security devices, and shrinkery. The shrink market in relation to children deemed
potentially troubled and potentially troubling is virtually inexhaustible. The existence of this new
"target sector" may even give a bit of relief to all the adults being declared depressed.

*One thing that is sadly amusing about the epidemic of actual or threatening school violence that
erupted after the Littleton massacre is the way that the liberal media and the conservative National
Rifle Association have been blaming each other. In our opinion, the media are vastly more
responsible for the collapse of morality that leads to such societal collapse than the NRA. However,
while most of the above futile measures have come from the left, the right has its own peculiar
worthless and misleading delusions, such as that printing out millions of copies of the Ten
Commandments and hanging them in school rooms and school hallways would fix things (Time, 5
July 99).

*One interesting fallout of the recent wave of killer children running amok is that even some
liberals are starting to squirm about things such as violence in the media, though they desperately try
to draw attention away from that by stirring up a fire storm of publicity about gun control, as if it did not take minds set on killing rather than disembodied guns. One liberal columnist called for "rational" thinking on the matter along the above lines, i.e., that "our nation's creativity must be protected" (referring to entertainment), and that adding up the number of incidences of violence on TV "is misleading" (Newsweek, 9 Aug. 99).

*Since the Littleton massacre, film critic Michael Medved has received some publicity recently for his 8 years of protests against the vulgarization of film, its growing decadence, and its harmful influence on the young. (This was 8 years before the Littleton massacre.) He notes that the more depraved a film is, the more glowing critical reviews it receives, and that there is a serious inconsistency when the film industry says on the one hand that exposure to sex and violence in film does not encourage youth to engage in these, yet on the other hand it charges advertisers thousands and even millions of dollars to feature their product in a film on the premise that viewers will then go out and purchase that product.

He also says that the glib response by so many in the media, "if you don't like what you see, then turn it off or don't go," is very hard to enact when the media have so infiltrated modern life that it is impossible to go anywhere without being assaulted by modern music (with its foul language), as by sound systems in public places or people's portable radios or car radios, and sexually provocative advertisements, such as billboards.

*While mass shootings in schools grab headlines, the fact is that high schools are now unsafe and scary places for mundane reasons. Almost 100% of children say that they have been seriously threatened by bullies. This has been accepted as the norm, in a "normalization of deviance" phenomenon (Newsweek, 10 May 99).

*We heard of one instance where a day care center recruited police accompaniment for an outing of about 10 toddlers with two teenage staff members.

*A very common phenomenon is that when a youth gets into trouble, goes on a violent rampage, and possibly even dies as a result, the early news reports commonly tell us what a wonderful kid it was. Often the truth only dribbles out later about all the trouble that the child had been in before. A good example is the news about a teenage girl who gave birth to a baby in the family's basement, put the baby in a plastic bag and into another room where it died. The news described the girl as a typical teenager who had never been in trouble before, but by-and-by it materialized that she had been pregnant two years earlier but her parents had arranged an abortion for her, that she later had told her friends that she would never have a child that would interfere with her life, that during her second pregnancy she had been on marijuana and cocaine, and that the family was outraged when the judge sentenced her to eight years in prison. We hear such stories as when a carful of teenagers die while joy riding around at 3 a.m., or when a teenage who should have been home gets hit by a car at 2 a.m. on a downtown street corner, when a teenager is assassinated in a drive-by shooting, and on and on. The parents of youth malefactors are also often described at first as "ordinary" and good parents, which does not always hold up on closer examination.

*One of the people who bears much culpability for decadence in our high schools was James Conant, who in the 1950s and 1960s promised the nation that if it only consolidated its high schools to make them bigger, everything about them would be better. The Littleton High School had 1,800 students. The small old-time local high schools sometimes had as few as a few dozen students, may not have had the swimming pools and the extensive libraries and many other amenities, but the sorts of things that now happen in big schools would have been extremely unlikely to have happened there--not to mention that the graduates of the small schools probably even learned more than youths do now in large public high schools. This part of our educational history seems to be virtually unknown to people, and has been silenced away by the educational establishment.

After systematically having gotten rid of smaller high schools for almost 40 years, some experts have begun to wonder whether most high schools are simply too large, exemplifying what we call the revolving door craze of always doing the opposite of what went before (Newsweek, 10 May 99). It is also telling that a high school with as many as 500 pupils is now interpreted to be small. Making big high schools smaller, or breaking them into subunits, is now one of the new revolving door crazes. Now, educators tell us that "things are better in smaller environments--kids are made
to feel they fit in" (Time, 31/5/99). Paradoxically, fewer children in larger high schools are involved in extracurricular activities than in smaller ones (Newsweek, 10 May 99).

While we are opposed to violence of any kind, our objection is based on religious grounds, and not on claims to empirical evidence. Yet many people who had no religious grounds for opposing violence have been teaching for decades that it is—so to speak—unscientific to spank children (as exemplified in the book by Professor Mary Straus, Beating The Devil Out Of Them), although there appears to be no scientific evidence that would hold up to rigorous scrutiny that would suggest that spanking children occasionally inclines them to become violent in turn. We, therefore, wished that others who make claims on supra-empirical religious rationales would confess that they are doing so, and perhaps would even tell us why their religion dictates such a belief. Ironically, the very parties who are opposed to parental spanking tend to vigorously defend obscenity and violence in the media, and also claim that it does not dispose children to violence.

In the virtually media-consuming publicity about the 4/99 Littleton school massacre in Colorado, one hardly ever hears the real issues addressed, namely, that our society has been working very hard to create conditions and values that its citizens like, but that cannot support a viable and functional society. Of course, one reason the media will not point attention to this is because it is controlled almost entirely by the liberal left, and these are the very people who have been bringing this situation about. Thus, it is extremely painful that even in the face of the most blatant kind of evidence, we are being given end-point "solutions" such as banning handguns, more security in the schools, and shrinkish early identification of potentially violent children to whom, we are then told, "intensive services" need to be given.

Let's face it, the culture of modernism has had it! Any culture that embraces what we have called the values and lifestyles of modernism is doomed. And that which it would take to reverse this trend, extremely few people are willing to do. The immediate and intermediate term costs would simply be too high.

Altogether, the Littleton phenomenon and its aftermath is an excellent opportunity to test one's capacity to read the signs of one's times, which TIPS challenges its readers to do. But let us be clear that most people will never read the signs of their times.

Apparently oblivious to what is going on (hence detached from reality, hence insane), a parent advice column in a 12/99 Syracuse paper had an 8-inch long heading: "Trust Teens to Make Own Decisions."

Religion in Society

A 1999 book, The Post-Christian Mind, looks at contemporary modernism and pronounces it "not a world of structures but a world of fluidity....The universal language of reason and morality gives place to a wholly relativistic vocabulary of emotive predilections. ...Virtues and vices give place to a strange amalgam of subjective concepts, such as self-esteem and self-realization....On all sides people are prating about discovering their 'identity,' as though one could help having one. A figure famous in the eyes of the media's public will exclaim, 'I found out who I really am!' Most of us acquire this knowledge before the nursery school age...and incidentally, the Christian call to lose oneself stands at the very opposite pole of experience to these meaningless assertions." However, the book does not seem to address the fact that most of modern Christianity is not Christianity at all but modernism behind a Christian facade.

According to at least certain studies, Americans are becoming less rational and more superstitious, hand-in-hand with becoming less informed, despite being massively bombarded by informational media. In 1976, only 17% believed in astrology, while now 37% say they do. More than 50% believe that some people can talk to the dead, which very few believed in 1976. Faith in fortune-telling has almost tripled (SHJ, 19/11/99). The Smithsonian (4/99) ran a long article on the contemporary superstitions. As we keep pointing out, in times of societal stress, superstitions explode. People are cracking!

Modern humans, having largely cut themselves off from traditional formal churches, are turning increasingly towards "spirituality without churches," and sometimes even without identifiable
religions. This is particularly marked in Europe where there have been dramatic increases in indices of religiosity but declines in indices of church membership and participation, and particularly so in the former socialist countries. For instance, almost a third of East German atheists believe in religious miracles, which raises the question just who the god is who they believe can perform these miracles, by what means, and why much of this "revival" seems to be tied in with New Age religiosity, and with new sects which reflect modernistic mentation (SHJ, 15/6/99).

*A woman with the real last name Virtue, who has a PhD and who looks a bit odd in her PR picture, goes around the US giving angel workshops which include medium readings at which angels will answer personal questions. She also offers "powerful angel therapy meditation to relieve fears and blocks." Apparently she has been on scores of national and lesser TV shows (Source material from Joe Osburn).

*According to some critics, the recent fascination with angels is just about on the same level of depth and sophistication as the parallel fascination with witchcraft, and a large number of recent TV shows have interpreted witchery positively as some kind of pantheistic nature religion, usually a feminist one (B&C, 3/99).

*A radio show broadcast nationally in the US five hours every night starting at 1 am on the east coast deals with the paranormal, and attracts 9 million listeners a week, some of whom even stay up or get up to listen to it (Time, 9 Aug. 99).

*Time (23/11/98) pointed out that instead of believing in fairies as formerly, people now believe in "close encounters of the third kind" (i.e., aliens, etc.), but such believers are largely oblivious to the connection. Among Americans, 30% (and mostly educated and intelligent ones) believe in aliens (Newsweek, 25/5/98). Time (1 Feb. 99) featured an Internet wiz worth $2 billion who has had encounters with aliens.

*Courses on witchcraft, magic and extraterrestrial life are subjects in current college courses. Also popular have become "porn studies," in which students get credit for watching porn movies, reading pornography, attending lectures from porn stars, and even producing their own pornography. Much of these developments and others like it are probably due to constructionism according to which the professoriat does not believe that anything can truly be known, and therefore nothing really matters (USN&WR, 30/8/99; source item from Joe Osburn).

*Apparently, there is more and more witchcraft in the US armed forces from the enlisted ranks up to the rank of colonel, and with ceremonies in which the worshippers strip naked to worship a horned god, and in which long daggers play a ceremonial role (Time, 5 July 99). Peculiar is that even though enlisted personnel and officers are not supposed to "fraternize," they can engage in these "worship" activities together in the nude!

*For some reason, fortune-telling has long been an almost 100% female craft. For some peculiar logic, it is illegal in many states unless it is for entertainment, while the horoscopes in the newspapers are legal, presumably because they are entertaining (Time, 22/2/99). Also, some of the hocus-pocus of fortune-tellers (e.g., waving hands around one's body) is essentially no different than "therapeutic touch" (working with nonexisting "energy fields") and "eye movement desensitization therapy" practiced by many legitimate health and mental practitioners, including many professors and deans in US schools of nursing.

*Caroline Myss is one of innumerable mystic, cult, and new age gurus, in her case focussing on healing. She has a large following of mostly women (recruited in part by books and tapes) and fills large auditoriums. Again, some academics endorse her (Anchorage Daily News, 23/2/99).

*Strangely enough, the film "The Exorcist" opened the day after Christmas 1973. At least in its early years, there were almost always at least some people during theater showings who got sick or fainted. Many viewers began to have anxiety attacks afterwards. Many people believed that either they or someone they knew was possessed, precipitating an avalanche of demands on priests for exorcism. The film contributed to many people even beginning to lose their grip on reality, and
some were put into a shrink place. All these things made the film ever more popular (CH, 11/98). Maybe the film was a big contributor to people turning to the paranormal.

*Some computer gurus, such as one with the name Bill Joy (who foresaw and popularized the Internet culture), have been described as having become the equivalent of spiritual leaders in that subculture. Newsweek (31/5/99) called him “a kind of Dalai Lama of the lab.”

*Computer guru Bill Gates said that "sitting at your PC, you can do whatever you want," which implies that computers make one divine and omnipotent (Newsweek, 31/5/99). We keep pointing out the irony of a computerized world (and computer-controlled and computer-worshipping people) turning in such large numbers to superstitions.

*It is amazing that a form of numerology superstition, which claims to have found that God inserted into the Jewish Bible a secret code full of prophetic messages which can only be decoded by computer, would have scrambled the minds of millions of people, including believers and non-believers, with some people being so impressed that they have converted, refocused their research, changed disciplines, and so on. The underlying assumption is that God was looking forward to the invention of the computer and played computer games with holy writ (FT, 12/98).

*Most people are not aware that popular secular video games these days are not only extremely violent but also heavily cult-based (NCR, 4 July 99). Considering that young people are the primary market, one should not be surprised to see more and more youths become desensitized to cultism, and grow up into adults whose spirituality will take the form of peculiar and strange cults.

*A Texas high school student who was supposed to "solemnize" the school’s football games with a short message was told that if she snuck prayer into the message, she would be disciplined the same as if she had cursed, and would be expelled. However, the interesting thing is that cursing is normative in US schools, and little happens to those who do it (NC Register, 5 Sept. 99). Apparently, cursing is less offensive to the belief systems of students and others than prayer is, and less a violation of their rights. Actually, "prayer" at school graduation ceremonies is legal as long as no god or higher power is mentioned.

*In public housing projects, Nation of Islam meetings are legal, but Bible study is not (Newsweek, 21/12/98).

*Nike marketed a shoe with the word "Air" in squiggly lines. Muslims started claiming that it resembled the Arabic word for Allah. Threatened by a world-wide boycott by hundreds of millions of people, Nike repentantly recalled 38,000 pairs, and funded several playgrounds for Muslim communities (apparently all in the US) in reparation (AP in SHJ, 23/11/98). It is difficult to imagine similar measures being taken for offending politically incorrect beliefs.

*Now that Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa are competing with each other in December, some people have begun to speak of "the winter holiday season" rather than the Christmas season, which is probably a good thing for much discourse since Christmas has little genuine religious meaning left. Even to a large proportion of Christians, it is largely a commercial and social context.

*Nuns are hot in Madison Avenue ads. Maybe this is trying to ride the angels craze. In short succession, nuns (often phony or whimsical ones) were featured in ads for jeans, stereos, fried chicken, a store chain, and the NFL (Time, 28/6/99). Expect no repentance or reparations!

*Traditionally, meditation had always been linked to religious belief and practice, but it was westerners who, since mostly the 1960s, divorced meditation from morality which it traditionally was meant to support.

*Another new, glamorous, good-looking, youngish-looking woman religious guru who started as a California bake shop waitress (Suze Orman) has begun to preach a get rich new-age gospel (Newsweek, 26/10/98).
Recently, the Dalai Lama has come out in strongest terms condemning abortion as a sin of violence, equally opposing contraception, euthanasia and homosexual acts, upon which he was quickly criticized by homosexual American Buddhists (Newsweek, 16/8/99). He is probably history now for all the people who have rhapsodized about Eastern religions and cultic practices.

Probably any definition of what a "family" is either is outright religious, or is derived from a religion, though this is rarely spelled out out.

We were startled to note that Christian leaders no longer speak of humans having free will, but as having "choice." This also changes one's ideas about the nature of sin. Adam and Eve made "bad choices."

More and more Bibles are being produced aimed at particular segmentized population sectors, such as mothers, fathers, teenagers, African-Americans, etc. One of these is specifically for women that advises them to seek help from civil authorities if their husbands abuse them (BR, 4/99).

Kentucky has enacted a law permitting clergy to carry concealed weapons (CW, 6/98).

The new Canadian Supreme Court is virtually 100% PC, and the lower courts are following suit. A 6/98 court ruling in Canada has been interpreted to mean that protesting persecution of non-Moslems in Islamic nations, and preaching a different religion before Moslems, is de facto a "hate crime" (LA, 11/98).

The Enlightenment metaphor of the human-as-machine just refuses to die. In mid-1998, the Labour Party in Britain sent a contract to its newly elected members of parliament which it called a "toolbox" for their relations with their constituents, and in which it referred to the MPs themselves as "toolboxes" (The Guardian, 15 July 98, p. 20).

Among run-of-the-mill US scientists, 40% still believe in God and an after-life, but among the elite of American scientists, hardly any do any more. Among biologists, 95% are atheists or agnostics. One sociologist observed that in academia, believers keep their mouths shut because the non-believers are intensely discriminating against believers, including discriminating against them in academic advancement (SHA, 19/9/99).

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

A Chinese man, Li Hongzhi, who lives in safety in New York but cannot speak English, invented a new religion in which the mystical energy called Qi or Chi and aliens who have been on earth since around 1900 play a big role. Surprisingly, he quickly acquired millions of followers. While he took refuge in New York, he whipped up his followers in China to protest against the regime, which brought down harsh reprisals. Reportedly, and virtually overnight, there may be more of his followers in China than in the Communist party. Also amazingly politically correct is that Houston's mayor even proclaimed a Li Hongzhi Day in 1996, though it certainly would have been illegal to declare something like a Jesus Christ Day or even a Rabbi Shneerson Day (Time, 5/99 & 9 Aug 99). What really scared the Chinese government was the discovery that the guru had followers among top Communist party officials. We would say that all this means that after 50 years of Marxist rule, the Chinese are cracking.

Finally facing up to the fact that human beings will not live without some kind of religion, a number of works have come out that are beginning to explain human religiosity in terms of evolution, i.e., a sense of the religious is some kind of adaptive trait laid down in the genes because presumably, it helped people to be pro-social and was good for the collectivity.
Until 1993, the Czechoslovak Academy of Science had an Institute of Scientific Atheism. When it was shut down, many of its faculty became faculty members in economics and management (Science, 12 March 99), evidencing their opportunism, and the phoniness of their previous work. Would you believe their new economic "findings"?

Ideology (de facto religion) often shows up in the disguise of scientific scholarliness. For instance, we have recently seen the production of many scholarly works—particularly books—that try to emphasize how destructive and maladaptive close and intimate human relationships are. Of course, this is happening in a context in which these very scholars often have come from divorced parents, have celebrated sexual promiscuity, do not believe that marriage should be viewed as sacred, and are otherwise decommunitized.

A John B. Shea wrote some cantos modelled on Dante's Divine Comedy (Fidelity, 11/96). Below, we bring an excerpt relevant to our topic.

A child's voice then was heard:
"Where did I come from and when
I am to die, where will I go?"
I answered so
"The people do not dare to ask
Or do not want to know.
To wisdom and to candor both averse,
Their egos fill the universe
And gazing in their mirrors, they think their image God

The values of modernism tend to undermine all constructive social institutions. Educated modernists especially also are often hostile to religion, but a 1 June 98 article in Newsweek said that in the African-American communities, "the Black church is the last institution left standing."

Religion in Human Services

Superstition in society will, of course, spill over into superstition in human services, of which we already gave some examples in the previous section. Yet another example of superstitions sprouting in human services is a craze in some Western countries to rearrange nursing home rooms, and sometimes other human service spaces, according to the Chinese feng shui principles, which are alleged to minimize bad vibes and maximize good ones (Older Persons Advocacy Newsletter, 1999; source item from Anne Cross).

Some people have been using the term "esoteria" for the strivings of many people these days to practice some kind of spirituality outside of traditional channels or institutions. Indeed, so much esoteria literature has been published in recent years that it has become no longer overseeable, though one analyst believes to have found three very common themes: belief in spiritual energies, reincarnation, and some kind of "holism" that interprets the human being as a unity of spirit, mind and body, which seems to be the most redeeming feature of these beliefs, if one dare use the word "redeeming" here, insofar as that is the one thing that modern medicine has pretty much thrown out.

All of this has great implications to human impairment and human services. For instance, reincarnation beliefs have a great deal to say about the meaning of bodily or mental impairment, including that it could either have been a choice by the affected person, perhaps in a previous life, for a greater spiritual perfection, or a punishment for offenses in an earlier existence. The reincarnation beliefs tend to be tied in with eastern practices such as breathing disciplines, movements and mental imaging which can all have positive effects. The belief in spiritual energy has of course swept human services, and particularly the nursing profession, as manifested in such crazes as "massage at a distance." Of course, with these beliefs go innumerable workshops and courses.

A nun (a real one, not one in an ad) associated with a hospital in NY State teaches "healing touch therapy," a religious version of "therapeutic touch." Some people have syncretized it with Reiki, a Tibetan healing art. At least one Catholic priest further syncretized all this into a healing Mass. Demand for this keeps increasing as of 6/99 (CS, 24/6/99).
*"Empowerment" has also become a major theme on the religious circuit, with some male and female religious gurus making it one of their major themes (Newsweek, 3 May 99). This is a construct on the borderline between general religion and religion brought into human service, i.e., empowerment as a service.

*In the previous section we mentioned the hidden religions behind irrational ideological warfare by scholars against the facts of human nature and empirical findings. Another such example relevant here has been the assault in recent years on the construct of unconsciousness. Apparently, modernists simply do not want to admit such a profound imperfection in the human being as is implied by the existence of any extensive unconscious mind content and processes. Thus, many scholars have begun to deny the operation of mental unconsciousness despite an overwhelming body of empirical evidence to the contrary. The intellectual head-standing that is required to do so can sometimes be very amusing.

*One of the really big superstitions in human services these days is the recovered memory craze--the very opposite of the "there is no unconsciousness" craze. We will eventually report on it at length in another TIPS issue. However, there has also been a craze among a few psychiatrists (even professors of psychiatry) that people can recover memories of previous lives.

*We had reported before that Alcoholics Anonymous (and its offsprings) got its 12 principles from Cardinal John Henry Newman of England who was one of the prominent figures of the Oxford Movement. However, we were not sure how the transfer took place. We since learned that Bill Wilson, who founded the AA, had attended meetings of the Oxford Group, a Protestant body founded in Britain that had US chapters. Thus, the widely current contemporary idea that only a person who has been through a particular problem can help others with the same problem (eventually giving rise to such esoteric self-help groups as "Mothers of Murdered Teenagers") was born on 10 June 1935, which marked the birth of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement and its basic tenet that "only an alcoholic can help another alcoholic."

*One of the ways in which handicapped people have tended to be isolated is that--according to surveys in the past--they have consistently had much lower church attendance rates than non-handicapped people. The good news is that this gap is being rapidly narrowed, but the bad news is that this is happening not because more handicapped people attend church, but because fewer non-handicapped people do. This is certainly one way to achieve equality.

*There now exists a Journal of Religious Gerontology. We are waiting for the Journal of Irreligious Gerontology.

*There is a theophostic counseling/psychotherapy that claims direct divine revelation which some critics believe is a direct revelation of Satan (PHA Letter, 11/99).

*We were amazed to learn that there is such a thing in Syracuse as Franciscan Management Services--and not only that, but that it is a for-profit health services agency. How such an entity can invoke the name of St. Francis is utterly beyond us, and we can only wonder what St. Francis is doing about it.

*A 1999 workshop, sponsored by a Christian service agency, was entitled "Marketing Your Ministry." It was taught by a former ad executive, and promised to teach how ministry and marketing were related.

*We ran across a clever adaptation of the Biblical "beatitudes" (from Dialogues on Disabilities, Fall 99) for servers.

Blessed am I who clean up BM for I will be cleaned.
Blessed am I who attend IEP meetings for I will be educated.
Blessed am I who watch for pressure sores for I will be watched over.
Blessed am I who deal with insurance companies for I will be reassured.
Blessed am I who ticket cars parked in handicap spaces for I will have access.
Blessed am I who lift a heavy load for I will be lifted.
Y2K and/or The End of Times

*As of mid-1999, there were almost 23,000 web sites that would come up if one entered the search term "end time" (NC Register, 24/10/99).

*Another irony is that a relatively small number of upper-class families in Mexico who are on the internet were swept by internet-propagated rumors in mid-1999 that the end of the world was near, and that they had to do certain things to be safe, including storing up holy water (NC Register, 29/8/99).

*Someone has called the Y2K anxiety the secular thinker’s apocalypse.

*One reason why there was a Y2K problem is that the US Pentagon actually mandated in the 1960s that the year field on all of its Cobol (computer) language be restricted to two digits (I&T, Winter 2000).

*Quick, read this before the end of the year. It is very amusing to learn that the American Bankers Association has distributed 4-page formula sermons which bankers are supposed to transmit to their priests, ministers, rabbis, etc., that would teach that there is nothing to worry about the Y2K problem, including that there will be no problems with bank accounts (NC Register, 5 Sept. 99).

*The cost of fixing the Y2K problem is so high that for the same amount of money, one could have given free computers to citizens of scores of nations.

*The way people cannot possibly see any profound problems with the computerization of the world because they can see only the advantages is very remindful of the history of DDT. During WWII, and shortly after, DDT was really a large-scale lifesaver, and yet right from the first, its toxic effects, both its negative impact on humans and on the environment and wild life, already manifested themselves but were largely ignored. The pesticide was also promoted with typical technology hype, such as "miracle" talk (similar to the promises that were made for nuclear energy), and with promises that certain pests and certain diseases, such as malaria, would be permanently eradicated. What saved the world from DDT was Rachael Carson’s 1963 book Silent Spring, shortly after which most uses of DDT, at least in the developed world, were banned. However, its residues linger to this day, and DDT is still widely used in the Third World. In time, it also became apparent that no pests were eradicated, and that to the contrary, they were becoming resistant to DDT. Among other things, birds of the eagle species were almost driven to extinction. Nor was there much learning in respect to other pesticides so that today, 67,000,000 wells in the US are pesticide-contaminated (I&I, Winter 2000).

Another analogy is the way so many people at first approved of Mussolini because "he made the trains run on time," and of Hitler because "he got rid of unemployment." People’s illogic is absolutely phenomenal. They never learn (a) that evil always comes with the lure of benefits, or (b) that one cannot judge any development or scheme only by its apparent benefits.

Social Advocacy

The Need for Good Social Advocacy

*Prior to the advent of big institutions in the US, and for some time still during the institutional era, it was quite common for citizens to be appointed guardians for "persons of unsound mind." Similarly, with the then still high death rates among adults, many so-called "minor heirs" were put under such guardianship. However, such guardians had to post bond which they would forfeit if they did not carry out their guardianship duties properly, which they had to swear in court to do conscientiously. Often, more than one person would be appointed guardian of a ward, in a co-guardianship arrangement. Surprisingly little seems to be known about this historical practice, though in county courthouses around the US, one will find in the archives entire books recording nothing but such guardianship arrangements. One can surmise that guardians were often able to prevent institutionalization of their insane or retarded wards by having the power to make certain arrangements in their lives, while nowadays, such persons may be left to their own "self-
determination” and end up with terrible consequences, including imprisonment and death. Conducting research on these old guardianship books would seem to be very meritorious, not to mention that it could generate publications and dissertations.

*At Christmas 1993, a handicapped man in Hamburg, Germany, died in front of his TV set. Only 5 years later was his skeleton discovered, with the TV Guide still on his lap, and the lights on his Christmas tree still flashing. The only reason he was found at all even then was that the money in his bank account that automatically paid his rent had run out, and the landlord came to see what had happened (Age, 21/11/98; source item from John Armstrong).

*The term "physical pressure" had been invented in Israel as a euphemism for torture. It certainly has taken the Israeli Supreme Court a terribly long time to rule, in 9/99, that its security forces could not use certain types of torture, which had apparently become almost normative. According to one estimate, 85% of Palestinians arrested in security cases had been subjected to torture, resulting in a steady stream of deaths. Rather than the Israeli nation being grateful for this ruling, it has set off a firestorm of indignation. Also, there were immediate moves in parliament to override the court ruling. However, the Supreme Court sanctioned continued use of torture in cases of what is called "ticking time bomb" scenarios in 9/99. There is a lesson here: torture of Jews by Nazis is bad; torture of Arabs by Jews is good.

*Advocacy is urgently needed against the sex trade, and especially with and in poor Third World countries. In S.E. Asia, girls known to have HIV may have sex with 30 men a day. In Cambodia alone, there were said to be 20,000 under-age prostitutes, and for a mere $200-700, one could buy oneself a girl, and get away with killing her once one was through with her. Sex tours are being advertised on the Internet.

The good news is that about 100 German men on sex tours to the sex paradise of Southeast Asia dropped dead after taking Viagra there, if late 1999 reports are to be believed (Newsweek, 29/11/99).

**Social Advocacy Forms**

*Amazingly, the largest protection and advocacy offices in the US are not those operated by the various states under the federal protection and advocacy legislation, but those operated by courts, mostly on behalf of children and mentally impaired elders. For instance, Cook County, Illinois, in which Chicago is located, has an Office of the Public Guardian that has a staff of over 250 (many of them lawyers and social workers) that functions as guardian of about 400 adults (some of them elderly and impaired) and a large number of children, and as an advocate of mentally or physically incapacitated adults, and abused, neglected or abandoned children. This includes about 500 child wards in contested custody and visitation cases, for a total of more than 31,000 children. More than 15,000 of these are in state custody. The office has also initiated both state and federal legislation, much like an ombudsman’s office is expected to do in Scandinavia (information received from that office in 11/98).

*In 1992, an Advocate for Service Quality was appointed by the government of British Columbia in the Ministry for Children and Families. The provision appears to be a form of what we call "in-house advocacy," not being entirely independent but having more freedom of scope than others in that the advocate is appointed to a 5-year term and reports directly to the minister.

*Politicians in Australia have been challenged to find out more about the needs of handicapped people by each of them "adopting" one of them, which, laudably, a number of them have done. This has been called the "politician adoption scheme," and a special ceremony is held to clearly establish and legitimize an "adoption," though of course it is not a real adoption. The relationship is very similar to that in Citizen Advocacy except there is no Citizen Advocacy office to help optimize the match and give it ongoing support and encouragement (Source documentation from Anne Cross).

**Confused Notions About Advocacy**

*How mindlessly the term "protection and advocacy" has come to be used is exemplified by the fact that the US protection and advocacy legislation has metastasized into a form called "protection
and advocacy for assistive technology," which surely can only involve advocacy but not protection. Furthermore, it includes a consultation function for impaired people which is neither protection nor advocacy, but simply a form of case work. If one is not careful, the next thing one knows, all social work and welfare departments will rename themselves into protection and advocacy departments.

*Simply giving people who have AIDS and their families a service has been reinterpreted by some social workers as "empowering them," and even putting children of parents about to die from AIDS under guardianship has been interpreted as an empowerment (SU Magazine, Summer 99). If we don’t watch it, scratching one’s butt hole will soon be called empowering.

*Here is psycho-gobbledygook that we ran across about what self-advocacy is. As one writer put it, "self advocacy is a process of becoming--a process where the personal is profoundly political" (BCACL Community Living News, 1997(3)).

Problematic Advocacies

*As we have always taught, the best and noblest advocacy is on behalf of a party other than oneself (in fact, that used to be a common part of the definition of advocacy), without expectation of benefit to oneself. Now, modernistic ideology has turned this on its head, and defined so-called self-advocacy as not only the best, but as the only legitimate, advocacy.

Accordingly, here is one interesting--and we dare say, for a lot of people, uncomfortable--issue. It is that whenever one sees a member of a societally devalued class in an advocate role, it is almost always either for themselves personally (as a so-called "individual self-advocate"), or for their devalued class. For instance, when a physically handicapped person is an advocate, almost always this is for him or herself, or for other physically handicapped people. When a racial minority member is an advocate, it is almost always for other members of that minority group. In contrast, the proportion of such persons as advocates is very small when it comes to advocating for other devalued and lowly classes, for world peace, for a cleaner environment, for saving the whales, against abortion or the death penalty, etc., etc. This tells us at least three things.

a. Such persons may have gotten "steered"--perhaps unconsciously, perhaps well-intentionedly--into such roles in the belief that if they are going to advocate, then they should advocate "for their own kind."

b. Having been on the receiving end of discrimination or devaluation may have been so traumatic or wounding that the person became self-centered, and incapable of becoming interested in advocating for another cause.

c. Being received--perhaps welcomed--as an advocate for that cause may have been very rewarding to them, perhaps because of "role avidity," i.e., their exclusion from other valued roles--perhaps from advocate roles for these other groups and causes--made them hungrily accept and even jump into this self-advocating role.

One result of so few members of devalued classes becoming advocates for causes other than that of their own class is that other people mentally exclude them from alternative advocacy roles, and the term "self-advocate" has come to signify that a person is a member of a devalued class, rather than a member of a valued class who is promoting his/her own personal interests, or those of his/her class.

Once again, this reality underlines the saying that the good is so often the worst enemy of the best: so many people are satisfied to have devalued people advocating for themselves that they do not consider what would be even better--or best--for the devalued advocates, and for those being advocated for.

*A mentally retarded young woman who was taught what her rights were thereupon rebelled against parental oversight, and got the service system to schedule a case conference at which it was decided to help her emancipate herself. A supported living counselor found her an apartment with a roommate, but within a week, she had struck out on her own. Immediately, a parade of men moved in and out of her apartment, and she had sex with any man who would offer her a cigarette or a ride. Within three months, she had contracted three different venereal diseases, and her health went rapidly downhill. Modernistic "advocacy" and "rights" proponents would chalk her up as a rousing success.
*Disability rights radicals have begun to demand that every single new private residence have accessibility features, such as at least one no-step entrance, 36-inch hallways, and 32-inch doors to the first floor toilet. The right at issue has been labelled to be that of "visitability," but as an advocate put it crudely, "we want to get into your house and pee" (Mouth, 9/99). What is a scandal is that US government-subsidized housing, such as under HUD, is allowed to be constructed inaccessibly. Even if there is an occasional accessible unit, the housing complex per se may still have inaccessible features, such as inaccessible mailboxes.

*With a decline in all social structures and all social virtues, there has been a growing incidence of malfeasance in guardianship cases in the US, particularly over older people, often nursing home residents. Some counties are hiring small armies of investigators to overlook their guardians. Perhaps surprisingly, the biggest problem appears to be with professional guardians who may be going into this business primarily because of its opportunity for graft. Some of these professional guardians used to be social workers, lawyers or paralegals. However, family members appear to be doing no better than strangers as guardians. Some courts are also recruiting volunteers to oversee the guardians. All of this should not be surprising in a society preoccupied with materialism (AARP Bulletin, 5/99). (Soon, courts may have to hire specialists who oversee the investigators who check up on the guardians. Maybe all guardians will have to have "individual guardianship plans," worked out in "personal guardianship futures" planning sessions.)

*In Indianapolis, cards were being handed out in 1999 showing a chained slave, with the message: "Keep it Real! MPRATT MPACT UTAMADUNI," and a number to call. Since this does not tell one what it is all about, we would say that it is not very effective or competent advocacy (source item from Joe Osburn).

*A very common phenomenon in the history of advocacy is for an advocacy body to campaign for a particular service development, and then be offered money to implement such a service, which converts them to being a service provider. Such bodies often continue to interpret themselves as advocates because they have very little consciousness that their role has changed and that service providers have a conflict of interest that did not exist when the same body was an advocate one.

**Resistance to Advocacy**

As we emphasize in our teaching, if advocacy is for real, it will come under attack.

*When a home for the aged in Alaska was criticized by an advocacy group (including relatives of residents), the lawyer for the home sent the advocates a threatening letter warning them of possible legal action (Anchorage Daily News, 23/2/99).

**Miscellaneous News Related to Advocacy**

*One characteristic of the construct of self-determination is that, much as has happened with the construct of quality of life, it was converted from a construct applicable to collectivities and social systems to one that was applied to individuals. At one time, one would have said that perhaps the people of a certain colony were granted independence and self-determination as a collectivity, and the idea that individuals would be self-determining would have been a rather alien one.

*One thought that occurred to us recently was how fortunate we are that the human service system did not think of self-determination around 1970 when it began to dump hundreds of thousands of people out of institutions and into calamity. Imagine what a wonderful cover the self-determination slogan would have been for this perversion.

*Considering that so-called self-determination doesn’t make any sense at all, it is amusing that the newsletter of the US self-determination movement is Common Sense.

*There is a long history of parents who have the means to do so setting up a trust fund to benefit their impaired children once the parents have died. With "quality of life" becoming such a craze concept and phrase, some people have begun to call some of these "quality of life trusts."
Here is a striking example of an assertion in the handicap advocacy journal *Mouth* violating one's phenomenology, and leaving one bewildered. *Mouth* (9/99) asserted repeatedly that there was not one county in the US where a person with a "disability"--and particularly a psychiatric one--was able to afford to rent a 1-bedroom or efficiency apartment. This left us gobsmacked because we had known a number of such persons who lived a modestly comfortable life on SSI in their own rented apartments. This leads one to ask oneself whether one had not perceived correctly, or whether the advocates had failed to nuance their claim, but one is left without a clear answer and therefore disoriented, even if one's perceptions had been valid and the advocacy claim invalid.

**Contemporary Morality**

*Morality in Government*

*An article in *Time* (31/8/98) asserted that lying is of the very essence of contemporary politics, and that the voters like it that way. Politicians act as mouthpieces for the self-deception of the people, and tell people what they like to hear, which so often happens to be an untruth.*

*A whole slew of politicians who promised that, if elected to Congress, they would vote for term limits comfortably settled into long-term office as soon as they got elected, and have been serving longer terms than they promised they would (*Time*, 28/6/99).*

*According to one columnist, the breakdown in good government in the US dates back to the introduction of air conditioning to Congress, which made it possible for them to stay in session longer and therefore also stay away from their home communities longer, losing touch with common people and what they want (*SHJ*, 9 July 99).*

*Newsweek columnist Meg Greenfield commented (26/3/96) on the endless remaking of politicians and their image. As the occasion demands, they get leftized, rightified, centered and re-triangulated, and almost all of it is lies and deception. We conclude sadly that this is what the public actually wants, and that it is very close to impossible for an honest person to be elected to public office in the US these days, and the higher the office is, the less possible it becomes. Dogcatchers (where these are elected) may now be the least dishonest public officials.*

*According to the economist Robert Samuelson, the political arena is awash in lies about the entire federal budget situation and its prospects (*Newsweek*, 9 Aug. 99). He called the entire US tax system "deceptive and corrupting" (*Newsweek*, 19/4/99). Between 1961-1997, there had been only one federal surplus year. The recent economic boom amazingly would enable the US government to pay off its entire humongous debt--but chances that it will do much about it do not look good, even though everybody agrees that there will be an ever-increasing demand for fewer and fewer workers to support more and more dependent people. Already, we have a situation where younger and often poorer people are subsidizing older and wealthier ones because even people with great wealth and high income during their retirement are unwilling to forego what to them is a relatively small Social Security income. Therefore, an ever-shrinking future capacity for debt repayment may lead to a national fiscal catastrophe when the government can no longer pay what it owes to Social Security alone from which it has been borrowing (stealing) for decades. Even worse, governmental leaders are treating the projected surpluses as if they already existed and have begun to spend them even before they materialize. Thus, long-term commitments are made with projected surpluses which, should they for some reason not materialize, will leave the nation with the new debt commitments on top of its old debts (*Newsweek*, 12 July 99).*

*Only in 1999 did it come to light that workers in a nuclear plant in Kentucky had been told for at least 23 years, from the mid-50s to late 70s, that they were handling uranium materials when they were actually handling plutonium, the most toxic substance known. Families of workers who died in consequence often only receive a pittance in workers' compensation (AP in *SHJ*, 9 Aug. 99).*

*Of the 27 candidates running for the mayor's office in Baltimore in 1999, 6 had criminal arrest records, 1 was a convict, and 3 had filed for bankruptcy (*Time*, 6 Sept. 99). All this makes it easy to "round up the usual suspects."
Morality in Law

*Ambulance-chasery-type lawing. Increasingly across the years, class action suits are not initiated by plaintiffs but by trial lawyers. Class action lawyers have even begun to form an association that meets in exclusive resorts, and hold brain-storming sessions on what vulnerable products or industries might make lucrative targets--and only then go fishing for plaintiffs (SHA, 12 Sept. 99).

Morality in Academia

*Amazingly, Ann Landers has 33 honorary degrees, attesting to the phoniness and shallowness of the US academic culture.

*Of 12 basketball players who entered Syracuse University, only 2 graduated within 6 years, which shows the hypocrisy of even major research universities (SHJ, 3/8/99).

Miscellaneous Phenomena of Contemporary Societal Morality

*Modernistic people who long for some kind of social order (and not all modernists do) want to be able to have an ethics (i.e., a set of principles or standards of conduct), but they do not want an underlying system of morality, and especially not one that is presented as true, and as itself derivative from a valid overarching "religion." This is because modernism rejects any such thing as morality, any source of morality other than the human individual, and certainly anything such as an eternal, supra-human moral law. For instance, in contemporary health care, decisions whether to apply, withhold, or withdraw some treatment are almost always decided by a so-called "ethics committee," comprised largely of so-called "bioethicists," many of whom do not hold or believe in any high-level moral system but who claim to be able to decide what would be ethical standards of treatment.

This same desire has manifested itself elsewhere in society, as when schools set up ethics committees after concluding that their students "need to learn right from wrong," because "they are not learning it elsewhere." But the school also makes it clear that "We're not teaching moral rules to kids," and instead it "would like to get them talking about the difficulty of making an ethical decision" (SHJ, 15 Dec. 1998, p. D3). Thus, people want children to know right and do right, but not to have any basis on which to say what is right and what is wrong, just as hospitals want to make decisions that can be considered "ethical," but without invoking any morality for such decisions.

Much of this is a good example of what we describe as "freeloading," i.e., carrying on an ethical practice that is derived from (and in many cases is only derivable from) an earlier moral value system of society, but rejecting that value system that is the basis for the ethics. Such an ethics cannot be sustained for any longer than the very short run.

*Dr. Joyce Brothers, who lavishly dishes out psychological advice to the world in her syndicated column, said, "I am not fond of the word 'wrong'," but she does think that there are "wise" and "unwise" things to do (SHJ, 23/3/99).

*A 1998 survey revealed that more young people are cheating, lying and stealing, though the good news is that they know it is wrong. Next, they will do it without knowing it is wrong (SHJ, 5 Nov. 98).

*More and more people are writing plagiarized or invented autobiographies. Even a Nobel Prize-winner, Rigoberta Menchu, was caught claiming that atrocities committed on others during the Guatemalan civil war had been committed on her (Newsweek, 22/2/99). "What is real?"

*Reportedly, students are turning wholesale to plagiarism from the Internet for their class projects, banking on the likelihood that their professors will never be able to find out because of the complexity of the information network, and the fact that sometimes, enablers will send prewritten material to students directly, escaping detection. Further, as of early 1999, one could buy term papers from 180 websites, not to mention getting free ones from others (Indianapolis Star, 28/2/99; source item from Joe Osburn). "If Nobel Prize-winners do it, why not we?"
*One single porno video can sell as many as 200,000 copies if it features certain porno stars.

*There is no general agreement that porn has "gone mainstream." E.g., mainstream movies have started using porn stars, while porno films are being marketed as "real movies." As one columnist (Ebert, in SHJ, 14/7/99) put it, "Vulgarity is embraced, obscenity is cherished. Semen, feces, penises and foul language appear often and usually not in the places you’d expect to find them."

*We have been struck by the fact that at a time when chastity has become viewed as a stupidity, or even vice, an increasing number of girls have been given the first name Chastity by their parents, probably in imitation of singers Sonny Bono and Cher having called their baby girl Chastity. This particular baby girl grew up to be a lesbian adult, and a great many other Chastities turned out to belie their names big-time. It seems much preferable to name a child after a vice (Fornication, Larceny, etc.) and then see the child turn out virtuous than the other way around.

*A device that one can attach to one’s TV set taps the closed captioning for the hearing-impaired, and deletes certain curse and dirty words so as to make a program less objectionable for watching by children. Amazingly, one unintended positive consequence has been that a dialogue without curse words is actually more intelligible, because the curse words are so often pronounced in ways which degrade the sound quality of other words in a sentence (NC Register, 29/8/99).

*Andrew Greeley, a Catholic priest who has a social science background and is a widely-syndicated columnist and novelist, claims (SHJ, 2 March 99) that morality in the US is increasing. This claim of his was quickly and gleefully reprinted even in newspapers in which he is not syndicated. What is wrong with this picture?

Philanthropy & Volunteerism

*In the previous TIPS issue, we reported on a large number of schemes for funding human services (and "charities") in relation to meeting (or violating) the desiderata of Social Role Valorization. Here, we comment on such schemes from a different perspective. One analyst classified the objectionable strategies of such fund-raising campaigns on or for public broadcasting as falling into the categories of "give us money and we will go away" (also referred to as the "little brother gambit," i.e., pay the little twerp so he will disappear so that one can pay full attention to his beautiful older sister); "bait and switch," which involves putting the more attractive programs on during fund-raising periods than during the rest of the year; and "humiliation," which involves the use of strategies which make viewers or listeners feel guilty for being "freeloaders." One can easily imagine that people would be as much, or more, offended by many of the charity fund-raising efforts on behalf of devalued people, where they do not even feel free to acknowledge their feelings of rejection of such people.

*In order to assuage the public, Red Feather agencies some years ago began to permit contributors to earmark their contributions to specific charities. It now turns out that this has been a fraud all along, because any specific charity will not benefit from such earmarking unless people donate more such earmarked money to them than the charity would have received from the Red Feather agency anyway, and this apparently never happens. In other words, whatever one earmarks gets simply subtracted from the amount that the Red Feather agency would have given to that charity (SHJ, 12 Nov. 98). This is a typical PPP (post-primary production economy) strategy: make additional work for everybody without any increase in benefit to anyone.

*So-called "affinity cards," where a credit card teams up with a worthy cause organization, is very tempting to people who wish to support the worthy cause, but Consumer Reports (9/99) reveals to us that all affinity credit cards charge higher interest rates, and the worthy cause only receives 50c for every $100 charged.

*We were astonished to learn that in Britain, it has become common for people to parachute out of airplanes in order to raise money for some charity. Because most of the jumpers are novices, one in nine gets injured, and the hospital treatment that they then receive costs 13 times as much as the money they raise with their jumps. One commentator said that perhaps would-be jumpers should be
paid not to jump (Speak Out, 7/99), to which we would add (a) that the government would be better off giving the money it ordinarily costs to treat the jumpers directly to the charities, and (b) maybe the would-be jumpers should stick to parachute therapy.

*Altogether, phony charities rake in $1 billion per year in the US (Time, 11/30/98). A Florida charity claiming to raise money for medical supplies for "disabled children" kept more than 98% of the $2.8 million it raised for itself and the fund-raisers it hired (AP in SHI, 3 Dec. 98). Even the high-profile Save the Children organization was found in 1998 to engage in fraudulent practices, such as asking people to sponsor children who had died (AP in SHI, 1 Jan. 99).

*In NY State at least, commercial telemarketing firms for "charities" in 1997 delivered on the average only 25% of their take to the charities. In some cases, charities ended up owing money to the marketers. One private hospital quit telemarketing because of its bad public image (SHI, 18/11/98).

*Someone said that "conspicuous compassion" (highly visible gifts to worthy causes, accepting public awards for one's work of mercy, etc.) has become as conspicuous as "conspicuous consumption" (a term coined by Veblen) once used to be.

*As in previous years, people near the bottom of the economic scale give away a vastly larger proportion of their wealth than the super-rich do (SHA, 30/10/99).

*In the US, groups ranging from Moose lodges to volunteer fire departments, from veteran groups to bowling leagues, and on and on, are all experiencing declines in membership. When people are asked why they do not join and volunteer, the answer they most often give is that they are working full-time, and what is often implied behind that answer is that either both parents are working which is harder on both of them, or there is only one parent and this one has no surplus time and energy left for volunteer efforts other than perhaps those associated with getting their child involved in activities. America has always been a voluntary society, and this bodes ill for its future.

*After 57 years of service to the community, the Women of Rotary in Syracuse disbanded. In existence since 1922, they were getting old, many had moved away to retirement communities, and young women were no longer joining (SHA, 30/5/99).

War or International Conflict

We remind new readers that we include a war section in our December issue because of the inextricable connections between war and human services, or their effects on each other, which was spelled out in much more detail in a previous year's issue, but which also emerges from many of the items covered.

*After almost 10 years of denial, the US government has finally begun to admit that there is such a thing as one or more Gulf War syndromes, and we continue to suspect that there are several causes. Early on, we hypothesized that the previously largely unproven vaccinations against anthrax were a major cause. This may also have interacted with other factors, e.g., other vaccinations or insecticides, or exposure to poison gas. Yet these shots continue to be required of military members, a number of whom have refused them and been badly punished. French troops, which did not get the anthrax vaccine, had no Gulf War syndromes at all (Economist, 11 Jan. 97).

*The Gulf War left behind 630,000 pounds of uranium dust and small fragments used in armor-piercing ammunition, apparently mostly by the US. This metal is not only toxic but also radioactive, and may have been one of the contributors to the Gulf War syndrome (SHA, 4/4/99).

*Not widely reported in the US is that Iraq was hit by an epidemic of Old World Screw-worm, a parasite that infests warm-blooded animals through even the slightest surface wounds (including insect bites). It has killed large amounts of cattle, and a few score of humans. A German biological warfare scientist concluded that the US had introduced the parasite as a form of biological warfare (8/98 news report).
*Of the 31 infectious agents that have biological warfare potential, 11 are relatively easy to deploy, and therefore are the most likely to be used. However, even from these 11, it is smallpox and anthrax that are the most likely to be used. Considering that a number of unfriendly parties are believed to possess stock of the smallpox virus, it is amazing to contemplate that many bleeding hearts are demanding that the few remaining stocks of smallpox vaccine in the world be destroyed as a symbol of the victory of medicine over smallpox disease, especially considering that there is no treatment against smallpox, and the facilities for quarantining persons who have smallpox are minuscule. One thing that complicates the smallpox situation is that we now have a large population with depressed immune systems, mostly due to HIV, who are apt to catch and spread anything that comes about and hand it on to people whose immune system is not depressed (Science, 26/2/99).

Few people are aware that in 1984, members of the Rajneeshi religious sect put salmonella stock into salad bars in Oregon and poisoned 750 people. (Were we even told?)

*In cleansing Kosovo from ethnic Albanians, the Serbs apparently perfected an invention largely of the 20th century, namely so-called civil annihilation. Refugees were stripped of anything that might in any way document their identity, not only passports but also other identifying information that one might carry in one’s wallet, family photographs, and even vehicle license plates. Thereby, they hoped to be able to create a population that would never be able to prove who they had been and where they had come from, and therefore could never reclaim their patrimony (Newsweek, 19/4/99). Civic annihilation has elements of social distantiation, and putting people in the ambiguous role of "other"; it is a common forerunner to actual deadmaking.

*Kosovo Albanians have been presenting two different faces to the world. On the one hand, we know them mostly as the desperate victims of a quasi-genocidal assault by the Serbs, but on the other hand, part of Europe has experienced them as an ever more widely-spreading powerful new crime mafia. E.g., Italy took in many Albanian refugees (this exodus started actually a few years ago when there was a near-civil war in Albania)--and promptly found itself confronted by an Albanian mafia.

*A Kosovo refugee in the camp cried out, "Who is this coming? Oh, a famous actor. Too bad. What I need is a doctor" (Time, 17/5/99).

*An estimated 30,000 children (including girls), some as young as 10, have been impressed into combat in the Third World. This is certainly one novel way of beefing up an army’s numbers. The good news: no sexual discrimination.

*Star Wars II is in the making—not the movie, but the PPP US arms industry folly. Star Wars I (since President Reagan in 1983) cost $70 billion, and never came close to working. A senior fellow of the US Council on Foreign Relations said, "You can only lie to the American people. Once you start spending so much money, that’s bound to happen" (Science, 16/4/99). One reason for this scandal: the industry is a major contributor to election campaigns.

*The US Navy wants 30 new nuclear submarines at a cost of at least $64 billion. Usually, real costs turn out vastly higher than estimated ones (Time, 8 Feb 99).

*The US Air Force has one general for every 23 airplanes. In WWII, the ratio was 1:244. The US Navy has one admiral for every 1.6 ships, up from 1:130. Each army division has 30 generals, up from 14 (Time, 5 Oct. 98).

*Vietnam is said to be the worst-polluted country in the world as a result of herbicide spraying during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange (with dioxin in it) was sprayed in concentrations 1,000 times higher than in the US. Health effects are terrible, and may persist for generations (CBS "60 Minutes," 12/12/99).

*Plutonium is one of the most toxic substances known. A few molecules of it can give one cancer. The amount released during decades of weapons tests by the US is kept secret to this day, but 4,000 pounds of it are believed to be in the Nevada desert from nuclear tests. Further, in its infinite wisdom, the US Department of Energy injected plutonium directly into the groundwater at several of its facilities around the country, whence it has begun to travel as groundwater is known
to do (Discover 4/99). Consider that this was done by some of our most educated and brightest people in the country!

*The board of directors of the Tennessee Valley (power) Authority voted in 12/99 to start making material for nuclear bombs. This is the first time in US history that a commercial reactor will be used for that purpose (AP in SHJ, 8 Dec. 99).

*Mild, peace-loving, often neutral, Canada has not only begun to sell nuclear reactors abroad, but ones already known to be defective. "If we can't make them work here, let's sell them to less-skilled 3rd world countries." Nuclear power and nuclear arms are closely linked.

*The German secret service claims that the American secret services have techno-spies all over Germany, and are "stealing like ravens." The Russians and French are said to be the two big other techno-spy nations (AW, 3 April 99).

*In 1846, James Russell Lowell of the Massachusetts Lowell dynasty wrote "the Complaint of B. Sawin, Esq.," a fictional ex-soldier, in New England dialect.

"I spose you wonder ware I be; I can't tell, fer the soul o' me,
Exactly ware I be myself,—meanin' by that the holl o' me,
Wen I left hom, I hed two legs, an' they went'nt bad ones neither,
(The scaliest trick they ever played wuz bringin' on me hither,)
Now one on 'em's I dunno ware;—they thought I wuz adyin',
An' sawed it off because they said 't wuz kin' o' mortifyin';
I'm willin' to believe it wuz, an' yit I don't see, nuther,
Wen one should take to feelin' cheap a minnit sooner 'n t' other,
Sence both wuz equilly to blame; but things is ez they be;
It took on so they took it off, an' thet's enough fer me:
There's one good thing, though, to be said about my wooden new one,—
The liquor can't get into it ez 't used to in the true one;
So it saves drink; an' then, besides, a feller could n't beg
A gretter blessin' then to hev one ollers sober peg;
It's true a chap's in want o' two fer fellerin' a drum,
But all the march I'm up to now is jest to Kingdom Come.
I've lost one eye, but thet's a loss it's easy to supply
Out o' the glory that I've got, fer thet is all my eye;
An' one is big enough, I guess, by diligently usin' it,
To see all I shall ever git by way o' pay fer losin' it;
Off'cers I notice, who git paid fer all our thumps an' kickins,
Do wel by keepin' single afta the fattest pickins;
So, ez the eye's put fairly out, I'll larn to go without it,
An' not allow myself to be no gret put out about it.
Now, le' me see, thet is n't all; I used, 'fore leavin Jaalam,
To count things on my finger-eends, but sumthin' seems to ail 'em:
Ware's my left hand? O, darn it, yes, I recollect wut's come on 't.
I haint no left arm but my right, an' thet's got jest a thumb on 't;
It aint so hendy ez it wuz to cal'late a sum on 't.
I've hed some ribs broke,—six (I b'lieve),—I haint kep' no account on 'em;
Wen pensions git to be the talk, I'll settle the amount on 'em.
An' now I'm speakin' about ribs, it kin' o' brings to mind
One thet I could n't never break,—the one I lef' behind;
Ef you should see her, jest clear out the spout o' your invention
An' pour the longest sweetnin' in about an annoal pension,
An' kin' o' hint (in case, you know, the critter should refuse to be
Consoled) I aint so x'pensive now to keep ez wut I used to be;
There's one arm less, ditto one eye, an' then the leg thet's wooden
Can be took off an' set away wenever ther 's a puddin'.
News of the Season

*In 1999, we noticed for the first time that Halloween decorations not only appeared by early October, but that they also became conflated with Christmas decorations. Also, some of the leading stores in the country, such as Macy's and Bloomingdale's, started putting out their Christmas sales several months earlier, namely in June and July (Time, 6 Sept. 99). And one store in Syracuse was out of Christmas paraphernalia by 21 Dec. 1999, and put out Easter stock.

*The local (Syracuse) art museum, the Everson, has an annual display of decorated Christmas trees. In 1999, the last day of the exhibit was... December 10, fully two weeks before Christmas.

*It is certainly understandable why the world of commerce treats Christmas as no more than a means to make money. As far as it is concerned, Christmas is over on Dec. 25. In parallel, Christmas is over in the media by Dec. 26. In 1998, the only one of Syracuse's 7 open TV channels, 42 cable channels, and 16 movie and pay channels, that still carried Christmas themes on 26 Dec. was the religious channel, while for weeks prior, there was Christmas on TV everywhere.

However, it is amazing how even alleged Christians are more and more "confused on the concept." Religiously and liturgically, there is the advent season--about 4 weeks before Christmas. Then comes Christmas, the night of Dec. 24. Then comes the Christmas season, which used to last 12 days (the "12 days of Christmas") until the Feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6. However, Christians start putting up Christmas trees the day after Thanksgiving, and some people even throw out their Christmas tree the week before Christmas. In 1998, we saw the first throw-out Christmas tree as early as 8 Dec. Many people throw it out the day after Christmas. All Christmas parties get held before Christmas rather than during the Christmas season, including parties put on by Christian organizations and services. What has confused American Catholics in particular is that after having become vague on when Christmas starts, and confounding Advent and Christmas, their bishops began a few years back to make the end of Christmas a movable feast that falls on the Sunday after New Year's, so that the Christmas season has a different length from year to year, and makes songs and sayings about the 12 days of Christmas meaningless.

*An ordinary working-class man in Syracuse reported in 12/99 that his wife insists on spending a minimum of $2,000 on each of their 3 children for Christmas gifts. One hardly knows what to make of this, because (a) no doubt there are many families that spend at least as much if not more, (b) this cannot in any way be good for the children, or for their future, and (c) probably both parents have to work furiously to pay for such an extravagance, which probably also means greatly reduced time they actually spend with their children.

Good News/Bad News Dilemmas, In & Out of Human Services

We have reported repeatedly on the dilemma that, on the one hand, so many TIPS readers yearn for "good news," but that, on the other hand, there is so little of it. Even what gets submitted as good news often turns out not to be. Herewith a few comments on the good news/bad news issues.

*The Syracuse Herald Journal observed in an editorial that "good news is no news" and that therefore, by its very nature, most news tends to be bad.

*A TIPS reader recently wrote to us that she had been looking up and down her state for good news copy for TIPS, but despite not being able to come up with any, she remains an optimist. Now that is what we call a real optimist.

"The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; The pessimist fears this is true"--James Branch Cabell.

*Some people complain that critics of human service practices should just look at the positive side of things, but an editorial in a Syracuse newspaper observed that at the local institution for the mentally retarded, residents had been "raped, molested, sodomized, impregnated, beaten and over-drugged," and rebuked a letter writer who said that the newspaper was "stressing the negative." The editorial said that "rapes and assaults are not negatives, they are crimes. They can't be lessened or
wiped away by simply talking about good things...treating the retarded with love and compassion, attending to their needs, and working long, thankless hours cannot be allowed to distract us from the victimization of helpless people. If that were true, then we could justify the sexual abuse of children by teachers or day care workers by talking about the other good teachers and day care workers in the nice programs and their schools. We could look the other way when a police officer is accused of brutality because the other officers on the force are hard-working and committed."

*The utopianists are rejoicing over a widely disseminated and translated article by Fukuyama, entitled "The End of History," which announced that "a final, rational form of society and state became victorious" with the death of Communism--a death which, in the words of Mark Twain, seems to us to be grossly exaggerated. The author of the article sees the time ahead as one of "endless solving of technical problems."

*The police chief of Portland, Oregon, set a good example by moving into a house in the city’s worst crime area, after renovating the abandoned rat-infested house (AP in SHJ, 27/11/93).

*Another bit of good news. A developer in Los Angeles has begun to build apartment projects for poor people in some of the worst parts of the city (e.g., south-central LA), with a special emphasis on fostering education of the children of poor families. Families who are accepted as tenants into such "Excel" apartments have to agree not only to pay the rent, but also to make a commitment to their children’s education. The apartments are clean and quiet so that the children can study, with a safe (i.e., enclosed) central area for play and recreation. If the parents are not home when their children return from school, there are live-in counselors--students from the nearby University of Southern California (USC)--who see to it that the children do their homework, and who will visit the children’s teachers to see how the children are doing in school. Children who maintain a minimum grade average throughout high school are guaranteed to be accepted into USC. The developer says that even though he is not making as much profit as he could on real estate elsewhere, he can still make a living, and indeed, he is now building only Excel-type apartment projects (CBS Evening News, 11 Jan. 1993).

*More good news. A nurse working in a NY State institution developed a relationship with a very severely and multiply handicapped teenage boy who lived there. When the institution was to be closed, she felt that "the most logical step" was for her and her family to take the boy home to live with them. Because of the young man’s physical condition, costly modifications would have to be made to their home, which the family could not afford. State law prohibits gifts of the state to an individual, such as a grant of money to adapt a house, but a contract was worked out to loan the family the money for the renovation, and to forgive some of the loan each month over a period of five years as long as they continue to provide a home for the young man. This specialized contract took eight months of study and finagling, and it is remarkable that it was even do-able within state funding structures. While they were awaiting the state money, the family hired an architect to design the addition to their house. They paid for the renovations out of their own money and personal loans, before they received the loan from the state (CNY Neighbors, 5/93).

*Some news is, by its very nature, both good and bad. Here is an example. Sherry Cook sent us a 1999 flyer that announced that Beth was going to "advocate for people with disabilities in ways that were never before possible." This, we were told, would be because of "her unique characteristics." Beth happens to be a stuffed giraffe that has been adopted as the symbol of Bethphage, a chain of Lutheran services for the mentally retarded that got its start in Nebraska.

*The both good and bad news is that dwarf bowling, on which we have often reported, has been replaced by generic people bowling. People put on a helmet, climb into a spherical steel cage, and are then shoved across a dance floor toward oversized canvas bowling pins. Since being introduced in 1992, almost 500 sets of materials for the game were sold within a year, mostly to bars and nightspots. People call it "good, clean, safe fun." We note that the safety features for this generic people bowling are much more rigorous than those that were used for dwarf bowling. Furthermore, being tossed can be a very lucrative business for dwarfs. One said that this brought him $2,000 a month.
*One bit of good news is that bad news is not necessarily new. The French writer Baudelaire (1821-1867) wrote in his diary: "It is impossible to skim through a newspaper, of any day, month or year, without finding on every line signs of the most atrocious human perversity, coupled with the most astonishing claims to integrity, charity and good will, and the most barefaced statements about progress and civilization.

"The whole newspaper, from the first line to the last, is but a web of horrors, a drunken orgy of wars, crimes, thefts, obscenities, tortures, crimes of states, of nations, of individuals... Everything in this world oozes crime: the newspaper, the walls, and man's face. I do not understand how a clean hand can touch a newspaper without a shudder of disgust" (Parabola, 2/1979).

*News that are too good to be true. You wanted good news? Okay, here you get it at last!
1. The General Assembly of the UN voted overwhelmingly that member nations should adopt policies consistent with the principle of subsidiarity.
2. A Gallup poll revealed that, shocked by recent events, Americans have had a change of heart, and 90% now believe that human life and personhood starts with conception, that abortion is the killing of an innocent human life and is a grave evil, and that the suffering of suffering people should never be combated by killing the sufferer.
3. It has been reported that a rehabilitation service actually rehabilitated more clients than it made and kept dependent forever.
4. New studies have shown that children are leaving US elementary schools better prepared for life than ever before: 90% of them are able to read at or above grade level, they actually behave attentively and thoughtfully in class, and converse courteously with adults and visitors.
5. The turnover rate of staff in human services has declined dramatically, to an average of 10% a year, with the majority of servers reporting that they have been in the same position, working with the same clients, for a mean of 12 years, and that they actually believe in the importance of fidelity to the people they serve.
6. Every human service agency in the US and Canada that has sent 5 or more staff members to SRV training has subscribed to TIPS. They testify that "we don't know how we ever managed without it," and "we don't see how any service worker or agency today can hope to function well, to provide high-quality services, and to enable its servers to develop and become 'gooder' people, without the kind of news, analysis and consciousness-raising that TIPS provides."

Of course, all the above good news are lies--but that is what modernistic people want. After all, hardly anyone can get elected to public office any more who is not a bald-faced sincere liar.

*The TIPS editor occasionally receives what could be called letters to the editor from TIPS readers, usually concerning a specific article or issue, though occasionally about an entire theme that has run through several issues of TIPS, or even the very idea of TIPS. One such letter came from a subscriber who recently had the time to reread all the issues of TIPS starting with the first one. To our knowledge, this was first done by Jack Yates, who reported having learned so much from it, and its having such a different impact on him than did reading each issue separately as it arrived, that we have since recommended the exercise to several other people, and at least once as a penance. Below follow excerpts from this subscriber's letter. "I have been re-reading back issues of TIPS (from Vol. 1 No. 1) in an effort to clear my head. Typically (and I have found this true of many others who subscribe to TIPS), it used to take me several sittings to get thru one issue (so depressing, you know.) Now I'm whipping thru one to two years of issues per night! Impossible, you say! Can one read too much TIPS, O.D. on TIPS? Could there be any side effects that I should look for--and what then? I'm already noticing a tendency to want to dress in black. And not too long ago, somebody actually referred to me as '________ ensberger,' which though not intended to be, I took as the highest (almost) compliment. Already people have accused me of being too pessimistic, too idealistic, too 'broad-based philosophical'--what does this mean? Is it too late?! What is happening to me, Dr. Wolfensberger!? And why am I so deliriously joyful??!!! And what's worse is that I think I am addicted to TIPS! I know the first step is to admit your addiction, but I always forget the second. I tried desperately to stop, but when I saw those bold red letters 'LAST ISSUE OF TIPS, RESUBSCRIBE NOW,' I started to go into withdrawal! 'How and when will it all end?,' I kept hearing voices ask from my third lower right molar (ed's note: referring to story on p. 20 in the June 1983 issue of TIPS). I must know the end of the story! How many more issues will it take?! So enclosed you will find a renewal for another year's subscription in hopes that you'll be able to come up with a decent ending by then."
*During the 1960s and 1970s, demographers in academia had predicted that the 1990s would be a golden age of plentiful jobs and low crime (SHA, 6 April 91). Obviously, we cannot go wrong by predicting bad news, because if we are wrong, everyone will forgive us. On the other hand, one is rarely forgiven for having been right.

*In this time of total insanity and flight into infantile wishfulness, many people would like to purge vast sections of the vocabulary that implies bad news. For instance, we are constantly afflicted by people who want to get rid of the word "affliction." Apparently, they wish there were no such thing, and therefore they want to get rid of the word. We therefore have gone back and thought a little bit as to what would qualify as an affliction, and came up with the following phenomena that we considered to be at least minimal criteria, but not necessarily exhaustive.

1. Any ongoing, intermittent, or more than one-time and brief pain.
2. Whatever bodily illness or injury gives rise to such pain.
3. Abnormal mental states, especially if ongoing.
4. Normative—but normatively also anguishing—human experiences, such as loss of a loved one.
5. Experiences that may not be normative, but that nonetheless cause great suffering and hardship, e.g., being driven as a refugee out of one's homeland, being deprived of food and water for long periods, etc.
6. Bodily abnormalities that hinder normative human functioning, even if the person has learned to compensate for the hindrance.

We would like some feedback on this list. What else should be added? What should be deleted, and why?

**Miscellaneous Miscellaneous News**

*The bomb that was smuggled into the World Trade Center in New York in 1993, and did $700 million worth of damage, cost only $3,200 to make. That was almost $22,000 in damage for every dollar's worth of bomb! (SHJ, 19/5/93). The terrorists certainly know more than anyone else how to get the biggest bang for the buck!

*By law, the Surgeon General of the US is accorded the rank of a Navy vice-admiral, complete with the requisite uniform. One observer called this "a bureaucratic version of cross-dressing."

*There are rock bands that travel in convoys of 200 trucks needed for all their stage effects.

*We regretfully report the death of the leader of Britain's Monster Raving Loony Party who ran in 40 odd political races with the slogan, "vote for insanity. You know it makes sense" (Time, 28/6/99). We desperately hope that an American branch of the party will soon spring up.

However, the party did the sensible thing in immediately selecting Mandu as its co-leader. Mandu is a cat who has a sister, cat Astrophy, and cat Alyst (Time, 18/10/99). Having so far futilely written in the TIPS editor's cat, Felix von Krischer, as a candidate for innumerable offices, we here see genuine hope and good news for which so many TIPS readers yearn.

*In mid-November 1998, it was revealed that in 1995 and 1996, a laboratory under the auspices of the University of Massachusetts had created an embryo from human and cow cells (thus a hybrid), and then sold it to a private firm. Amazingly, there was hardly any further publicity after this was first announced in the Washington Post. As we have said all along, there is vast scientific arrogance, and if scientists can create minotaurs or centaurs, they will do it.

*Amazingly, almost half of the consumers in the US have consumer debts of $10,000 or more (SHJ, 9 March 99). No wonder the stock market soars—until the debts are due.
TIPS Editorial Policy. TIPS was begun in 1981, & comes out in six, or fewer but combined, issues per year. Combined issues of TIPS, such as a double or triple issue, contain two or three times the usual amount of copy. This allows some topics to be treated in depth, & saves on postage costs. TIPS contains articles, news, insights, reviews & viewpoints that relate to the interests & mission of the Training Institute. At the present, this mission has to do with reading "the signs of the times," & interpreting their meaning for human services. This necessitates that TIPS address some of the larger issues which affect our society & the ways in which decisions are made in it, because these higher-order phenomena will eventually express themselves in human services in various ways, including in human service values, funding & practices. Usually, each TIPS issue focuses primarily on one major theme. Examples from the past have been Crazeology; Deathmaking; Human Service News; Poverty & the Poor; Social Advocacy; Social Role Valorization; War & Peace; Crime, Punishment & Prisons; & Homelessness. TIPS addresses relevant developments whenever & wherever they occur, so disclosures of adaptive or horrific developments promoted by a particular political party or government should not be taken as partisan political statements. We assume that subscribers are people who lead hard lives struggling against great odds, & are aware of many shortcomings in human services. Thus, we try to inject levity into TIPS so as to make subscribers’ lives more bearable (or less unbearable, as the case may be), even if not deliriously joyful. In fact, the "signs of the times" tend to be depressing, & thus much TIPS content is in need of levitation. TIPS tries to report developments truthfully, but since it gets many items from other sources, it cannot be responsible for errors contained in original sources. In order to save space, published sources for items are abbreviated when cited--just enough to help us recover the full citation if a reader requests it. Items that are not attributed to other sources or writers are to be considered authored by the publisher/editor of this newsletter. Anyone wishing to reproduce items from TIPS should contact the TI Training Coordinator for permission & terms.

The Training Institute. The Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agentry (TI), directed by Wolf Wolfensberger, PhD, is part of Syracuse University’s School of Education. Dr. Wolfensberger is a research professor in that School. Since its founding in 1973, the TI has never applied for federal grants, & has been supported primarily by fees earned from speaking events & workshops across the world, & to a small extent from consultations, evaluations of services, the sale of certain publications & planning & change agentry tools (see "TI Publications" below), & subscriptions to TIPS. TI training has: (a) been aimed primarily at people who are or aspire to be leaders & change agents, be they professionals, public decision-makers, members of voluntary citizen action groups, students, etc.; & (b) primarily emphasized high-level concepts & values related to formal & informal human services, the rendering of compassionate & comprehensive community services, & greater societal acceptance of impaired & devalued citizens.

Invitation to Submit Items for Publication. We invite submissions of items that appear suitable for TIPS. These may include "raw" clippings, "evidence," reviews of publications or human service "products," human service dreams (or nightmares), service vignettes, aphorisms or apothegms, relevant poetry, satires, or brief original articles. We particularly welcome items telling of positive (but not tritely positive) developments, since bad news is so frequent as to be the norm. Send only material you don’t need back, because you won’t get it back. If we don’t goof, & if the submitter does not object, submissions that are used will be credited.

Dissemination of TIPS. Readers are requested to draw the attention of others to TIPS, & to encourage them to subscribe. A subscription/renewal form is found on the back of each issue. Please consider photocopying this form & forwarding it to potential subscribers. Also, we appreciate subscribers announcing the availability of TIPS in other newsletters and periodicals.

TIPS Back-Issues Available. TIPS tries to have a supply of back-issues available for new subscribers who wish to complete their set. Let us know what you need, & we will negotiate a package price.

TI Publications. The TI sells or recommends a number of items relevant to its mission, & lists them on a "publication list" which is updated regularly. If you want one or more copies, please let us know.
Complete the form below for subscription/renewal/donation/address change (as applicable), & return it to the TIPS editor at the address below. We encourage you to make copies of this form & circulate it to others who may be interested.

____Address Change ____New Subscription ____Donation ____Renewal

If this is a renewal, the address below is: ____the same ____new.

NAME OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION

MAILING ADDRESS (list the address that is least likely to change in the future. For some individuals, that is their work address; for others, their home address.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mailing Address (list the address that is least likely to change in the future. For some individuals, that is their work address; for others, their home address.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mailing Address (list the address that is least likely to change in the future. For some individuals, that is their work address; for others, their home address.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zip or Postal Code

Subscription rates in US funds. Make check or money order payable to "SU Training Institute" & mail to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscription Rates</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
<th>TIPS Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>Training Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$17</td>
<td>$19</td>
<td>230 Euclid Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$32</td>
<td>$35</td>
<td>Syracuse, NY 13244-5130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

315/443-4264

There may be a delay between entering a subscription and receipt of the first TIPS mailing, or between TIPS mailings. This is usually due to a double or triple issue being prepared.

Address Changes. You must let us know if you change your mailing address (use form above). If you change your address without telling us, we may never hear from each other again. We will also not be able to furnish replacements for old copies lost during your move. However, we will replace a copy that arrives in severely mutilated condition.

TIPS
Training Institute for Human Service Planning, Leadership & Change Agentry
230 Euclid Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-5130
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED