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Wolf P. Wolfensberger

Syracuse University

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The Training Institute had to move to new quarters in May. This took so much work time that we fell behind not only in TIPS, but also in several of our other projects, especially those involving writing. Even though this is not a December issue, we decided to cover our usual December themes because subscribers will be receiving this issue in December or January. The usual December themes are poverty, homelessness, oppression, crime, punishment, prisons, morality, religion in society and human services, the family and children, philanthropy, social advocacy, societal collapse, warfare, news of the season, and miscellaneous topics as space allows.

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Poverty & the Poor

*During the Great Depression days, there were songs called the "Depression Blues," "One Dime Blues," "Welfare Blues," "Unemployment Stomp," and "Beans, Bacon, and Gravy," one of the better known ones.

I was born long ago in 1894,
And I've seen many a panic, I will own;
I've been hungry, I've been cold,
And now I'm growing old.
But the worst I've seen is 1932.

REFRAIN: Oh, those beans, bacon, and gravy,
    They almost drive me crazy,
    I eat them till I see them in my dreams, In my dreams;
    When I wake up in the morning,
    And another day is dawning,
    Yes, I know I'll have another mess of beans.

We congregate each morning
At the country barn at dawning
And everybody is happy, so it seems;
But when our work is done
We file in one by one,
And thank the Lord for one more mess of beans. (REFRAIN)

We have Hooverized on butter,
For milk we've only water,
And I haven't seen a steak in many a day;
As for pies, cakes, and jellies,  
We substitute sow-bellies,  
For which we work the county road each day. (REFRAIN)

If there ever comes a time  
When I have more than a dime  
They will have to put me under lock and key,  
For they’ve had me broke so long  
I can only sing this song,  
Of the workers and their misery. (REFRAIN)

*We draw to readers’ attention the catalogue of the publisher Charles H. Kerr Company, 1740 West Greenleaf, Chicago, IL 60626, phone 773/465-7774, e-mail: info@kerrpubco.org. This firm has its roots in the strife-ridden days of labor in the early 20th century, and publishes many early, but still relevant, items (its slogan is "books for a better world since 1886") on the plight of the poor, their oppression by the rich, and the state of prisons. It also seems to be one of the few organizations left anymore that is unashamed of its Marxist leanings.

*One criminologist (Steven Spritzer) has divided the "surplus population" into two categories, which he calls "social junk" and "social dynamite." Social junk consists of the handicapped, people extruded from the labor pool because of illness or accidents, street people, etc. They offend against the aesthetics of society, as by cluttering up downtown streets and store entrances, but they do not pose a threat to the social order. However, the social dynamite group does. It consists of the work-capable poor, of the young who are being frustrated in attempts to enter the labor market, of work-alienated people, of people thrown out of jobs at times of economic down-turns, etc. Some of them join gangs, engage in serious crimes, and/or join the drug culture. The authorities respond to social junk by trying to keep it as invisible as possible while otherwise making concessions to it in the form of social services and subsidies. Toward social dynamite, they use organized and coordinated approaches with force, and the criminal justice system.

*Some authorities have claimed that the middle classes exercise a form of self-control in which, at least these days, the discourse of illness, pathology and psychology plays a major role. Its members are under tremendous pressure to function adequately or better in society, to "realize their potential," maximize their resources, achieve proper time management, etc., etc. The underclasses are told that they need to learn "life skills," but their accomplishments are often not followed by social rewards. Because the self-regulatory mechanisms do not work with them, external coercive methods are brought to bear on them.

*About 46% of federally subsidized apartments for the poor in the US are in polluted areas (SPS, 4 Oct. 00).

*Beggars who travel about in the US (as many do) have to be fairly good mathematicians. In San Francisco, it is legal to beg within 30 feet of an ATM; in Houston, one must stay 8 feet away; and other cities prescribe distances of 10, 15 or 20 feet. In fact, we would say that such travelers better start carrying a long tape measure.

*Here is another example of what the powers-that-be do to the poor. In New York State, poor people are eligible for financial assistance with their utility bills, which can be quite high in the winter. The media tell one (as of early 2000) to call a toll-free number, upon which one is given repeated instructions to "Press 1 if..." and "Press 2 if...," etc. Finally, one is told to enter the first four letters of the county in which one lives (some poor people might not know this, or not know how to spell their county), and when one does, one is given yet another number to call for that county. So one has to hang up and then call that number, but a real person answers and tells one that the waiting list for the program is several months' long, and that even if one puts one's name on the list now, one may not receive a call to discuss one's eligibility for several more months. No doubt the legislators who put together the program have no idea what the poor have to go through, and think that the program is "just great." In fact, the governor of NY boasted about it on TV.

After hearing several TV ads (including ones featuring the state's governor) publicizing the program, and encouraging people to sign up for it, someone known to the TIPS editor recently
applied for assistance with home energy bills through a state program for the poor administered by the county. First, for days this person was unable to get through to the office by phone in order to make an appointment. Then this person was told over the phone that the waiting list for the program was months long, and therefore to make an appointment for many months in the future. An appointment was arranged, and when this person showed up for the appointment, was told that "We don't make appointments here." When this person showed the desk clerk the form with the appointment date and time written on it, which had been sent by that same office, the clerk allowed the person into the waiting room. After a wait of some 15 minutes, the person was called by a caseworker who never introduced herself, never explained to the person what the interview was going to cover, how decisions were made, etc. Each time the person asked the caseworker a question of clarification, the caseworker merely repeated what she had said before. Then the caseworker said that the person was eligible for a certain amount of assistance, but did not explain what that meant, whether a check would be sent in a lump sum or monthly, or whether this amount was to be deducted from utility bills, or anything. When the person asked what that meant, the caseworker said, "You'll receive a letter in the mail," and dismissed the person. The time spent waiting in line and waiting in the waiting room at the office was 45 minutes, the time spent with the caseworker was 5 minutes.

This is just a very small taste of what the poor who are dependent on agency (and especially government) services so often have to endure, and not just occasionally but repeatedly, over many, many years, even decades. This is reason enough to get as many as possible off agency dependency.

*We report again that to the profound chagrin and consternation of the liberals, welfare reform continues to be marked vastly more by indices of success than failure.

In 1999, poverty in the US fell to its lowest level in two decades (though still a respectable 11.8%), apparently due largely to the strong economy, showing how much economic conditions contribute to the poverty rate. Since 1993, the percentage of Americans on welfare fell 56% by 12/99, the lowest in 35 years.

The woman who for 20 years ran the welfare department of an Illinois county with a population of 7,500 recently had to find something new to do because there had not been anyone on welfare in that county for a year. This was the first county in the US where this has happened, but others are catching up with it. One reason for the success of her department was that they aggressively tried to find jobs for people on welfare, and then stayed in touch with them intensively for 5 months to make sure they stayed on the job. The bad news is that the 4 welfare officers are now doing other kinds of social work, including working on Medicare problems (SPS, 14/8/00).

We all know the story of the cup that can be interpreted to be either half full or half empty. The liberals are interpreting the three-quarters-full cup to be one-quarter empty. For instance, our local paper (SHJ, 4 Oct. 00) ran an editorial headline, "Millions Still Suffer Hardship," rather than "Millions Escape Welfare." The same newspaper also ran a puzzled editorial headline (28/8/00), "Where are all the people?" meaning the ones that used to be on welfare. The big complaint seems to be that people who were once poor on welfare are now the working poor, and that this is wrong, rather than to be rejoiced over!

One way liberals have tried to denigrate welfare reform is by claiming that making mothers on welfare work means that more of their children get put into day care (e.g., Newsweek, 14/2/00). As we said before, children of mothers on welfare are probably vastly better off even in so-so day care than in the chaotic homes of multi-generational poor unwed mothers.

Of course, one reason the liberals are so depressed about the success of welfare reform is that they were the ones that caused the welfare crisis by systematically incentivizing multi-generational dependency and unwed motherhood. They will probably never confess that they were wrong.

Perhaps one of the biggest problems that has accompanied the decline of people on public welfare is that many of them now do not have the health insurance coverage that they once had while on welfare.

Poverty in Rich Countries

Poverty in affluent countries is totally different from traditional/historical poverty. Below, we describe what some of these differences are in the US.

One thing one keeps seeing is that many people considered to be poor have remarkably little to show for the amount of money they do have or get. There are people who manage to live a
middle-class lifestyle on the same amount of income as a lot of people who live in slums but cannot make ends meet. Where does the money go? Here are some examples of what we have seen.

Perhaps surprisingly, some of the poor have expensive tastes and habits. For example, one can see expensive motor boats parked in the driveways and parking lots of subsidized housing projects of the poor. Also, some poor families get together to buy a prestige car, such as a Cadillac, and take turns driving it, especially on Sundays.

In the US at least, it is extremely unlikely for a person who qualifies as poor not to own at least one TV, and in recent years, also all sorts of music equipment, boom boxes, CD players, etc. In fact, many people in the slums seem to be obsessed with sound equipment, and may have multiple versions of the same item. Also an amazing number of poor families have satellite TV antennas and/or a TV cable subscription, which latter costs a lot of money.

In poverty areas, one can see many people dressed in very recent fashions—indeed, sometimes the most recent fashion—and sometimes, in famous and expensive brand-name clothing, at least of the type valued in certain poverty subcultures. Especially keeping youngsters dressed who demand the latest of designer clothes that earn them peer prestige can be very money-draining. And since what is stylish often changes, the clothes may be thrown out well before they are outworn.

When scooters became popular in 2000, one could see them in large numbers in the areas where poor people live, even though they cost between $60 and $130.

We even learned that there are people living in government-subsidized public housing for the poor who hire other people to come in and clean their apartments for them. (There are periodic inspections, and people who do not pass inspection are at risk of eviction.) While some of the poor may not be able to do the cleaning themselves, others simply find it more convenient to spend some of their money on this.

Many poor people are totally enmeshed in the culture of buying and spending for the present. For example, many of the poor buy on the installment or "rent-to-own" plan, which can make items up to three times as expensive—if they are ever paid off, especially since such payment plans for poor people with bad credit histories are often much more expensive than those for others. Further, the poor often either cannot or will not keep up the payments, so the items get repossessed by the merchants, with the buyers having lost all of their investment and nothing to show for it.

Yet further, few people (and not only the poor) realize how they can nickel-and-dime their wealth away. The amount of money spent buying one soda pop a day five days a week, if placed into a retirement account, would amount to more than $10,000 in 20 years, and the same is true of what people may spend daily buying a cup of coffee, lottery tickets, ice cream cones, or using the ATM from a bank other than their own which charges a fee. What some people spend on movies or renting videos may look quite modest, but deprives them of more than $50,000 of retirement assets if it were saved, and weekly or so dinner-for-two out at even a modest restaurant can add up to close to $300,000 in lost retirement assets. And yet many poor people do eat regularly (perhaps daily) at fast-food restaurants rather than cook a meal, and even send their children to buy relatively expensive snacks and meals, including even soft drinks for breakfast. These snacks may cost much more in the small convenience stores in which poor people typically buy them than they would elsewhere. In some poor families, cooking skills have virtually died out, which means that eating will be vastly more expensive.

Many poor people in the US spend an amazing amount of money on gambling or lottery tickets. In their minds, it is one of their few hopes to escape poverty. Again, if saved, this money could eventually add up to a tidy sum.

Many poor people never save even when they do happen to have some surplus. They may not have developed a mentality that saving is important, and so they may spend whatever they have left over after they have covered all their essentials. This mentality becomes particularly evident when they receive a sudden windfall, such as an insurance settlement, or a big check for back-payments owed them by the government because of an earlier mistake about their benefit status. In such cases, they may spend the money right away, sometimes on expensive and non-essential items. Even large sums can disappear in an instant, sometimes with nothing to show for it.

Also, poor people may not be good at comparison shopping, which requires skills of arithmetic and fore-planning, as well as ability to delay satisfaction of one's needs or desires, that they may not possess. Of course, it does not help that stores in poverty areas charge high prices, which to some degree they must because there is vastly more pilfering and vandalism there.

Also, many of the poor—just as many of the more well-off—have no manual craft skills left. They will often throw out items that could be fixed with a minimum of tools and skills, e.g., a lamp
with shade may be discarded because of a loose nut, or because of a bad plug which could cheaply and easily be replaced with two simple tools and a trip to the hardware store.

Even much more expensive items than lamps—such as microwave ovens, televisions, etc.—may be thrown out merely because these were "old" or had gotten very dirty. All they may need is a good cleaning.

And when poor people do throw out good or salvageable clothes and other items, they tend to stay thrown out—i.e., other poor people are unlikely to try to salvage such items for themselves. In American poverty areas, anything imaged as "garbage" is apt to be left untouched on the curb.

All of this is deeply problematic. On the one hand, one certainly does not want to punish poor people for being poor, nor to insist that they have and enjoy only low quality things, or that they go without everything but the barest necessities. And one does not want to further wound the already wounded by harsh and hard-hearted attitudes towards their problems.

On the other hand, when people who work hard to pay taxes that support the poor see the poor enjoying amenities that those who support them do not even afford themselves (e.g., the most recent name brand clothing and all sorts of "frills"), this can set up resentment in those who work to support them, and an attitude that the poor are not "really" poor, do not need government subsidy, or do not deserve it. And whenever the poor do things that support this expectation, the public can hardly be blamed for developing this attitude. For instance, when the state of Michigan introduced mandatory drug testing for welfare recipients, it found that 8% of them were on drugs (AP in SHJ, 4 Nov. 99), so the taxpayers of Michigan were paying money that was used in part to support these drug habits.

Obviously, being poor in affluent countries today means something very different from what it has meant throughout the ages. According to some studies, among the people who would qualify as being "poor" in the US, 38% own their own homes, 14% own two or more cars, half of all poor households have air conditioning, 31% own microwave ovens, and poor people on average consume the same levels of proteins, vitamins, and minerals as middle-class folk. Poor children specifically eat more meat and protein than their middle-class peers. Obesity is almost a curse of US poverty, particularly among poor women. The average poor person is better fed and housed, and owns more things, than the typical US citizen did for most of the 20th century. It therefore helps to make a distinction between traditional poverty and impecuniousness.

So a vastly bigger problem today than impecuniousness is the multi-generational "culture of poverty" including all sorts of incompetencies, family instability and collapse, victimization to crime and violence, drugs, and other problems. Many impecunious people and families would be impecunious even if their income were doubled or tripled, because they have adopted high aspirations for material goods and a comfortable lifestyle, but without many of the disciplines that would enable them to achieve and maintain it, or even merely to live better within a restricted income. Many of these various incompetencies are actually cultivated by the larger post-production society that "needs" dependent people.

Of course, even as they enjoy many material things, the poor or impecunious are still subjected to much wounding and oppression, especially by the imperial powers in society (such as welfare offices). And we have not even addressed the problems of profligacy that can similarly be found among the well-to-do, and in so-called "corporate welfare." As we keep pointing out, there are "rich" people who are never impecunious—but who have a negative balance of assets!

**The Gulf Between the Haves & Have Not**

*The food Americans waste each day could feed 240,000 people for a year (Casa Cry, 1/00).

*The average CEO of America's bigger corporations makes 62 times ($14.4 million a year) more money than the US president. Their factory workers get on the average $24,000 p.a. (SHJ, 8 Sept. 00).

*Ball player Michael Jordan got $14 million for use of his name for a year for selling Nike sneakers, while less than that was paid that year to all the workers making the shoes. Indonesian laborers got 15 cents an hour (Casa Cry, 18/3/00). Similarly, Disney vice president Michael Ovitz got a $90 million severance settlement, which was more than the all the Disney workers get in their collective lifetimes (Casa Cry, 18/3/00).
*We were wondering why the Concorde so often flies partially empty, until we learned that rich celebrities sometimes reserve several adjacent rows of seats so as not to have to put up with seat neighbors (SHJ, 2 Aug. 00).

*Probably never before in history has there been such a conjunction of wealth, poverty and democracy in so many nations. This is not just a US phenomenon, but increasingly worldwide. For instance, in Germany, even some of its richer cities may now have 20% of the population living on a poverty level. Historically, such discrepancies have usually only been found in poor or non-democratic countries. Because of the novelty of all this, people do not yet have good explanatory constructs or even an adequate language to deal with this.

*After there had been protests all over the country about the School of the Americas on the grounds of Fort Benning, Georgia, being a training grounds for assassins and oppressors in Third World Central and South American countries, and after even mainline news media joined the protest, Congress decided that its name should be changed to the Defense Institute for Hemispheric Security Cooperation. Some people said that other than detoxification, one of the aims of this change was to make the name so long that protestors could no longer write it on their protest signs. The major Syracuse newspaper (SHJ, 7 Dec. 99) headlined an editorial, "School of Assassins: Renaming It Just Won't Do."

*In a mere 2 years (1997-1999), the number of millionaires in the US and Canada rose 40% to 2.5 million (Newsweek, 15/5/00).

*The economic boom of the last few years has produced what some people have called the "Sudden Wealth Syndrome." One of its symptoms is acute anxiety, especially by people who have never been wealthy before, that they might somehow lose all the loot that they have amassed. Another one is the feeling of futility that strikes some people after they have bought all of the houses, cars, exotic trips, etc., that they have ever wanted. Some California shrinks have set up a Money, Meaning and Choices Institute in San Francisco to help such newly rich people grapple with their mental torment. Some people have also begun to speak of second-hand sudden wealth syndrome, likening it to second-hand smoke, which afflicts some people who get mentally distressed contemplating how rich other people are getting (SPS, 25/5/00).

*While the gap between the poor and the middle class in the US is shrinking, the gap between the rich and everybody else is getting ever wider. Among the working poor, income is 12% lower than it was 20 years ago, while in the top 20% of working Americans, it rose 34%, and in the top 1% it rose 85%. Some of the latter is due to favorable tax policies for the rich. Nearly half of all wealth is owned by the top 1% of Americans, while the bottom 80% only own 4% (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 3 Sept. 00).

*While the US has enjoyed several years of economic boom, and unprecedented prosperity for a large number of citizens, a large proportion of citizens have been spending their new wealth very unwisely. Many have spent it on things that do not last (especially fancy cars) rather than on a house, home improvement, a piece of land, their children's education, etc. Also, many have spent more than they had coming in, meaning that they actually went deeper in debt, probably caught up in the societal spending frenzy. And the more people had coming in, the more they spent themselves into debt! Perhaps this is what "second-hand sudden wealth syndrome" is all about. Many of the "wealthy" persons who live high on the hog actually have a "negative net worth." These are mostly people who believe that happiness comes from spending much money. However, the typical millionaire actually lives relatively modestly, and spends a lot of time on civic and nonprofit affairs (SHA, 6 Feb. 00).

*Even as the US has experienced an economic boom for several years, including record tax surpluses, federal expenditures on home health care for the elderly have declined a whopping 45% between 1997-99, and further cuts have been scheduled over the subsequent five years (SHJ, 21/4/00).
The eight richest great industrial powers of the world, called the G8, held a summit meeting in Okinawa in Summer of 2000 to talk about reducing the debt of poorer countries. The Japanese government spent almost a billion dollars to host the conference, in part because it was on a remote island with not enough infrastructure to host such a conference. This expenditure would have gone some way to actually reduce that debt (Private Eye, 28/7/00).

The Transfer of Wealth Upward

*In 1996, African countries spent $1.30 for every dollar of international debt! (Casa Cry, 1/00). In the US, this would be called loan sharking at 130% annual interest. Where could one find a better investment? This is a powerful argument for debt forgiveness after one has earned thousands of percent over a period of years on a loan.

*One of the wealthiest counties in the US (Nassau County, NY) received a $100 million subsidy from the state to bail out its own profligate mismanagement (SHJ, 15/5/00).

*Again, US companies, including the richest, got $32 billion in US government subsidies in 1998 (SHJ, 30/9/99). Altogether, hidden subsidies (including tax loopholes) to rich people and firms will cost US taxpayers an estimated $3.7 trillion over the next 7 years (Casa Cry, 3/00).

*In 2000, NY State granted IBM tax breaks and other incentives to create about 1,000 new jobs in the state. It turned out that this amounted to $475,000 per job--as much money as it would have cost to pay 1000 people close to $25,000 per year for 20 years (SHJ, 18/10/00). Sounds like corporate welfare to us.

*US rate payers had nuclear power plants forced down their throats decades ago, and now have to bail out the failing or nonfunctional plants for an estimated $120 billion (Casa Cry, 3/00).

*We reported before that with the advent of AIDS, many people with AIDS began to sell their life insurance policies at a fraction of their worth in order to enjoy the cash while they were still alive. In 1996, Congress made income from such “viaticals” tax exempt. Then other sick people, as well as healthy elderly ones, started to sell their insurance policies too. The stocks of firms buying up viaticals soared—and the viatical trade became one of the top 10 financial con games. Plus, the “viators” (especially those with AIDS) began to live longer than predicted, began to run out of money, and became public charges--another transfer of wealth at public cost.

*Despite scandals and promises, the US IRS continues to hassle people on the lower income end (especially the working poor) more than the fat cats (SHJ, 20/12/99, 16/4/00).

*We continue to report that pension funds keep getting looted. Union officers seem particularly adept at looting union pension funds (SHJ, 30/9/99).

*Closely related to pension theft is theft of people’s personal retirement funds. Even the Southern Baptist church got caught up in this, soliciting people’s investments of their retirement monies, and then losing the money (to the tune of $590 million!) in poor investments and shady deals. Investors will be lucky to recoup 20% of their investments (Newsweek, 6 Dec. 99).

*US crime families have begun to take over investment firms, and one of their prime targets has been elderly investors who are promised high returns while being robbed blind. A network of such scams is believed to have lifted $50 million from elderly investors by early 2000. However, many previously legitimate functionaries in the securities market have been participants (SHJ, 23/6/00). One thing that is surprising is how little publicity of this there has been. Another scam targeting primarily older Americans is so-called promissory note fraud that has cost investors nationwide several hundred millions of dollars. Again, previously ordinary securities traders have been in the forefront of the scam. The investor is lured to lend start-up cash to a new company and promised a regular fixed income in exchange (AARP Bulletin, 7/8/2000).
*After working for General Electric for 32 years, an employee got a monthly pension of $496/month from the firm; another employee got $419 after 40 years! At the same time, the pension fund swelled due to the economic boom, and the GE board of directors voted to boost their own pensions from $50,000 p.a. to $75,000 after only 5 years of service! (SHJ, 9 Dec. 99).

**Homelessness**

*The centuries-old practice of pushing the poor and homeless out of one's community so that one will not have to take care of them may be here to stay. The latest version: Sacramento (Calif.) has been offering homeless people free one-way tickets out of town (SHJ, 9 Dec. 99).

*Since the advent of trash recycling in the US, homeless people have found large paper recycling dumpsters relatively comfortable places in which to spend the night. This is a nightmare (no pun intended) for the truck drivers who come along and empty the dumpsters into their compactors. Many of them have developed the habit of banging the trash bins with their forklift in order to try to awaken anyone who might be sleeping inside. Quite commonly, people then quickly come crawling out. However, 2 people in Syracuse alone had been crushed to death by 9/2000, apparently when they were too intoxicated to appreciate what was going on.

*Amazingly, there are 40 schools in the US intended specifically for homeless children. Most of them are classrooms in shelters for the homeless, but one in Phoenix, Arizona, serves 750 children from grades K-10. Once the parents get a steady abode, they transfer to mainstream schools (Time, 26/6/00).

*One of the Biblical injunctions is to take in the homeless, but in Indiana, a woman was fined $6,300 because she refused to cease doing exactly that, even though most of the people she took in were relatives. The woman said that she would refuse to comply with a court order, and anticipated that her home would be taken away from her so as to make her one of the homeless as well (AP in Indianapolis Star, 1 June 2000; source item from Joe Osburn).

*One way in which the authorities are trying to oppress the homeless is by requiring that adults who use certain parks in which the homeless had been seeking refuge be accompanied by a child. Sometimes, such park rules are even established for parks where there are very few children around (MANNA, 10/99).

*It seems that every year, the rich and hoity-toity manage to invent a new way of making fun of the homeless, or of at least alluding tastelessly to homelessness realities. Recently, the Christian Dior fashion house created women's dresses that make the wearers look as if they had spent a night in a dumpster. The tattered dresses were "accessorized" with used tea bags, empty liquor bottles, bottle corks, etc. "Most fashion critics praised the collection" (Time, 31/1/00). The first shall be the last!

*We have some more hobo jokes.

No. 1. Tramp: "Lady, won't you help a poor man that lost his family and all his property in the Florida flood?"
Lady: "Why, you are the same man that lost his family in the Galveston flood and was shellshocked during the war."
Tramp: "Ain't it so, lady? I'm the unluckiest guy on the face of the earth."

No. 2. The tattered stranger entered the offices of the Riverdale Realty Development Association, and demanded that he be shown into the office of the president of the concern. The clerks in the outer office protested, but the tramp was firm in his demand, and at last he was admitted. The realtor scowled as the disreputable one entered his office.
"Well, what can I do for you, my man," he said sharply.
"I hear that you offer to pay for practical suggestions which will aid in improving the appearance of Riverdale," said the tramp.
"Yes, yes. That is right. Do you have a suggestion to make?"
"I got a suggestion to sell."
"Well, what is it? If it’s acceptable, I’ll pay you for it," exclaimed the real estate man impatiently.
"I suggest that you give me five dollars and I’ll go on to the next town, thus improving the scenery around here considerably."

No. 3. Two tramps were haled before a police judge charged with vagrancy. In the course of the testimony the following evidence is brought out:
Judge: "Where do you live, my man?"
Tramp No. 1: "Nowhere, yer honor."
Judge: "And where do you live?"
Tramp No. 2: "I’ve got the room above him."

*As is the case with folk songs and folk stories that have long been passed along orally, a lot of hobo and prison songs come in multiple versions where it is not always possible to identify the original ones. Paul Williams drew to our attention that "Hallelujah, I’m a Bum," run in last year’s TIPS, had multiple versions, some also known in Britain. He thinks that the song was recorded early in the 1900s by one Harvey McClintock, that Rogers and Hart had a 1930s musical by the above name, and that Al Jolson sang it in the film with that title.*

*Hoboes and farmers were often at odds. The farmers wanted cheap seasonal help, the hoboes often wanted as much as possible for as little as possible. The hoboes’ derogatory term for farmers was "Farmer Brown." During the depression of 1894, there was a march of the poor from Ohio to Washington, led by Jacob Coxey, which was called Coxey’s Army. Out of it came the following hobo song, to the tune of "Tipperary."

    We are coming home, John Farmer; We are coming back to stay.
    For nigh on fifty years or more, we’ve gathered up your hay.
    We have slept out in your hayfields; we have heard your morning shout;
    We’ve heard you wondering where in hell’s them pesky go-abouts?
    It’s a long way, now understand me; it’s a long way to town;
    It’s a long way across the prairies, and to hell with Farmer Brown.
    Here goes for better wages, and the hours must come down.
    For we’re out for a winter’s stake this summer, and we want no scabs around.
    You’ve paid the going wages, that’s what kept us on the bum
    You say you’ve done your duty, you chin-whiskered son-of-a-gun.
    We have sent your kids to college, but still you rave and shout
    And call us tramps and hobos, and pesky go-abouts.

    The march met with little sympathy from the people on the way. The press responded with a corruption of an old English song about the vagrant poor.
    Hark, hark! Hear the dogs bark!
    Coxey is coming to town.
    In his ranks are scamps
    And growler-fed tramps
    On all of whom workingmen frown.

    Ever since, a congregation of ragged, noisy and disreputable people has been called a "Coxey’s Army."

*Ewan MacColl wrote a nostalgic farewell to the hobo days, "Goodbye to the Thirty-Foot Trailer."

    The old ways are changing, ye canna deny
    The day o’ the traveller’s over
    There’s nowhere to gang & there’s nowhere to bide
    So fareweel to the life o’ the rover
    Goodbye to the tent & the old caravan
    To the tinker, the gypsy, the traveling man
And goodbye to the 30 foot trailer.
Fareweel to the cant & the traveling tongue
Fareweel to the Romany talking
The buying & selling, the old fortune-telling
The knock on the door & the hawking
You've got to move fast to keep up wi' the times
For these days a man canna daunder
There's a bye-law to say ye maun be on your way
And another to say you can't wander
Fareweel to the besoms of heather & broom
Fareweel to the creels & the basket
The folks o' today they would far sooner pay
For a thing that's been made oot o plastic
The old ways are passing & soon they'll be gone
For progress is aye a big factor
It's sent to afflict us & when they evict us
They tow us away wi' a tractor
Fareweel to the pony, the cob & the mare
The reins & the harness are idle
You don't need the strap when you're breaking up scrap
So fareweel to the bit & the bridle
Fareweel to the fields where we've sweated & toiled
At pu'lin' & shawin' & liftin'
They'll soon hae machines & the travelling quaens
And their menfolk had better be shifting

*One of the rail-traveling hobo songs was "Freight Train" by Elizabeth Cotten.
Freight train, freight train, run so fast (2x)
Please don't tell what train I'm on
So they won't know what route I'm gone
When I'm dead & in my grave
No more good times here I crave
Place the stones at my head & feet
And tell them all that I'm gone to sleep
When I die, Lord, bury me deep
Way down on old Chestnut Street
So I can hear old "No. 9"
As she come rolling by.

Crime

*Mercier, C. (n.d.). Crime and insanity. London: Williams & Norgate. (Home University Library of Modern Knowledge. The tone of this little book seems to be that of the mid-19th century. However, since motor cars are mentioned, the book may have been published in the early 1900s. Among other things, it discusses "racial crimes," by which it means crimes against reproduction. We learn here that in England, mothers who committed infanticide always received the death sentence, but that it was never carried out. To our astonishment, we also read here that in England, there had been a steady string of mutilations of cattle or horses, and of putting obstructions on railway lines, such as we have seen a new epidemic of in recent years.

*Peaceful demonstrators about issues of conscience continue to get badly mistreated by local and federal police in the US: thrown on the floor (often face down while shackled behind), beaten, sprayed, verbally abused, etc. No phone calls or lawyers may be allowed. Sometimes they get released in the rain and cold in lonely places at night after not having had anything to eat or drink for many hours. "Common criminals" seem to get treated better, having their rights read to them, etc. (CW, 6/00).
For a good part of the 20th century, liberals have claimed that law enforcement agencies overreported the prevalence of crime. Now, with crime abounding, the opposite may be the case, with true crime figures being underreported in order to hide the extent of societal collapse (e.g., Guardian, 13/7/00).

It used to be that a halfway decent community was the best insurance against being burglarized. We are now being told (Consumer Reports, 2/93) that "good home security" requires "locks, alarms, lighting, neighbors, and dogs."

The Dagwood cartoon gave a good reason why crime in the city declined: "There aren't that many victims left" (SHI, 6 Dec. 00).

Alcohol plays a huge role in crime. In 1995, 40% of people out on probation who committed another crime had been drinking, and at least 10% had been on drugs (Newsweek, 10 April 00).

Did you know that the Philip Morris tobacco firm owns the Miller Brewing beer firm? If it isn’t one drug, it is another. If crack were legal, it would probably be made by one such firm.

Colombia holds the world's kidnapping record, with 7% of the victims being children. This is all about ransom extortion, called "fund raising" by the kidnapping circles (AP in SPS, 4 May 00).

Poland has come to its senses and launched a curfew for minors between 11 pm - 6 am in many of its cities because of the large number of juvenile offenses (DPA in AW, 9 May 98).

So often, one reads or hears of a shooting, and the victim claims to have been just sitting, walking home, getting out of a car, or opening the door to their home, when "suddenly, out of nowhere," they were shot, and no one knows by whom or why. This idiom of initial reportings of shootings has become quite common in newspapers. Later, so often, it turns out that the shooter and victim knew each other, and that the shooting was the result of the trade in drugs or some other illegal activity, and the shooter was trying to even a score, e.g., for being cheated out of drugs or money. But if one does not follow a story over time, one might be left with the impression that the shooting victims are always totally innocent victims of random violence.

We are also amused by the way people slain in the ghettos get posthumously interpreted as angelic paragons of virtue. E.g., a pretty rough 23-year-old Syracuse unwed mother of a 6-year-old, nicknamed Me-Me, challenged a man stranger to a knife fight when he accidentally stepped on her toes in a bar at 2 a.m. Armed with a steak knife, she asked him whether he was afraid to fight a girl. She cut him, he ran bleeding, but when she slipped and fell, he came back and stabbed her to death. The "victim" was promptly interpreted by her family as a "very sweet, nonviolent person" (SHI, 7 Aug. 00).

A sausage maker in California shot 3 health inspectors to death, each with several shots, one of them a woman, failing in his attempt to shoot a fourth one. Despite a long history of violence and problems with the law, one of the killer's friends promptly described him as "the most mild-mannered person I've ever known."

There are still gentlemen. A Syracuse woman discovered to her shock that her home was being riddled by gunfire. Perhaps carelessly, she went to her porch to investigate, and there found 3 men who told her politely that the shots had been aimed at them, then apologized for the damage--and left (SHI, 30/5/00).

Once it had become popular to accuse Catholic priests of sexual abuse of youths, some people have begun to try to make a fortune from this by falsely claiming to have been thusly abused, even forging records pretending that they had lived in certain places where they had never lived (AP in SHI, 25/2/00). One such party of four demanded $850,000 in damages.

While some people have been terribly upset about the police using so-called profiling to keep a special look-out for people who have a conglomeration of characteristics (e.g., many stores use profiles of which kind of people are most likely to shoplift), there has been vastly less concern with
US customs and immigration officials using profiling in order to decide which of the people who are trying to cross the border should be subjected to greater scrutiny. Actually, a great deal of profiling has a large amount of social science behind it, and use of profiling at the borders actually does greatly increase interception of people who should be intercepted. Now, schools are beginning to use profiling to identify students who might go on killing binges. Apparently, fewer people are concerned about such profiling in schools than they are with police using profiles on the streets. Perhaps they are more concerned with their own child getting killed by a schoolmate than they are with strangers or police being killed on the streets (Time, 24/4/00).

*People want public safety and police protection, but anybody who would want to be a police officer these days should have his or her head examined, because in the eyes of the public, the police seem to be unable to get anything done right. So why would anyone want such a job?*

*We were shocked to learn that audio or videotapes that were used in a court trial are considered to be in the public domain, and that anyone can later get them and use them. For instance, in 2000, a TV show got from a district attorney videotapes of murder confessions and made a commercial TV show out of them.*

*Meant as a commentary on the human propensity to savagery, Ogden Nash wrote in ca. 1969: If you should happen after dark,
To find yourself in Central Park,
Ignore the paths that beckon you.
And hurry, hurry, to the zoo.
Then creep into the tiger’s lair,
For you will be much safer there.*

*Apparently, fingerprinting is widely being replaced by finger imaging, which consists of the production of a photo image of a finger with its ridge-and-groove pattern, and the electronic storage thereof. Recently, recipients of many kinds of federal and state benefits have begun to be required to have their finger images taken, apparently in order to reduce fraud.*

*In New York State, a DNA sample is now taken routinely from every felon. Two who refused had it taken forcibly.*

*When the West was still wild, it afforded many people with criminal records at home to make a new start there—or to continue their lawless lives there with greater impunity. This is behind the famous anonymous song:
Oh, what was your name in the States?
Was it Thompson or Johnson or Bates?
Did you murder your wife
And flee for your life?
Say, what was your name in the States?
Now, surveillance and tracking methods make it very difficult—almost impossible—to disappear unless one has a vast amount of real cash, or none at all and lives from hand-outs, e.g., on the streets.*

**Punishment**

*Empires often engage in what philosopher Herbert Marcuse has called "surplus repression" which means that vastly more repressive power is applied than necessary to achieve the desired oppression, and that this power is used in a highly visible fashion, often with a form of performance of theatre meant to be demonstrative to observers, and intimidating to them. A good example is all the theatre that accompanies the deployment of the so-called SWAT teams that sometimes come quite unnecessarily wearing face masks with armored vehicles, barking dogs, machine guns, in the middle of the night, with helicopters shining lights down from above, and on and on, often quite unnecessarily but very dramatically evacuating neighborhoods. Some people have characterized this as the post-modern version of pubic executions.*
*The definition of a new category of "hate crimes" with higher penalties than for the same crimes committed from different motives, or the same but unprovable motives, is another nail in the coffin of American legal ideals and liberty. In essence, it punishes thoughts, which has always been repugnant to American ideals.

According to a 1993 US Supreme Court decision, hate crime laws are constitutional because they allegedly punish conduct, rather than speech or expression. However, this is really a lie because crimes against hate-crime-protected classes cannot really be inferred to be hate crimes unless there is evidence that the offender harbors hatred in his/her mind against a class, and the presence of such hatred can hardly be determined beyond reasonable doubt without evidence of a person's "expressions" (which these days means speech, dress, art productions, etc.) Otherwise, one would have to make any crimes against any member of a particular protected group automatically and an ipso facto a hate crime, even if it were committed by another member of the very same group. For instance, some feminists have argued that every rape of female by a male should be classified as a hate crime, but apparently not the other way around. And in fact, this leads us to a third dilemma, which is the implication that underlies the actual administration of these laws, namely that the perpetrator must be from a class different from his or her victim. Further, analysts have pointed out that whenever a crime is not merely being punished because it is already illegal, but additionally punished for being a hate crime, then such a criminal case actually fuels conflict between the classes at issue. The focus of a court trial is then no longer on the criminal act per se, but on its discriminatory motive. Among other things, this gives violent criminals an opportunity to present themselves as victims of political correctness (B&C, 11/99). Finally, punishing an identical crime differently depending on whom it is committed against also implies that some people are more, or less, valuable than others. In one Ohio trial, the defendant accused of a hate crime was questioned at the trial whether he had ever had dinner with a member of the victim’s class, namely any African-American.

One obvious Solomonic resolution of all these problems is to simply decree the death penalty for all crimes, which makes it impossible to increase the severity of punishment, and obviates a necessity to fish around for potential motives.

*In 3/2000, a "black" man in Pennsylvania went on a rampage, took some hostages, and started shooting five of them, two of them fatally. However, he made two big mistakes. First of all, he shouted at the "whites," "you are all white trash, racist pigs," and to a "black" hostage he said, "not you, sister" (AP in SHJ, 2 March 00). He was promptly charged with committing a hate crime, which these days seems to be infinitely worse than a double murder. If only he had (a) kept his mouth shut while shooting "white" people, and (b) drilled the "black" sister as well, he would merely have been charged with murder, and probably gotten away with an insanity plea. We continue to emphasize the importance of committing one's crimes silently and without explaining them so that one will not be charged with an imputed hate crime.

This makes us wonder why there is no category of love crimes that carry unusual penalties.

*The prominent sociologist Amitai Etzioni claims that the average pedophile molests 30 children before being caught, and he therefore approved of laws that permit the community to know where such offenders live when they get out of prison. He also disapproved of the slogan of one pedophile group that he attended, which was "sex after eight is too late" (B&C, 5/99).

*There has been great excitement in Germany after one of its ambassadors became a Muslim, and began to speak favorably of chopping off the hands of legal offenders or stoning them, and about husbands being allowed to beat their wives. Many people who had been ecstatic about "celebrating" Europe becoming multicultural with the upsurge of Islam there are beginning to get some lessons as to what this might eventually mean--though this might be vastly preferable to the current galloping decadence there.

One trouble with diversity and multiculturalism is that Islam does not acknowledge the legitimacy of a state or secular law other than religious law. If a previously non-Islamic country were to gain a majority--or even only plurality--of Islamic citizens, they would be under religious obligation to seek to make Islamic religious law the law of the land. On the other hand (if any such hand were left), this might be no worse, or better, than PC law.
*People suing other people for damages in the US is a $150 billion a year market, and going up. One trial lawyer in Texas was awarded $130,000 for every hour he claimed to have worked on the case (Reader’s Digest, 1/2000).

The Jail & Prison Scene

*During the Middle Ages, striped clothing symbolized transgression, which is why in medieval iconography, disreputable characters such as Cain, Judas and the Devil were often shown in striped clothes. But to us, this practice is also still somewhat familiar in the form of the striped clothes that prisoners used to wear in the 19th century, and still until relatively recently. However, whether the originators of such prison clothing were aware of the ancient meaning of stripes is not clear to us.

*We were amazed to learn recently that in several Nazi concentration camps, there were inmates from the art and entertainment world who plied their craft under extremely adverse conditions. Some musicians were made to play music by the camp commanders in order to fool newly-arriving prisoners, or Red Cross inspectors, as at Theresienstadt. Otherwise, possession of a musical instrument carried the death penalty. In some camps, the artistic inmates put on cabarets and theatre. Often, the inmates inserted subversive themes, but the guards, sitting in the front rows, usually completely failed to perceive this, while the inmate audience did. Sometimes, this was achieved by no more than a shift of stress on the words of a line of a play. In some cases, the artists would insert subversive passages from forbidden pieces into the performance of allowed ones.

Some inmate ideologues thought it wrong to play cabaret and theatre in the KZ, but many artists concluded that this gave inmates a healthy fantasy life, and that it was also the only thing that connected them to the open world and their past, and thus prevented dulling of spirits and a mentality of resignation, and thereby strengthened mental resistance and saved lives.

In Dachau, Jura Soyfer, who perished later in Buchenwald, wrote a long "Das Dachaulied" ("The song of Dachau"), that was a parody of the slogan above the entrance to Dachau, "Work Makes Free."

Leo Strauss, son of Oskar Strauss of the Viennese Strauss musical family, composed the song "As If" that became his most popular at Theresienstadt. The intended irony and subversion is obvious to us, in that Theresienstadt was an "as if normal" showplace of a concentration camp, spelled out by the song.

*Martinson, R. (1974). What works? Questions and answers about prison reform. The Public Interest. 35, 22-56. In this article, the author concluded that "nothing works," and that the notion of rehabilitating anyone in or through prison was a sham. This became a virtual dogma, leading to an era of prison nihilism. By 1979, Martinson did one of these "oops" that are so common these days among leaders who led other gullible people astray, and changed his mind--but his followers did not. It is amazing that so many people could come to the conclusion that nothing works with any prisoner, given that it is known what makes recidivism worse, and even if it is true that the kinds of people with long criminal records that tend to end up in prison can always be expected to have high recidivism rates.

We cannot emphasize enough that from the perspective of Social Role Valorization (SRV), an important relevant question is whether anything can be done even under the constraints of incarceration that would enable prisoners to hold valued--and/or less devalued--roles in the eyes of prison personnel, parole boards and society. For many prisoners, this would be an avenue of rehabilitation, and there is research that confirms this. Relatedly, seeing prisoners in more valued roles would counteract some of the abmoralization that happens so commonly to prison personnel. And even if prisoners never leave the prison, they would benefit from this. We are working on a manuscript that addresses the applicability of SRV to detentive settings.

*The US prison population has soared to 2 million, and the imprisonment rate (1 in 147) is also at a record high. However, the crime rate is lower than it has been in 8 years, with violent crime the lowest in 21 years. Unlike some of our colleagues, we suspect that the removal of habitual predators is lowering the crime rate. Among African-American men, the incarceration rate for the 20-39 age group is 1 in 9, and in some US states, 7% of the "black" population is behind bars. The good news is that the increase in the incarceration rate is slowing down, and was only 3.4% in 1999.
*According to Newsweek (13/11/00), one reason official "black" unemployment is currently so low is that so many "black" men are in prison.

*The rate of release from prison has declined in the US from 37 per 100 prisoners in 1990 to 31 in 1997. At the same time, the number of parolees returned to prison because of parole violations has increased. Nevertheless, more than 4 million American legal offenders are out on parole.

*Studies suggest that the crack epidemic of the 1980s produced a higher rate of chronic addicts in the "black" population in the US than in the "white," and that this is one big contributor to the higher incarceration rate of "blacks" (SHI, 8 June 00).

*The breakdown of American society is symbolized both by the fact that some laws impose mandatory prison sentences, while other laws (in response to burgeoning prisons) make parole mandatory.

*The largest prison in the US is Angola in Louisiana, which has 18,000 acres (Time, 10 July 00).

*There are some people who assert that the 10-fold increase in US prison places since 1955 is at least in part due to the increasing rate of imprisonment of mentally disordered people who formerly would have been put into mental and mental retardation institutions. Some people (we included) have called this "transinstitutionalization" (AP in SPS, 20/5/00).

*Some jails do everything to avoid having to house mental patients, among other things fearing the legal liabilities involved in trying to run a prison as a psychiatric unit, and employing guards as nurses (Time, 10 July 00).

*Prisons are the single biggest "industry" left in southern Illinois (Time, 10 July 00).

*Many new US prisons have been located in Caucasian Republican localities to which non-Caucasian prisoners from heavily Democratic urban areas are sent (AP in SHJ, 3 April 00).

*Many declining communities see the placement of a prison there as economic salvation. However, the idols can be very treacherous. Local tradesmen are generally not employed in the construction; the prison takes a lot of land off the tax rolls; and prisons generally do not buy things locally. Prisons will both import staff and hire local people, mostly for its lowly jobs. An influx of outsiders puts huge demands on the infrastructure, often generates pollution, and often raises local living costs, e.g., for housing. Also, the population influx attracts chain stores and malls that replace local businesses, and take the profit elsewhere (source information from Susan Ruff).

*Some authorities claim that the removal of a certain class of prisoners into supermax prisons is actually destabilizing of ordinary prisons in which the removed prisoners often had played a stabilizing leadership role. In their absence, there are many poorly controlled hot-headed young prisoners who will act out violently rather randomly and on impulse, who otherwise would have been kept in check at least most of the time by the leaders. Also, they direct their violence against each other rather than toward the prison authorities who generally can take care of themselves (Sun, 10/00; source item from Guy Caruso).

*The east coast of Florida abounds in pedophilia networks. Why? Because this is where many run-away children go in pursuit of sun, water, fun and drugs. Florida has responded by establishing a form of incarceration of pedophile offenders in facilities masquerading as "treatment centers," often even in former jails, staffed by "therapeutic assistants" armed with pepper spray. To avoid legal problems, the inmates are called "residents" (Time, 19/6/00).

*A privately-owned juvenile detention center in Jena, LA, had a staff turnover rate of more than 300% in its first 13 months (Time, 10 July 2000).
*Jails and prisons are very variable as to what possessions inmates may have. One problem with allowing more than the bare necessities is that then some inmates will bring/have more than others, which triggers envy, conflict, gang activity, extortion and violence. On the other hand, stripping inmates down to the bare necessities is oppressive and suits the jailer mentality; it also makes the jailers’ periodic search for contraband easier.

One way jails and prisons control possessions is by standardizing them, which means they have to be bought at the inside commissary. For instance, a comb brought from home would have to be given up, and a new one bought at the commissary. This can inflict a heavy burden on already poor inmates and their families.

*Suicides in prison seem to be on the increase worldwide, perhaps in part because even in relatively enlightened and wealthy countries (the US, Britain and France), prison conditions have been getting worse.

*There is irony in a 130-year-old maximum security prison in downtown Paris being called Prison de la Santé, i.e., the prison of health. Its doctor published an exposé of its unspeakable conditions that became a national scandal. She described the 10-acre campus as a “wasteland” with “not a trace of grass, not a plant, not a flower, not a single tree” (AP in SPS, 29/1/00).

*Foreigners have been streaming into a number of South American countries, intent on smuggling drugs out and making quick and easy money. However, many get caught and have to do prison time there. There were 55 foreign women in one Lima, Peru, prison alone, from all over the world (AP in SPS, 25/9/99).

*There are now world-wide chains of private prison companies. The biggest, the deceptively-named Prison Realty Corp., not only owns but also operates 47 prisons, and manages 36, in England, Australia, Puerto Rico, and 21 of the US states (IAMJ, 5/00).

*A man in the county prison in the Syracuse area hit another inmate—and promptly was "arrested." Apparently, putting people into prison does not impress them enough anymore, so they have to be arrested in addition. Of course, to a large extent, this also reflects the above-mentioned phenomenon of "surplus oppression."

*We commented before on how jails and prisons exploit inmates financially, as by letting inmates use phones, and getting huge kickbacks from the grossly inflated phone charges levied by the phone companies. The jail in our county took in a net profit of about a quarter million dollars(!) per year from such phone kickbacks. This money was spent by the Sheriff’s department for things unrelated to the jail.

By the way, this probably explains why inmates may be allowed to make unlimited phone calls, run community crime rings via the phone from prison, stalk women and make bomb threats via prison phones, etc. There is simply too much money to be made by the prison authorities to want to stop this.

*Prisons in the state of Maine have banned smoking by both inmates and personnel, and one consequence has been that they all are getting fat. Amazingly, prisoners seemed to have virtually unlimited access to sweets (AP, 7/200; source item from Kris Caproni).

*A woman prisoner once complained to a corrections expert that she had had her fill of correctional treatment such as “anger management,” but no one ever had given her a “love lesson,” i.e., tried to teach her how to love others and let herself be loved (CP, 2000, No. 2).

*Frustrated by failures of just about everything else, prison authorities are returning to an ancient practice (e.g., pursued by the Quaker colony in Pennsylvania) of encouraging religious conversion of prisoners. Several states (e.g., Texas, Kansas, Iowa) have turned over portions of prisons to a nondenominational Christian rehabilitation ministry (but with Catholic sacraments available) called InnerChange Freedom Initiative, organized in 1997 under Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship organization. Much of the day is spent in religious studies and instruction, worship, sermons and prayer, in which guards and wardens have to participate in part. Staff also are not
allowed mistreatment, foul language or deignifying address. As a result, there is little of the ongoing war between staff and prisoners that is otherwise normative. Prison staff elsewhere have applied in large numbers to be transferred to these programs. The inmates are all volunteers. One of the things they are taught is family relationships. The Iowa version of the program includes a community service element, and a follow-up phase after release. So far, the Texas results have been very promising, with hardly any recidivism in contrast to the normative long-term rate of 80%. Hindu, Moslem, etc., groups are also eligible to start such programs, but so far have not done so.

**"Hard Times in Mount Holly Jail" is believed to have had several forerunners, going back at least to the early 1930s.**

When you go to Mount Holly, it's there where you're set,
It's whiskey and tobacco you get damned a bit.
Chorus: And it's hard times in Mount Holly Jail,
And it's hard times in Mount Holly Jail.
Your hands and your feet chained down to the floor,
God damn their old souls why can't they do more.
Soup that you get is not very neat,
It's full (of) some scraps and some damned dirty meat.
Fetched from the kitchen in an old slop pail,
And that's the way they serve you in Mount Holly Jail.
Oh lice! Oh lice! as big as young quails,
You can't help get lousy in Mount Holly Jail.
There is High Sheriff Townsell, I almost forgot,
He's greatest old loafer was in the whole lot.
If he was tried and had his just due,
He'd been sent to state's prison 'count burglaries too.
There's Billy Reeves I almost forgot,
He's the damndest old loafer was in the whole lot.
Your pockets he'll pick and your clothes he will sell,
Get drunk on your money at Townsell's hotel.
There is Mr. Pitcher, he's a very nice man,
If you ask him for a favor, he'll do it if he can.
That ain't all I'd have you to know,
Every Sunday morning we have Holy Joe.
There he will stand and the truth he will tell,
To save the poor prisoners from going to hell.

*David Lane, a prisoner of conscience over the abortion issue, wrote this "Prisoner's Song" (LA, 2/96):

A little bird I am,
shut far from fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing
To Him who placed me there:
well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee.
My cage surrounds me round about,
Abroad I cannot fly,
But though my wings are closely bound,
my soul at liberty is found:
For prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.
Your letters have meant so much to me. Your prayers and love have held me up in moments of loneliness. Thank-you so much.

*We now have many poverty and hobo songs, but very few prison ones. If you have any, please send them to us.
The Death Penalty, & the Public Loss of Faith in the Legal & Criminal Justice System, Which Engenders Support For the Death Penalty as a "Final Solution" to Severe or Habitual Predation

*All over the US, states have been changing their laws so as to mandate execution by lethal injection, which more and more turns out to be vastly more "cruel and unusual" than any of the predecessor methods. One problem is that many prisoners have been drug addicted which collapses their veins, and in order to be able to effect an injection, they have to be virtually butchered first. Sometimes, the butcher executionists explode the victim's veins. While this butchery is in progress, the curtains are drawn on witness rooms so that nobody will see the gruesomeness of it all. While being thusly butchered, one prisoner victim even cried out that witnesses should bring the facts of this butchery to the public's attention.

It is a telling sign of the times that the medical model is being adopted even for judicial killings these days when this model is pervading society, even though it is not more humane than several other methods.

One physician noted with outrage that the term "lethal injection" is normative when in reality, the convicts get killed with anesthetics. He also claimed that humaneness has not been the prime motive, but cheapness/economy. After all, there is little else that is humane about how convicts are treated in prison!

*When prison wardens execute a prisoner these days, the thing they always emphasize is that it must be done "professionally," and when the killing is over, they discourse about how "professionally" it was done, and even boast of how "professional" it was (e.g., Ind. Star, 16/4/2000, source item from Joe Osburn). All in the way of detoxification!

*Every December, we carry horror stories that illustrate why the public does not trust the criminal justice system, and that is one reason more people came to favor capital punishment as a final solution to certain people predating habitually and severely on a career basis upon society. A New York City man who worked at a fast-food place tried to break into the restaurant's safe, and was sentenced to five years of probation. He broke the probation by committing several robberies of fast-food places, but was let out on $3,500 bail while the sentence was being negotiated. Prosecutors had requested a bail of $100,000. While out on bail, he failed to keep one court appointment, and then a second one, upon which a warrant was issued for his arrest, but he eluded arrest until his next and most gruesome crime. While a fugitive, he took a job at a fast-food place where he was fired for theft after money disappeared. He continued his spree of armed robberies of fast-food restaurants, and at the one he had worked and been fired, he participated with an accomplice in its robbery, and the cold-blooded execution of 5 employees, wounding 2 more.

At age 17, a man clubbed his mother to death in NY City. He spent a mere 16 months in prison for it. Ten years later, in Canada he followed a woman home from a bar and robbed and raped her. He also had 8 charges pending involving 3 other woman (AP in SHJ, 6 April 00). As one mother of a murdered daughter put it, "the reality of incarceration in America is that everything is based on a lie. We sentence people to life without parole, and then parole them. We sentence people to life and put them on the streets in 20 years. Nothing is really what it seems. Polly's killer should never have been on the street. He had been sentenced to more than 200 years" (Newsweek, 12 June 00).

*In 1998, a young man in Syracuse was shot from behind and has been paralyzed ever since, but learned nothing from the experience. In 2000, he himself shot a pistol at a car occupied by his former girlfriend, their joint daughter, and two other people. He was arrested the same day, but inexplicably released on his own recognizance within hours—upon which he speedily went back to his former girlfriend's neighborhood and once again fired at her, her new boyfriend and her twin sister. Again, this is one of those incidences that makes citizens lose confidence in police protection, criminal justice and public safety (SHJ, 31/7/00).

*A woman in Syracuse was involved in 4 automobile accidents in 3 years that all caused injuries. Her license had been suspended 27 times, her automobile registration 3 times because she had no insurance; she has been convicted of speeding, driving without a license, driving without a registration, and driving without a seatbelt; she had 59 outstanding traffic tickets; and she owed the city thousands of dollars for parking violations, including parking in a handicap spot in front of the
police department. It also turns out that she is by far not the worst offender in the county (SHJ, 28/6/00). While no one is advocating the death penalty for such offenses, her getting away with all this does contribute to a mentality in citizens that the law will not protect them from known psychopaths and menaces.

*One political cartoon in 2000 showed Justice puzzled by having to choose between the alternatives of either an electric chair or a revolving door.

*While a surprisingly large number of people sentenced to death turn out not to have committed the crime at issue, few are entirely innocent victims. Most of them had led a life of crime before the crime at issue, which is why they end up under suspicion and in line-ups. In many countries of the past, and in some of the present, they would have been put to death for some of the crimes on their records. An example is death row inmate Workman who held up a fast-food restaurant with a .45 automatic pistol loaded with deadly hollow-point bullets which he pointed at employees, and which he fired during a shoot-out with police officers during which one died—from a fellow police officer’s errant bullet, it turned out later. Workman, quoting scriptures, has since posed as an innocent victim of justice miscarriage.

*A good example of making the wrong man the test case for a right cause was Gary Graham who had gone on a crime spree in Texas during which he committed 20 armed robberies, 3 kidnappings, a rape and 3 attempted murders, plus 1 murder for which he was convicted and sentenced to death, and executed in 6/00. For many people, including Jesse Jackson, he became something of a poster child of opposition to the death penalty. Jackson explicitly called him "innocent," which he may conceivably have been of the one murder of which he was convicted (AP in SHJ, 29/6/00). At one time, rape alone, as well as attempted murder, would have sufficed for the death penalty.

*In Italian amusement arcades, the "electric chair game" has become a very popular craze, with whole families waiting in line to play it. The winner is the one who refuses to chicken out and gets "electrocuted." A very dangerous game indeed at a time when people can no longer distinguish fiction from reality (NCR, 30/7/00).

*The perversions of sentencing of career predators find their counterpart in prosecutors de facto framing people for capital crimes, all in order to appear to be solving cases. It has been estimated that in recent years, about 70 death row inmates have been exonered by DNA evidence of the crime for which they had been convicted (NCR, 15/10/00).

Slavery & Torture

*Arab countries have had a slave tradition going back to their conquering years in the eighth century. In those Arab countries where camel races are popular, children are still enslaved as camel jockeys because of their low weight. Many such children get hurt, maimed or killed from falls (Nwk., 15/12/97).

*The Northern (Arabic & Islamic) Sudan seems to be the leading slave nation now, killing or enslaving its southern (African & Christian or animist) population, even though the Islamic population is a minority of about 30%. Westerners have started to buy some of these people back out of slavery, but this has merely resulted in making slavery more lucrative. Of course, the sex slave angle plays a big role in this (Nwk., 3 May 99). The Khartoum government, though small and remote, ranks with the Hitler, Stalin, and Cambodian killer regimes in its evilness—and yet the US had been selling it arms! (SHA, 20/2/00).

*An estimated 2 million girls and women are forced into sex slavery world-wide. An estimated 50,000 women and girls are brought yearly to the US alone under false pretenses from Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, and forced to work as unpaid or low-paid indentured laborers, servants, or prostitutes. Legal prosecution thereof is next to nothing (SHA, 2 April 00). Those in the sex trade may have to serve up to 35 customers a day (AP in SHJ, 23/2/00).
*Israel has a long history of using torture (which it euphemistically called "pressure" or "force"), mostly on people who might have information on terrorism. The Israeli Supreme Court finally ruled that torture was impermissible. Prime Minister Barak was not enthusiastic about this, and said that "a new way" must be found to extract information.

*The UN accused the US of torture because it permits stun belts and restraint chairs to be used on people already in custody. A number of prisoners, some of them mentally disturbed, have died while strapped into restraint chairs, sometimes for as long as 8 days.

With a stun belt, one can administer 50,000 volts, lasting 8 seconds each, to a person from as far away as 300 feet. The belt has been used by more than 100 county agencies, numerous state correctional agencies, and the US Marshall's Service. Among other things, it can cause severe internal injuries and even death (SHJ, 31/5/00).

The Family

We have so much material on the family that we are breaking it into several distinct subtopics. Note that artificial baby-making gets covered in our TIPS issues on sanctity of life/deathmaking.

Waging War Against Family & Marriage by Redefining It

So many people, structures and movements hate the family, and that for "diverse" reasons. This motivates them to make war against the family. One way of doing this is to dilute or change the meaning of the word, because this will undermine people's familiality.

*Some people are more likely to see an attack on children as an attack on the family, while others are more likely to see an attack on families as an attack on children. The fact is that both of these are intimately interwoven, and an attack on one is an attack on the other.

*Modernists have started to speak of "familism" and "natalism" in the same way they might speak of racism or Nazism. "Familism" refers to the (politically incorrect) idea that traditional families are a good/desirable thing, especially for bringing up children. "Natalism" refers to the valuing of begetting and having children.

*We commented before that even in politically correct circles, there is now great unease about the correlation between the collapse of the traditional family and dysfunctionality among children. However, diehard modernists keep trying to save the culture of modernism, among other things by claiming that the contemporary collapse of the family is actually a return to the way human societies naturally functioned in history with mates frequently dying, men and women having multiple wives or multiple husbands, children being often raised by people other than their biological parents, etc. What we refer to as the traditional family is explicitly interpreted by such diehards as "quite an aberration in human historical terms." More specifically, these desperate modernists try to disprove the validity of four propositions: that children need two parents, and these should be of the opposite sex; that there should be a division of labor within families; that mothers are better at childrearing and caretaking than fathers; that young children should be cared for primarily by members of the family (CP, 2000, No. 2).

*According to some family experts, people's ideas about marriage have become those of romance and finding a soulmate, pretty much separated from notions of childrearing and "family." Only 34% of households in the US now include children under 18, whereas a century ago, it was 75% (Time, 6 Nov. 00).

*One of the new definitions of marriage is "two successful careerists in the same bed," and "part of a private political system in which rights and interests must be constantly asserted and defended" (Wendell Berry). This is also called the divorce model of marriage since it involves a "prolonged and impassionate negotiation as to how things shall be divided."
*There is a Population Reference Bureau in the US that noted that there really had not been much of a decline in institutional marriage in the US--if only "we expand our notion of marriage" (FJ, 12/92).

*The Jesuit Volunteer Corps publishes a newsletter called *Journeys*. In one of its issues, it carried a picture of two beaming women with the announcement that they were getting married--to each other, that is, and we breathed a great sigh of relief that they had not married Jesuits (FT, 2/93).

*There was vast coverage in the media about a proposal in the Vermont legislature to legalize something akin to marriage ("civil unions" between homosexuals), which was eventually signed into law in April 2000, contrary to the overwhelming sentiment of the citizens of the state. Virtually unmentioned in the media was the fact that this bill was drawn up and passed in consequence of a directive by the Vermont Supreme Court.

*Not only did the Netherlands’ Parliament approve of full-fledged marriage between people of the same sex (and provided for their divorce at the same time), but it did so by an amazing 107:33 majority, and to thunderous approval (AP in SHJ, 12 Sept. 00). Even some conservatives supported the measure. This is more than what the State of Vermont did, and more than the legal partnerships allowed in France and Scandinavian countries (SPS, 13/9/00). This surely is a link to decades of mass euthanasia in the country, and also surely, further related measures are bound to lie in the future.

*The 1991 judicial ruling in the Mia Farrow-Woody Allen case set a little-interpreted but landmark precedent about unmarried couples living together or living apart, or homosexuals, being allowed to adopt children.

*Schools and teachers are generally PC. They have been trying to indoctrinate children from earliest ages on that homosexual pairings are at least just as good as married couples. Even bewildered 6-year-olds get propagandized about families with 2 mammas or 2 pappas.

*Now that there has been legitimization of cohabiting homosexuals singly or jointly adopting children, the next natural consequence has been the legitimization of court battles over the adopted child when the previous lovers break up. The conflicts become particularly thorny when one woman in a lesbian relationship got herself artificially impregnated by a donor, but both were listed as parents on the birth certificate(!), and the other one now wants visiting rights (AP in SHJ, 26/9/00).

*A homosexual man of the gay lifestyle in NY City decided that he wanted "a more traditional, well-rounded life," and that fatherhood might be a way of attaining this, "an anchor to hold me in place," though what he did not want was a "live-in baby." So he arranged to have sex with a lesbian friend who lived with another lesbian, and they agreed beforehand that his name would not be on the birth certificate, and that he would have no parental or financial obligations or rights, but would be able to visit as often as he wanted (Newsweek, 29/5/00). A good example of modernistic values and self-centeredness, and using baby-making as a calculated means. His plan found a cool reception among his male friends, so he joined a support group of men "attempting to create an alternative kind of family."

*There is a new legal domain called Non-Traditional Estate Planning, which deals with wealth and inheritances in cases of "marriages" between same-sex homosexuals, settlements when such "married" homosexuals "divorce," property settlements where children were conceived by artificial insemination, and similar peculiar modernistic situations (source material from Margaret Sager).

*It is very unusual these days to find a newspaper columnist who supports traditional morality as to sex and marriage. People write in reporting the most outrageous arrangements, and the columnists are very neutral and give utilitarian outright immoral advice. Laura Schlessinger was just about the last syndicated defender of traditional morality, and she got beaten to a pulp for it, and to our surprise backtracked a bit.
One way to destroy the family is to turn children against parents, or deprive parents of parental functions and authority. We discovered and acquired this monograph in which Hillary Rodham (already then, before she became Mrs. Clinton) had a chapter in which she advocated a significant rollback of the legal status of minority of children (p. 20 ff). As a precedent, she invoked the abolition of slavery! Of course, this was concordant with her prominent later position that female children should be able to have abortions without the knowledge or consent of their parents.

In New York State, as probably in many others, a child could act in an emancipated fashion upon attaining the age of 16. For instance, at 16, a child would be allowed to leave the home and quit school, and then do any number of awful things. As a result, many children have become hooked on drugs, enmeshed in the sex trade, entered the crime culture, and also ended up without either education or job skills, and often in institutions and prisons.

In 1993, the government of British Columbia passed a law that no longer requires parental consent for medical treatment of a child of any age. Also, anyone who falls under the extremely broad rubric of a health care provider is covered by this act, and the health care provider need not inform parents unless a child agrees. There is no provision for review of second opinions, with the service provider being the sole judge on whether a child has requested or agreed to a procedure. Under this law, a ten-year-old child could refuse life-saving treatment because it is painful, a six-year-old could go to a sex therapist and be given sex as a treatment, any ten-year-old girl could have contraceptives installed in her, and on and on. All of this is also interpreted in terms of "choices." This is yet another erosion of parental authority, thereby of the family in general, and an unbridled aggrandizement of individualism and willfulness from earliest childhood on.

Throughout all of human experience that we know of, on all continents, no society has ever thrived without the family structure as its core (Amitai Etzioni, in Time, 6 Sept. 93, p. 76).

Media & PC Badmouthing of Traditional & Intact Families

Major sectors of feminists condemned marriage as "an obscene bourgeois institution." Homosexual circles want legitimization of homosexual "marriages," but have historically belittled the marriage institution, and its members as "breeders." Fiction writers almost normatively now depict families as awful, disfunctional, abusive, etc. TV hardly depicts any wholesome families anymore. According to columnist John Leo (NC Register, 5 Dec. 99), the 1999-2000 TV season tried very hard to appeal to teenagers, and did so by putting on shows in which parents are either non-existent, oppressive, philandering or in jail, and when they are shown, they always say stupid things. Grandparents are sometimes shown benignly because they are harmless and do not inflict any discipline.

In early 1993, we first learned that families could be divided into "maltreating" and "non-maltreating." Note the peculiar dichotomy and choice of terms. It is a bit like dividing school teachers into pedophiles and nonpedophiles.

One slightly amusing sign of the times is that so many people are now going back and writing either their autobiographies, or slightly fictionalized versions thereof, in which they claim to have had horrible, harrowing, abusive, etc., etc., etc., childhoods. We suspect that a lot of this reflects a modernistic attitude of disappointed entitlements to the perfect childhood, and a parent-bashing mentality.

The 28/8/00 Time cover story was "Who Needs a Husband," glorified secular singlehood for women, calling it an empowering choice (note the double whammy code phrase). Single women seem to fall into the two categories of wanting to be, and not being very happy with, being single. Allegedly, more than 40% of all adult females in the US are not married. Even looking only at women age 25-55, 65% reportedly are not married. This is a bit hard to believe, and may be pro-singlehood propaganda, since this would imply a roughly equal percentage or number of unmarried
males. However, one obstacle to marriage is very clear: 61% of single women and 54% of single men claim they would only marry the perfect mate.

TV shows such as "Sex and the City" do not help, in conveying one overarching message: "Men Are Dogs," even though the women in it are depicted as wild and bed-hopping.

The article also referred to rearing a child on one's own as an "empowering decision."

One theme that emerges over and over in the story was that modern women do not want "anyone to control me" and want to have "freedom."

However, one critic says that young women are growing up "unskilled in the art of compatibility" and they do not want to "have to change."

The same cover series also reported that 32% of all births in the US are to unmarried women, and many of them keep asserting that single parenthood is not harmful to a child.

Ironically, the cover story appeared right around the time anti-men feminist Gloria Steinem—doing the kind of "oops" we mentioned above—got married in her old age!

*Researchers are now claiming that coming from a large family dramatically increases one’s risk of developing "Alzheimer’s," and blame it on the lower income and education of such families and their children (Time, 14/2/00). This is another example of "researchers" discovering what people want to believe, as we keep pointing out.

The Trivialization of Marriage & the Marital Vows

*According to one writer, many young women these days invest vastly more efforts planning their wedding than planning their marriage (B&C, 1/2000). Some people claim that weddings have become theatrical productions, often at unimaginable costs. Also, weddings increasingly include outrageous elements, such as the couple smashing wedding cake in each other's faces, dogs serving as ring bearers, or the bride selling dances for money. An increasing number of weddings are apparently being held in the nude.

*Fashion houses and the bridal industry are working very hard to, as Newsweek (26/6/00) put it, "put some distance between the holy and the matrimony," with things such as beach weddings with brides in bikini dresses, ever more vulgar wedding parties and bizarre costumery. It described this as being a world-wide trend.

*One way in which marriage is being trivialized is by US high school texts framing it in the context of health, as a recent study of such texts discovered (ET, 11/99).

*Among the danger signs to look for in marriage preparation programs are the following. (a) "Marriage" is rarely mentioned, while the discourse heavily uses the idiom of "relationships." (b) Marriage is interpreted in terms of emotional relationships, rather than as a religious, social and childrearing institution. (c) The focus is on therapeutic communication rather than as shared values and ideals. (d) Excessive focus on the wedding day. (e) Endless emphasis on conflict in marriage, and legitimization of the mental reservation of divorce as a way out.

*Because relationship commitments are so fleeting these days, some men will not give diamond engagement rings to their intended brides on birthdays or gift-giving holidays such as Christmas, because in that case, if the couple break up, courts have ruled that the woman is entitled to keep the ring, whereas if she receives it on an ordinary day, she is supposed to give it back if the engagement fails (SHJ, 15/2/95).

*The staging of quasi-mock-marriages on TV is along the above lines: strangers marrying each other on a show without any commitment to each other.

*Paying more while enjoying it less. In the US, an estimated $42.4 billion was spent in 2000 on weddings, at an average cost of $19,000 each, and going up (Time, 27/3/00). We keep saying: the more expensive the wedding, the less solid the marriage, the sooner the divorce.

*The "Today" show had a web audience plan a couple's 9/00 wedding and honeymoon in every detail on the show. More than 1000 couples applied to be the couple. No future for them!
*An ad in a New York newspaper suggested that since plastic surgery is apt to last longer than one's marriage, that it is more important to choose the right plastic surgeon than the right spouse (First Things, 4/93).

*Whoopi Goldberg told TV newswoman Barbara Walters (and the public) that the reason she left her husband was because he would not put the toilet seat down after urinating. We suggest that all these little reasons for marital dissolution be inventoried (probably in a 20,000 page book) and included in the marriage vows under the things that one must put up with (SHJ, 27/5/93).

*Most contracts under US law cannot be unilaterally abrogated--except for one: marriage. It is therefore easier in the US to walk away from a marriage than from a contract to purchase a used car (Time, 6 Sept. 93).

*In her advice column, "Dear Abby" has begun to endorse people who have demented spouses taking up with other heterosexual relationships. To add justification to this, she virtually interpreted people with so-called "Alzheimer's" "as living somewhere between heaven and earth, and the likelihood of returning is nil" (e.g., UP, Fall 1990). In essence, Dear Abby is dispensing marriage annulments (Source clipping from Joe Osburn).

**Cohabitation**

*Cohabitation has increased 10-fold since 1970!

*It is deceptive to consider only the rate of births out of wedlock. A more revealing index is conception out of wedlock of children carried to term. According to the US Census Bureau, more than half of first-born children are conceived out of wedlock, which it believes to be triple the 1930s figure. Also, in the 1930s, 54% of pregnant women got married before giving birth, which figure is now down to 23%.

*At one time, cohabitation was "living in sin" (as if we didn’t live in sin), but now it is merely living together. Also, it is an interesting phenomenon that for about 100 years, opponents of the family structure spoke in terms of "free love." Today, when what used to be called "free love" is practiced by the majority of younger people, and many older ones as well, no one calls it free love anymore. In fact, it no longer has a name at all.

*Of course, the bedrock of contemporary cohabitation is "contraception," and that means many unrecognized abortions if the pill, IUD, or other drugs are used; and many recognized abortions when these "contraceptives" fail. In other words, cohabitation is part of the culture of death.

*People who cohabit have been shown (to the anti-family people’s chagrin) to be more likely to get divorced if they do marry. According to some thinking, this is because cohabitation changes attitudes toward marriage, family and divorce, and reduces investment into marriage. This is even true in a material sense, in that married people are more likely to buy houses, save, invest, etc. They are also less likely to drink-and-drive, take drugs, smoke, etc. Further, cohabitating couples are more likely to have sex with other partners, and to be violent to each other: 14% vs. 6% for married ones. Enlightened morality seems to carry a heavy cost.

*One woman said that the advantage to cohabiting was that this way, she only had to worry about breaking a lease instead of a contract for life.

*An unmarried man and woman had a baby with each other, and when they split up, the man was sentenced to child support until nine years later he noticed that the child had no resemblance to him. He demanded a DNA test which found that the child was not his at all but the court nonetheless insisted that he continue to pay child support. Now a lot of men in similar circumstances want DNA tests, and many of them feel that the courts are merely trying to keep welfare payments by the government down by rulings such as these (SHJ, 4 June 00).
A man who has had 9 children over 36 years by 7 women over a thirty-year period is one of the great heroes and models of many people: singer Ray Charles. At least, this is better than having 7 children by 9 women.

What is the matter with these men who want to live in sin with only one woman? If in sin, sin boldly, as Luther said. Live with 4 (an old Islamic practice), or a mansion full (like Hugh Hefner of Playboy). Make sin count!

Marital Instability & Some of its Fruits

Demographers say that 1971 was a watershed year in the history of American marriage, with divorce being relatively rare before that but beginning to soar thereafter. The proportion of people who marry three or more times hit a high of 8% of total marriages by 1990 (Newsweek, 13/3/92).

The traditional family is becoming a remnant in the US, and probably in many other countries too. As of 1999, only 26% of people live in a family where there are two married parents of the opposite sex with at least one child. As recently as 1972, the figure was 45%. Only 56% of adults are married, and only 51% of children live with both natural parents, while 18% of all children live with only 1 parent. Most of the rest are with a parent who lives in an unmarried cohabitation. While children of broken marriages often intend not to repeat their parents' patterns, they apparently can't help themselves, and are extremely likely to live in unstable heterosexual relationships (NCR, 12/99).

Every marriage in the British royal family except the Queen's own either is or has been rocky or on the rocks. The British press has called this a constitutional crisis.

The cynical associate publisher of Wedding Bells Home magazine quit and started a new magazine, Divorce Magazine. He said, "It's a more natural progression than if I came from House and Home magazine" (Nwk., 26/8/96).

Of US female high school seniors, 40% believed in 1990 that they will eventually have at least 2 husbands (Time, Fall 90). Such expectancies obviously are not a good foundation for a "first" marriage, and become self-fulfilling.

"Blended families" is the new term for situations where a man and woman with children from previous marriages or liaisons get married to each other (Time, 13/1/92).

A parent who had just spent a big amount of money on the daughter’s wedding got incensed when friends referred to the marriage as a "starter marriage," and real estate agents sometimes refer to a couple's first house as a "starter house." Other people refer to cohabitation as a "starter marriage" (SHJ, 10 March 00).

A Doonesbury cartoon in late 1991 featured the following interview. "Meet Brad and Carol... Brad and Carol have been married for ten years. They have two happy, well-adjusted children who were not born out of wedlock... Both Brad and Carol go to church, give time to charities, love their parents, and help their kids with their homework. They don't cheat on their taxes or each other. Neither has ever battered the other... Neither is addicted to sex, drugs, alcohol, food, violence, cigarettes or each other, and neither has ever slept with Madonna, or incredibly, me!... Today on Geraldo... Happily married people who are not recovering from anything!"

"So Brad and Carol! What's it like being freaks?" "It's fine, no complaints... Actually, it's strengthened our marriage."

A marriage research project at Rutgers University claims that American men and women between ages 21-29 who have never been married viewed financial independence and acquisition of a home as greater priorities than marriage, and looked upon marriage as an economic risk. With increasing age, men still preferred this kind of an arrangement (probably quietly shaking from laughter at the women's stupidity in putting up with this), and were less likely to want children, while women began wanting to be married but had become cynical and distrustful about men. The study
Also noted the incoherencies of people who, on the one hand, wanted life-long marriage while, on the other hand, believing in sexual license (AP in SHI, 7 June 00).

*Even though fewer people get married, more of those who are married get divorced. This accounts for the fact that just between 1980 and 1990, the number of marital and family lawyers in the greater Syracuse area boomed from 17 to 60! (SHI, 11 July 91). Decadence is always good for somebody!

*Sex guru Dr. Ruth Westheimer claimed (Time, 10 April 00) that if couples whose marriage was on the skids adopted even only one novel sexual position, their marriage might be saved. What a simple ingenious but certainly wrong "position" on marriage that is! "Try another way," Dr. Ruth!

*In the US, there are millions of parents of both sexes who are separated or divorced, or where the parents are unmarried but the father's identity is known, but where the parent who has custody of the children is not receiving child support from the other spouse, sometimes despite literally hundreds of court hearings and rulings. Only about half received the full amount of child support set by the court. These de facto abandonings of their children are found equally commonly in all social classes and among both sexes. Quite commonly, the parent who ends up with the children, who is usually the mother, sinks into career poverty. We interpret this phenomenon as additional evidence of decommunitization in our society, enmity toward children, estrangement between the sexes, and societal collapse generally (Newsweek, 4 May 92).

*When parents split up, "the courts look at the men as nonessential to their children's lives" (Newsweek, 28/2/00).

*When parents with children divorce, 40% of the children will not see their father in a typical year, and 20% will not see him in 5 years. (Press & Sun Bulletin, 3 April 92; source item from Sue Ruff).

*The likelihood of "black" children living with both parents until age 17 dropped from 52% to 6% in the 1980s.

*A poll-taker comes to a house, and a little boy opens the door. In response to the poll-taker's questions, he says: "Well, let's see... My mom's the head of the household, but she works three jobs so she's never home. Her boyfriend sometimes lives here with his two kids, but he's in rehab right now. My half-sister and I are moving in with my grandma tomorrow, so I don't really live here anymore, anyway..."

*A sad sign of the times is that so many children's books now try to weave in the kinds of problem situations that children do encounter in real life, such as people in the family going onto drugs, separating and divorcing parents, the arrival of new step-parents, and so on. In former days, juvenile fiction inspired or opened a healthy fantasy world; today, the poor children have to regurgitate endlessly in their readings the decadent and miserable situations around them.

*In the early 1990s, an album of children's music came out, called "Tunes for Tots." It included some decidedly modernistic song themes, such as children singing about their parents' divorce, with lines such as "Sometimes that's the way things go." This sort of thing seems to be the trend in the children's music business which is also socializing very young children very early into the rap and rock genre. So after reading about awful families like one's own, one has to sing about it too? It appears that the age of innocence is getting ever shorter and shorter.

*Even otherwise politically correct researchers are beginning to report that parental separation has devastating impacts upon children, and leaves wounds that for most of them never heal. Among the impacts are that the children then witness their parents in new erotic (and sometimes erratic) relationships, often serial ones, which in turn arouse the children's own sexuality. Perhaps relatedly, second marriages of divorced parents who have children are even more likely than the first to also end in divorce. The children themselves are later more likely to shack up with someone rather than to get married, and that relationship is not apt to last either. The recent findings—which are
commonsensical--severely cut into the "good divorce" ideology of the past few decades. However, there are still holdouts who sing the virtues of divorce for all concerned, one such being newspaper columnist Katha Pollitt (e.g., *Time*, 25/9/00).

*Research has begun to bear out the fairy tales, namely that stepmothers really are not as good and caring to their young stepchildren as they are to their own. Stepchildren get less education, medical care, and even food than children would from their biological mothers (*Time*, 18/9/00).

*A man told the story of his modernistic family in a guest column in *Newsweek* (8 May 00). Both his parents had 3 marriages, his brother had 4, and he himself "only" 2, all but one of these terminations by divorce. He kept his distance from all his relatives because "how do you commit to folks who may not be in your life next year?"

*In a case that was before the US courts in late 1992, a woman refused to give up her 9-year-old son who had been living since his birth with adoptive parents. This instructive story is very complicated, so follow these details closely: two women gave birth to sons (let us call them boy A and boy B) the same day in the same hospital, and the hospital apparently accidentally switched the babies. One woman gave her son up for adoption, the other (let us call her Woman A) took her baby home. Five years later, woman A discovered (through blood tests done on the boy and her husband) that the boy she had was not her son (boy A) but was boy B. The couple were divorcing, and the husband claimed he had not fathered the child. Another couple had adopted woman A’s natural son (boy A), being innocently ignorant of the fact that the children had been switched. The now divorced woman A adopted the child she had been raising for five years (boy B), and sued for custody of her natural son (boy A) who, however, had been living in ignorant bliss with his adoptive parents since his birth. The court finally awarded custody of boy A to his adoptive parents, but in the meantime, woman A had in effect kidnapped boy A, refusing to let him return to his adoptive parents after a visit with her. Woman A has since remarried, so she now has: one current husband, one ex-husband, one natural son (boy A) whom she is trying to keep, and one adopted son (boy B) whom she can also keep. Got it? The adoptive parents now have no one. Who does (and who should) own this child? And what is best for the child--or does this even matter?

*We don’t hear much of studies that have looked at all sorts of factors that might be predictive of criminal incarceration in adulthood, and that found that after holding everything constant against everything else, the single biggest predictor was the absence of a person’s father in the household, particularly in the case of boys (*FT*, 3/99).

*It is only about 10 years ago that Vice President Quayle was mercilessly ridiculed for decrying single motherhood!

*At one time, people were concerned primarily for the welfare of the children of divorcing couples, but increasingly, as older couples are divorcing, we are hearing how traumatic this is to their grown-up children (e.g., *Newsweek*, 4 Sept. 00).

*Mother are vastly more likely to kill a child if the child’s father is no longer in her life, much as the likelihood skyrockets that a new man in the life of a mother with a young child from a previous man will kill that child. A mother may kill a child from a previous man either because the child becomes an obstacle to finding/keeping a new man, or because the burden of raising the child without a cooperative man is experienced as overwhelming.

In 1999, a Syracuse woman had 2 children from 2 men within 2 years, but no man in the house, with the oldest child being said to be autistic. As he became bigger, at age 13 he started beating up on his mother. So one night, she set her house on fire in a fashion that killed him, but enabled her to save her younger daughter. What struck us about this is that getting rid of her son was so important to her that she was willing to sacrifice her entire house with all her possessions. This event illustrates to what extremes parents with difficult children may be driven if they do not have the support to continue functioning within whatever strength they do have.
Children Born Out of Wedlock

*In all industrial countries except Japan, an increasing number of children are being born out of wedlock—in the US, close to 30%. Nor can this all be explained in terms of poverty because the rate of giving birth out of wedlock increased 100% among women with college education just between 1982-92. Also, it appears that many women are having such babies in order to establish a lasting loving relationship with somebody, no longer trusting that marriage would provide it.

*An organization in New York City called Single Mothers by Choice meets every month, and all the name tags are also coded with a two-letter code. The first code reveals at what stage the woman is: T for thinking about having a baby on her own, A for attempting to get pregnant, P for being pregnant, and M for having already given birth. The second letter reveals the how: I for artificial insemination, A for adoption, and N for sex partner (which we assume might stand for "natural").

*A US organization, called Mom’s House (founded in 1988), provides child care for young unmarried mothers, teaches them parenting and housekeeping skills, teaches them that sex and parenthood belong within marriage, and helps them to finish high school and even college. The organization is up-front about its religious beliefs (including its opposition to abortion and birth control) and its expectations for the young women, and reports that only 3% of its graduates have had another child outside wedlock. As of 2000, the organization is establishing programs in several locations in the northeastern US.

Granny Dumping

*A new trend since the late 1980s has been for elderly people to be brought to hospital emergency units and to be abandoned there, much as formerly, infants were abandoned by being deposited into receptacles at foundling institutions. The abandoners include spouses, children, other family members, landlords, and even nursing homes. Because the abandoned person is often an older woman, this has come to be called "granny dumping." This is the other pole of child dumping. Many of the family dumpings occur on Fridays when the family goes off for the weekend. The phenomenon is most marked in states with large retirement communities. While the problem was still relatively small, it was a rapidly growing one.

Granny dumping has also made its appearance in Australia, particularly in the tourist areas of Queensland, where tourists apparently are abandoning their elderly family members—generally at a local hospital—before they go back home. Until this publicity hit the news in 1992, Australia had naively thought that granny dumping was exclusively an American phenomenon.

*Not only are families dumping their elderly members in the emergency units of hospitals, but nursing homes have begun to do the same thing. They bring one of their residents to an emergency room for some kind of an acute health problem—and when the person has been stabilized, the nursing home announces that the person’s "bed has been filled" and they cannot take him or her back.

Conclusion

Not much about the family is good news these days. Among it are heroic stories of commitment to impaired children, and of adoption. One other good news is that in some states, it is vastly harder than in others to find people to fill the kinds of jobs that require work at night and on weekends, because more people there put togetherness with their families first (AP in Indianapolis Star, 15/9/00; source item from Joe Osburn).

Children: Child Development Reports & Theories

*First, the experts said to let babies sleep on their stomachs. Then they said that this can kill them, and to put them on their backs instead. Now they say that this will flatten their heads and deform their brains. We say: "primitive" societies that carried their babies, often in nets and slings, probably had it right. Next best: suspend the babies in mid-air.
*Amazingly little research appears to have been done on baby formula despite its common use. Only recently was it announced that formula with certain so-called fatty acids similar to those in mother's milk produced a huge increase (7 points) in the babies’ intellectual growth by age 18 months (AP in SHJ, 7 March 00).

*The opinion that babies do not feel pain is swinging to the opposite that infantile pain causes the growth of nerve connections to the paining site that forever alter future perceptions of pain there.

*When young children are put together, then even before the age of three, a dominance hierarchy emerges. As in the animal world, dominance is usually established through aggression, but this becomes less overt once the dominance has been established (Discover, 5/2000).

*Parents should not give names such as Faith, Hope, Charity, Chastity, etc., to their children until the children have become old enough to reveal what their qualities and virtues really are. A Texas man, fired for exposing himself, went back to his workplace and killed 5 people there, including a woman by the name of Wheeler. When he was sentenced to death, relatives of the victims "were pleased." "His face was the last thing my mother saw and I'm going to make sure I'm there on the day he dies so my face is the last he sees," said Charity McFadden, Wheeler's daughter (SHJ, 30/9/00).

*Scientists say that girls--but not boys--are reaching puberty ever earlier. One hypothesis is that this is due to an increase in hormones in the environment, in part from pesticides. Another hypothesis blames childhood obesity, since skinny girls tend to reach puberty later (Time, 21/8/00). One of our hypotheses is that the pervasive psychological and social sexualization of children plays at least a part. The kind of people who have been pushing immoral sexuality and premature sexualization on children naturally opt for the explanation that chemicals in the environment, or obesity, is to blame for all this (e.g., Time, 20/11/00). One mother responded to these news reports by pointing out that in major clothing stores, it is virtually impossible to get clothes any more that are suitable for young girls; everything is skin tight, clinging, revealing, and imitative of the also provocative clothing of older girls and young women (Time, 20/11/00).

*A Girl Scout study found that in the US, girls age 8-12 increasingly adopt the mentality and practices that formerly were associated with much older girls, such as dressing and acting like older teenagers, worrying about appearance and popularity, becoming preoccupied with thinness, and launching into romantic relationships, including serious dating. As one observer said, if one goes into an elementary school today, one might think one were in a high school. Parents are complaining that it has become increasingly difficult to purchase "little girl" clothes, because designers have simply shrunk teen styles to fit younger girls (SHJ, 14/9/00).

*Experts claim that for a long time, a major source of self-esteem for girls was the quality of their character, but that in recent years, this has shifted so it now is the shape of their bodies. As children are becoming sexualized at ever earlier ages, even tots are becoming obsessed with appearance. The experts are not very helpful in that they play shrink lingo games and call for shrink treatments, including mind drugs (Newsweek, 3 July 00).

*Girls aged 8-12 now also see school first as an arena for socializing, and only secondly as a place to learn.

*As of Fall 2000, children spend about $140 on school supplies, $550 on clothes, and $600 on electronics, for getting ready to go back to school (Newsweek, 18/9/00).

*It is rather telling that in an age when segmentation of reality is the norm, and not only the existence of universals but even of enduring moral norms, is denied, that psychologists concerned with child development would come up with theories that deny regularities in children's developmental processes, and try to explain child development by means of chaos theory. These theories are allied with those that interpret biodynamic systems (including children) as self-organizing, and therefore render parents and adults in their lives relatively irrelevant (e.g., Thelen & Smith, 1996). What is so fascinatingly perverse about this school of thought is that it also interprets the fact
that environmental circumstances that can affect the course of a person’s development can be cited as evidence of chaos rather than of regularity.

**Children: Parental Withdrawal From Fecundity & Child-Rearing**

*The wealthy countries of Europe and Asia are running out of children and face a population decline. It is people in these countries that keep saying that the world needs fewer people, but at the same time, they claim that fewer people brings economic decline. There is some crazy and confused thinking here. At any rate, these countries then let in immigrants to make up for their population loss, but as a result experience major assimilation problems, attitude backlash, etc.

*Some of the loss of fecundity in modern nations is due to loss of fertility, to which there are many contributors. Among these are promiscuity that leads to venereal diseases that reduce fertility or even cause sterility. Another one is abortion that does the same. Another reason why men are losing their fertility maybe that they were raised after plastic-lined diapers arrived. These apparently fry the scrotums of baby boys and permanently reduce healthy sperm later in life (Time, 16/10/00).

*According to every imaginable index, modernistic parents are in a process of withdrawing not only from fecundity, but also from the rearing of the children they beget. Among the many causes for this, 5 seem to stand out: hostility toward marriage; hostility toward fecundity; hostility toward children (what the Germans call kinderfeindlichkeit); lowered willingness to perform childrearing activities, and to bear the entailed sacrifices; and ever-decreasing competency to rear children even if one is willing.

*Between 1981-97, the number of women in large hospitals who have themselves drugged during labor tripled, despite the fact that both mothers and babies fare better after birth without the drugs. Authorities say that the attitude is one of "I want a baby but I don’t want the pain" (Newsweek, 29/11/99).

*In the US, the abandoning of one’s child has historically been most likely to take place in hospitals, which is why we have some numerical documentation of this. In 1991, there were 22,000 such abandonments in US hospitals, which already by 1998 had risen to 31,000, the great majority involving drug-addicted mothers. While some such children were adopted, and relatives took in others, the majority were eventually returned to their mothers after these had been declared rehabilitated (Boston Globe, 10 April 00).

*Babies are being abandoned in record numbers in the US and elsewhere. A large proportion die before being found. Additional ones (probably half) are never found. Apparently, one clever way to abandon a baby is to stuff it behind some diaper packages on a supermarket shelf, where another mother will soon find it. An organization in San Diego has started a cemetery devoted entirely to dead or slain unclaimed or unknown babies. Project Cuddle, established in Southern California in 1990, has a national outreach (888/628-3353) to prevent pregnant mothers from abandoning their babies. In the Pittsburgh area, over 600 families have started the practice of putting a basket for a baby on their front porches, and leaving the porch light on.

*The laws currently being passed in Western countries to permit legal child abandonment at designated places had been eliciting extreme reactions from both sides. One side stresses the lives that are saved, while the other side criticizes that such a heinous practice would be legalized, and at any rate, that it would not work.

*Amazingly, since the early 1980s, the number of children in foster care in the US has more than doubled (Time, 8 May 2000).

*McKenzie, R. G. (Ed.). (1999). Rethinking orphanages for the 21st century. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Shall it be the frying pan or the fire? People in each may think that the other is preferable—until they had a chance to try it. This book argues in favor of the return of the orphanage. Its editor grew up in one, and apparently had a relatively least worst experience, and generalizes from that. One thing the editor got right is the PPP nature of the child placement system
that tries to aggrandize (and enlarge) itself by not making early and good matches of children to adoptive and foster parents. The status quo people are, of course, howling in rage and characterize the proposal by the worst epithet they can think of: "right wing" (e.g., CP, 2000, No. 2).

*The good news is that many people are willing to adopt children, including children with impairments or of different racial features, thereby also saving many babies' lives. The bad news is that many such parents are infertile because of earlier sexual promiscuity and abortions.

*Some unscrupulous people are trying to cash in on the demand for adoptable children. There are reports that in Latin America, pregnant women may be kidnapped, and then made to have an early delivery so that the baby can be sold into the adoption trade (The Australian, 7 April 92; source item from Peter Millier). In the US, some private adoption services have become scam operations that promise people babies, charge them money in the meantime, but don't "deliver." One Philadelphia woman running such a scam collected about $215,000 from hopeful couples from all over the US. Somebody said, "it's easy money" (Time, 17/7/00).

*The US Census Bureau did not used to count how many children were being raised by grandparents, but recently started doing so. If found that since 1970, the number grew from 2.2 million "grandparent-headed households" to 5.4 million in 1997, accounting for 8% of US children (S.P.S., 30/6/00). Some of these children's parents died, but more often, they are mentally unfit, on drugs, incarcerated, or simply abandoned their children (Nw.k., 12 June 00). Sometimes, both the parent and the parent's children have to be taken care of by the parent's parents. One problem with all this is that modernistic societies are gradually running out of grandparents who are willing and able to raise their grandchildren that their decadent children cannot raise.

*One of the many reasons why head lice have made such a big comeback is that by the time baby boomers decide it is finally time to have children, they can no longer see well enough when a child reaches school age to search the child's head for nits and lice (Time, 25/9/00). Furthermore, nitpicking a child's head is a very time-consuming task that has to be repeated over and over, and requires quantity time instead of quality time.

*No one at home. In 1998, the number of 2-income families exceeded 1-income families for the first time (Time, 6 Nov. 00). In 1976, only 31% of working mothers returned to work within a year of having a baby; by 1998, this had risen to a record 59% (Time, 6 Nov. 00). Furthermore, when mothers do go back to work, they are more likely to work full-time rather than part-time, whereas formerly they were apt to do the latter (Time, 13/11/00).

*About 7 million children (18%) aged 5-14 regularly came home from school to empty homes or were left unsupervised in 1995 (S.P.S., 31/10/00).

*At one time, there was much sexual abuse of children in Canada's institutions and foster homes. This "free sex" has been greatly reduced, but now, Canada is reportedly becoming one of the countries in which paid sex with children is very common. Indian and mixed race children seem particularly likely to be inducted into the sex trade, and Canada is now one of the countries to which pedophiles travel for easy prey (AP in SH.A, 2 April 00).

*In the US (and probably elsewhere too), sexual molestation of a child is much more severely punished if it is committed by strangers than by relatives. Pedophilia is distinguished from incest only by who commits it. This has become a motive for pedophiles to marry women with children (SH.A, 2 Jan. 00).

*There is now such a thing as "724 children," i.e., children who are being kept indoors at home 24 hours a day, 7 days a week because the parents are afraid of the violence outside the doors.

*It is quite a shock to find a lengthy 11-page article in the 2/93 issue of Exceptional Children devoted entirely to how to teach "pre-school children with disabilities" how to respond or not respond "to the lures of strangers." Families and services are doing very poorly teaching their children anything adaptive, and now on top of it all, we have this very learned article, using clever research
procedures complete with behavioral charts and curves, on how to teach children who are not only very young but also handicapped, to take protective measures against predatory adults. One thing that is almost beyond all belief is that there are people who do believe that the collapse of polity and functionality of a culture can be countered first of all "by research," secondly by teaching potential victims defense skills at the clinical level, and thirdly by teaching this even to handicapped babies. This study came from one of the citadels of academic programs in handicaps, namely the University of Washington.

*As long ago as 1990, a new hotline for children in Canada started receiving 25,000 calls a month from troubled or abused children--and this in a country with a very small population.

**Children: Child Junking Via the Media Specifically**

One way to junk a child is to stuff it with media, and especially bad, violent and sex-filled media.

*Our entire culture pushes children from an earliest age into sexuality. For instance, the entertainment media quite commonly these days put even babies and young children into roles with sexual connotations. An example is the television series "Baby Talk" where courtship begins in the cradle. People are then surprised later when children engage in heterosexual relationships at an early, and ever earlier, date.

*There have been male dolls out on the market--primarily meant to be bought for little girls--that have been advertised as "extremely sexy...will seduce you..." and that come with underwear that can be taken off--and condoms (SHJ, 24/3/93).

*We are told on the one hand that children are being sexualized too young, and then on the other hand, the media (e.g., Time, 30/10/00) lionize a love story between a 13-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl in the film "George Washington."

*Hollywood executives admitted in Fall 2000 that they have systematically been trying to market films with violent and sexual content to children of grade school and junior high level. Isn't there something strange about adults pushing little girls into extremely early sexualization, and then wondering about the increase in sex crimes?

*Observers of the modern scene have noted that over the years, the list of taboo topics considered unfit for children to know has shrunk to next to nothing, as children are learning these previously taboo topics at earlier and earlier ages.

*In 1969, movies began to be rated according to their content and suitability for children of various ages. That year, there were 81 movies rated G for general audience (i.e., suitable for children of all ages), and 88 were rated R, meaning restricted, usually because of some sexual content. Already by 1990, there were only 8 G films and 341 R ones.

*The media people use every trick in the book, and a lot of tricks not yet in any book, to corrupt the sexual morality of children. One is to sneak gratuitous sexuality into totally unrelated contexts. For instance, a woman bought her 9-year-old son what she thought was a computer game on chess. Only after it was opened did she notice that it featured a greatly-endowed woman, i.e., "the queen."

*Lassie it isn't. Parents learn that the film "Best in Show" about a dog is rated PG-13 (meaning it is suitable for children above age 13 with parental guidance) and decide to spend the afternoon with them in the cinema watching it. To their surprise and horror, they discover that the film has lots of cleavage, "gay" jokes, a lesbian kissing scene, slang references to sexual intercourse, a couple joking about "doing it," and discussions of sexual positions.

*To our total disbelief, we saw parts of a new Disney film (for children, at 7 p.m. on a Sunday) in 11/2000 in which a man playing Santa Claus spent the night in bed with a single unmarried mother, in a "gratuitous" scene of sexual debauchery. This is on top of a series of Disney
sponsorships of corrupt media. Obviously, the Disney executives (Eisner and Company) have embarked on a deliberate campaign to corrupt children, and Disney needs to be boycotted.

*The typical US child aged 2-18 gets stuffed with 5.5 hours of "media," mainly TV, a day; for those above age 8, it is almost 7 hours. About two-thirds of children aged 8+ have a TV set in their bedrooms (36% with cable), and a third aged 2-7 do; 30% have a VCR. Half of parents have no rules about TV watching (Time, 29/11/99). It is extremely common in homes to have the TV on at dinnertime. Also, 70% of children (88% of "white" ones) have a computer at home (11% with Internet hook-ups), which is mostly used for "fun." However, about 1.5 hours per day are spent listening to CDs, tapes and radios--hardly any for good reasons (SHI, 18/9/99). Even children who do not have computers in their rooms or at home may use them elsewhere outside of school. Reportedly, 65% of US teenagers use the Internet regularly, half of them at home. Many spend hours each day communicating on the net with schoolmates whom they see all day, sometimes with 10 all at the same time (SHI, 4 Nov. 99). Yes, the children are becoming what they behold!

*Children surfing the Internet for legitimate research projects can hardly avoid bringing up pornography, in part because so many porno sites have misleading names (Time, 11 Oct. 99).

*Some of the intelligentsia that have not yet gotten over Freud or their shrinkery justify violent TV games for children because "the id is the center of your life," as one media designer said.

*Parents of teenagers claim that they monitor their children's web surfing, but the children report that this is untrue (Time, 11 Oct. 99). Let's face it, the vast majority of parents have lost complete control over what their children see on TV or do with their computers; and whatever it is, it isolates them from adults. A few decades ago, most children did not even have their own bedrooms, let alone the means to isolate themselves electronically.

*The average US grandparent spends $505 p.a. per grandchild, and apparently heavily so on media-connected items. An alternative proposal is that they put most of this money into a college fund.

*Texts used to tell us that maybe 0.5% of American school children have serious hearing losses. A news report (AP in SHI, 14/6/2000) claimed that there were 400,000 "deaf and hearing-impaired girls" alone in the US. If there are now really that many, they must have lost hearing from having listened to loud music.

*Starting with the Fall 1990 US TV season, characters (including child actors as young as 6) on TV series presented during the so-called family hours (roughly between 7-8 pm) began to use crude sexual language and allusions. In reply to critics, TV executives said that this is the language that children now use all over the US, and it would be cutting off children from reality if TV were not to use such themes and language. The growing number of TV shows thereafter that showed married couples doing and talking sex was invoked as a "cover" for doing it in children's shows.

*Airlines have had a long tradition of showing films on long flights. In the early 1990s, these films began to get raunchy--and here is a great example of media and PC hypocrisy: some airlines began to run notices recommending "viewer discretion" "because many films today may contain some material that may be offensive to some individuals." How is a passenger on a flight to exercise discretion for him/herself or any children when there may be up to ten different screens on the plane (on new planes, 1 for every seat) showing the same film; and should parents bind shut the eyes of their children?

*Starting in the early 1990s, more than half of the periodic catalogues of ca. 40 pages of a major US publisher of visual aids to be used in the education of handicapped children and youths has been devoted to materials related to sex. One cannot help conclude that with so much education these days revolving around sex, sex has virtually become education.
*Furby stuffed creatures with built-in voices have been caught talking foul. This was probably another joke of liberal media technicians, like those caught putting naughty sex scenes subliminally into the Disney film "The Lion King."

*The mythology that one needs to be rich in order to have more than one child was perpetuated by Time which advised people that if they want a multi-child family, they "better make sure that the family bank account is full to bursting" (8 May 00).

**"The idea that parents must suffer for the children is an outdated model of martyrdom. It creates victims in two generations at once" (a writer in Time, 16/10/00).

*A columnist pointed out that Dr. Laura Schlessinger bashed single mothers and working mothers long before she quoted the Jewish Bible about the immorality of homosexuality, but it was only then that the liberals tried to get her off the air and out of the newspapers. No one accused her of hate speech when she preached against extramarital sex and working mothers. A working mother and a columnist greatly complained about that, and thought that she should have been bashed much earlier (SHA, 9 April 00; SHJ, 14/8/00). She was particularly scandalized by Dr. Schlessinger's advice, "don't have them if you won’t raise them."

*It is absolutely amazing to contemplate the liberal mentality about parental de facto abandonment of child-rearing. An editorial in the Syracuse Herald-Journal (18/9/00) noted correctly all the awful things that happen when children after school do not have a parental home to go to where a parent is at home, but then the editorial reflexively called for government-funded after-school programs, rather than for parents to reconsider their self-centered lifestyles. Another writer promptly supported this perspective with the headline, "Latch-Key Children Need Government Help" (SHJ, 22/9/00). Who would publish a headline such as, "Latch-Key Children Need Parental Help"?

*For some ideologues, publicly funded quality day care on demand has become a religious quest. Why? Because they are getting panicky that the liberal ideologies of the past have led to practices that destroy the country, and are seeking ways of salvaging this ideology (and the mistakes that they had endorsed) by an idealized form of childrearing out of the home. We lay money that (a) it won’t happen, and (b) it won’t work.

*As the percentage of children in day care keeps going up, researchers are rushing to prove how good day care is for children. Possibly, they are better off where there are a few rules than in today’s chaotic households (Nwk., 16/10/00).

*One sociologist (Lionel Tiger) has given the name bureaugamy to practices that displace parents, transfer parental roles to the state, encourage single parenthood with public financial incentives, and especially those that entail welfare schemes that "marry the mother to the state."

*The more compelling the objective quantitative indices of parental withdrawal from childrearing become, the shriller become the assertions from modernistic and PC quarters that it is not quantity but quality of parental engagement with children that counts (e.g., AP in SHJ, 27/8/99). Soon, we may have a form of quality drive-by child-rearing.

*One current trend is to attribute so much to "genes" as to convey that experience has a very limited role, which also contributes to a mentality of hands-off childrearing, or of substituting experience-giving objects and gadgetry for interpersonal socialization. Similarly, a prominent theory is that it is the genes that give babies pro-social or stand-offish qualities, and thereby elicit nurturant or stand-offish parental behavior. So if you withdraw from rearing your baby, it is the baby’s fault (Newsweek, 27/3/00).

*The assertion by Judith Harris in her 1998 book, The Nurture Assumption, that parents don’t really matter in the development of children has certainly stirred up a hornet’s nest of controversy, and energized a lot of people into writing on the issue. The Nurture Assumption continues to attract enthusiastic adherents because it lets parents off the hook of childrearing, and lets working mothers put their children in day care without any qualms. One researcher now examines the biochemical
indicators of stress in children, and finds that what happens in the family does matter extremely much, and is very powerful in explaining child behaviors. For instance, children who experience stress lose resistance to diseases and are more apt to get sick; and if the stress persists, they slow down in growth and become stupid (Discover, 8/2000).

To the degree child peer influence is increasing these days, there is commonly a very good and obvious reason, namely that a child simply does not have as much access to adult figures as children used to have, and therefore turns to peers as a substitute.

*Even as the birth rate is going down and people have fewer and fewer children, the number of products developed for infants and their parents is exploding, but most of these are useless, and many are dangerous. Many are an effort to separate parents from the intimate bodily care of children. For instance, there are all sorts of electronic gadgets to immediately cover the sight and smell of baby’s diapers, and machine substitutes for parental cuddling, e.g., playing a recording of a "real" heartbeat to a baby so that one does not have to hold the infant close to one's own heart. Of course, as children get older, they are apt to be literally swamped with gifts of material goods that can on the one hand overwhelm the child with too much noise, too much stimulation, and too many "choices," and on the other hand can engender a greedy mindset in children for more and more material goods.

*Somebody has characterized the shrinkery of children (child therapy, child drugging, etc.) as today's substitute for child-rearing and moral teaching.

*A new advocacy group in the US is called Citizens Against Breast-Feeding, blaming breast-feeding for cigarette smoking, illicit sex, homosexuality, and cybersex. It declares breast-feeding to be a violation of the civil rights of babies and a form of incest. This was one of the many groups who held protest events in Philadelphia while the Republican party had its nominating convention there, demanding that the party make opposition to breast-feeding part of its platform (SPS, 1 Aug. 00). If these are friends of children, who are the enemies?

*People’s alienation from children is signified by all sorts of phenomena such as more and more adults displaying pictures of their pets, and even having their pet’s portrait painted at great expense, and sometimes even displaying the pictures of their pets where in the past, people would have put pictures of their children.

*According to one authority, parents who plan on shifting from quality time to quantity time once their children hit their teens are too late, because by that time, teenagers reverse the tables on their parents and spend little time at home to be quality-parented (Time, 18/9/00).

*What is the single most predictive quick way of discreetly finding out whether an adult with children is a liberal or a conservative? Forget questions about voting patterns, abortion, minimum wage, welfare, etc. Instead, find out whether they teach their children to call them by first name, and encourage other children to address them the same way (SHJ, 10 Dec. 99). Of course, by having their children not call them (or anyone else) something like "mom" and "dad," these parents are playing down their parental identities and roles.

*With parents increasingly failing, either from parenting incompetence or withdrawal from parenting, the schools have gradually taken on virtually every single parental function, from diapering and breakfast on up to after-school care. These have begun to be called "full-service schools." Unfortunately, they often also provide functions and services that many parents in functional families would not want, such as an egging on of the children into sexuality--and then providing them with abortions without parental knowledge or consent.

*Time (3 June 96) carried a cover story on the plight of American children. Amazingly, the gist of the story was that since families do not seem to be able to raise children anymore, the schools should do it. Since readers may assume that we are exaggerating, and may not be able or willing to believe the unbelievable, we suggest that they examine this issue of Time themselves.
With ever more single-parent families, and ever more two-parent families having both parents working, having someone available to care for a sick family member, or to watch children when schools are closed, is becoming more of a problem. In response, some firms are coming up with complex family benefits packages that include on-site care, financial assistance with the cost of emergency day care, not to mention even providing on-site banking, dry cleaning, and health clubs (e.g., SHJ, 6 April 00, p. C6). While there are no doubt many advantages to such programs and services, it is remarkable (and no one seems to be commenting on it) that this makes families ever more dependent on formal agencies, rather than informal relationships—and at the very time when job stability, and employment continuity with one firm, is becoming a thing of the past.

With more and more parents being incompetent in homemaking, child-rearing and life-coping tasks, many of their children have become over-burdened with responsibilities. Some have to assume virtually adult tasks, and even do such things for their parents as cooking. Some of the children are expected to rear their siblings, because the parents will not or cannot do such things. Some are also expected to hold down part-time jobs on the side. This kind of situation arises particularly often in single-parent families. Some of these children, overburdened by demand, crack. An example is a 12-year-old boy in Florida who crushed his 7-month-old stepsister's skull because he could no longer cope with taking care of her.

Children: Child Junking—Miscellaneous

Shrink types, educators, media moguls and members, advertisers, storytellers, writers, and the entire culture of liberalism, feminism, and political correctness, are engaged in a war against children. In part, this is based on immoral worldviews, erroneous notions about human nature, and hatred of children. Among their many false notions are that adults have nothing to teach (even though these people are teaching something), and children are by nature good and only need "empowerment" and "self-esteem" to come out ok. The notion of babies as helpless to babies as moral self-sufficient cognitive virtuosos changed in the 1970s when women began to go to work in large numbers, and craved for justifications.

As we reported before, the Germans coined the term Kinderfeindlichkeit to refer to the modernistic resentment of children. One contemporary expression exemplifies it: "being child-free." Not only that, but the anti-children critics have been complaining that society and the government discriminate against them. One anti-child professor, Elinor Burkett, wrote a book entitled How Family-Friendly America Cheats the Childless. One rapidly-growing anti-child organization is called No Kidding (USA Today, 23/10/00). Can demand to kill all the kids (and a few years later, the breeders as well) be far off?

People will have much to answer for, for what they are doing to children. We were amazed to learn that sex guru Dr. Ruth Westheimer was recruited by the Public Broadcasting System in the US to appear on its children's program, "Between the Lions," to help teach children to read. Her identity is not even well disguised as she is presented as Dr. Ruth Wordheimer (Time, 17/4/2000). What exactly would possess people to recruit this vulgar woman for such a role? To promote early sexual promiscuity? (We call her Sexheimer.)

Starting around 1990, the Boy Scouts in New Zealand began to receive "condom training" (semper paratus?). This sounds to us very much like the "malthusian drill" that we read about in Brave New World.

The Syracuse Herald-Journal ran a series of stories on the local high school youth culture, which was very depressing, with extremely high indices of decadence. Administrators tried to squelch the story, which was bad, but even worse was one student describing the series as "uplifting."

At one time, the teachers in our schools were interpreted to be math teachers, English teachers, etc., but since the mid-1980s, there have been some who are interpreted to be "sex and drug educators." By the way, this is not a good juxtaposition. Would we like counsellors advertised as specialists on "marriage and spouse killing," or physicians specializing in "homosexuality and hemorrhoids"?
There has always been a genre of juvenile fiction, but a new subversion thereof now is teen fiction that features all the themes of a decadent youth of modernism: promiscuous sex, VD, unwed pregnancy, drug addiction, prostitution, suicide, anomie, and so on. Book chains such as Barnes & Noble have begun to install entire shelves of such books, which is said to be the first literary genre "born off the Internet," in part because its style is somewhat the equivalent of TV sound bites (Time, 19/7/99).

Many children get drowned in material goods, and many parents are impotent to stop themselves or their children from participating in this externalistic consumerism. One mother complained that her children got gifts from someone or other almost daily (Newsweek, 10 April 00).

A totally amoral and partially immoral marketing industry is junking children by engendering materialism, greed (a "deadly sin"), and externalism. Its recent strategies have included aiming products directly at children and pre-teens. Once it captures their minds, then it relies on the children to pester their parents to buy for them whatever is being marketed—and the parents do. There is even a new term for this, "pester power" (Scripps Howard Service, in SHJ, 1 April 00, p. A5). Among children, crazes spread even faster than among adults, with children wanting desperately to have what other children do. Increased parental affluence, decreased parental time with children, and parental guilt over the latter also play into this phenomenon, with the result that parents spend more on their children and have less reason, or strength, to say "no." We remind readers once again that adaptive child-rearing is near-impossible these days as long as one is not significantly separated from the media culture, which very few families are.

A columnist said that American teenagers have become "besotted with fashion and with fashion's most opulent brands," and that luxury marketers are taking full advantage of this. Oddly, this is enabled by the wealth of teenage girls who, between ages 16-19, have an average income of $131 a week, though 8% are spending more than $200 a week on clothes alone. Even younger teenage girls have an average of $69 a week to spend, which staggers our minds, naive as we are (SHJ, 14/9/00). In addition to earning money from jobs, US teens 12-16 are given an astonishing median weekly allowance of $50! (Time, 24/7/00). No wonder both parents feel they must work to make ends meet, though some children are expected to do chores around the house for their allowance.

While America is swimming in wealth, it has the highest rate (22.4%) of children living in poverty among rich nations, and second highest among industrialized ones, only surpassed by Mexico (Time, 26/6/00). Sweden has the lowest rate with 2.6%.

It is amazing to contemplate that a full 13% of pregnant women in America smoke during their pregnancy even though almost all of them are aware of the dangers to their unborn baby (Newsweek, 24/4/2000).

Once in the past, children had such a thing as bedtime. Now, with indulgent, disoriented and even detached parents, there is no longer such a thing as bedtime, with bed and sleeping times being random and chaotic. One result is that a huge proportion of children are now said to have sleep-related problems, sleeping "disorders," and sleep deprivation. In time, such children may simply end up being put on mind drugs and Ritalin. One problem is that parents sometime involve their children in extracurricular activities that go well into the evening because that is when they themselves are available, which they are not when both parents are working day jobs (SHA, 9 April 00).

On the one hand, children are so flooded by media images of cadaverous young women as beautiful and glamorous that the children (mostly girls) become anorexic and cadaverous themselves, and at any rate body-image obsessed. On the other hand, children are simultaneously made sedentary by the media and flooded with food, so that child obesity is becoming extremely common, and explosively so in the US ever since just 1990. Until relatively recently, child obesity had been rare! Even schools tempt children with soda and snack machines, and on-site fast food stores. Further, many schools have eliminated longer recess periods that children formerly used to work off energy. Further, children who come home to an empty house after school tend to find solace in food.
Generally, declining parental oversight is also a contributor, which then also includes one-parent families (Newsweek, 3 July 00). The prediction is that all of this will avenge itself grievously 20 years from now in massive adult health disorders and especially diabetes, hence blindness, etc.

*Apparently, a lot of people are not aware that Calvin Klein, who had been blitzing the fashion world with his kiddie porn ads, has been treated for drug and alcohol addiction, and is said to have had homosexual liaisons. In light of his attitudes, this would not be surprising. He also has advertised his wares with a most provocative initial, namely, cK, and one can easily imagine what the first two letters are suppose to be. One can be fairly certain that readers were not meant to round the word out as "kick." Things like that not merely reflect, but also shape, the values of the larger culture.

*All and all, somebody said that our children are growing up in a junk culture.

**Children: Child Rearing on the Product Acquisition or Development Model**

*Some experts have said that parents treat their children like the commercial world deals with products to be developed, with child-raising becoming a form of product development in a competitive consumeristic society. At least, this is much less worse than withdrawal from childrearing.

*At least some authorities are charging that today's upwardly mobile adults look upon the "acquisition" of children much as they might upon acquiring a dog, a garden, or an automobile, and also view the hiring of nannies much as they would the employment of their gardeners and dog walkers (Time, 29/5/2000).

*While some parents withdraw from child-rearing, others immerse their children in non-stop activities. Some experts have called this "scheduled hyperactivity for children" (Newsweek, 17/7/00). However, this can also become a barrier against old-fashioned family togetherness.

*Many parents these days grew up themselves as ill-socialized children. If they become much invested in their own children, they often become animalistic in their identification. E.g., watching them play a sport, they can lose all control if their children get thwarted, and fly into uncontrolled rages, abuse of other players or referees, and violence, comparable to the "road rage" these kinds of people are also apt to display. This has gotten so common that many referees have quit. Some sports programs will no longer accept children whose parents do not sign a pledge that they will behave themselves (SHJ, 10 Dec. 99).

**Youth Misbehavior & Violence, Especially in the Schools**

*It is beyond us how anyone could claim that children exposed to scenes of violence around them would not be influenced thereby to also emit violence. When children witness their elders hitting each other, then they may think nothing of clubbing an infant to stop it from crying. Similarly, the cartoons children watch (which are notorious for the amount of violence they depict) usually do not show a true picture of violence, i.e., they do not show blood, pain, dismemberment, or even the permanence of death, and thus children develop no internalization that violence can actually result in these. We would add that in addition to the increase in violence in our society which children are apt to imitate, children these days are also being raised to have less self-control and self-discipline, and therefore are more likely to give vent to violent rages when their desires are denied them. For instance, children have been known to kill each other over a bag of potato chips, or because one called another an insulting word. This was exemplified by one young man in California who shot and killed both his parents when he was 14 years old. He did so because his mother slapped him, and he decided that "life would be better without them." Of course, this was merely the application of the long-standing Ann Landers divorce criterion, i.e., "decide whether you are better off with or without him/her." What goes around comes around.

Of course, a number of these violent children and adolescents have been the victims of physical abuse themselves, and thus could have learned both that violence is a solution to problems, as well as that violence is a legitimate expression of one's anger against another person.
However, it has also been discovered that an increasing number of such violent youngsters show little or no remorse over what they have done. If they have any regrets, it is that they got caught and are being punished. Some such youngsters often also get their "practice" from having served as enforcers for drug lords who send them out to commit violent crimes against people who owe money for drugs. This is done because juveniles typically face much less severe penalties for the same crime than do adults.

*Below is an item that we had written in the early 1990s, but never got around to including in TIPS.

In Chicago, 74% of ghetto children had witnessed either killings, stabbings, shootings or robberies. In one high school in Brooklyn, half the students had experienced some kind of puncture wounds, and on any given day, a fourth of the pupils are absent, either hustling drugs, hanging idly on street corners, or being too scared to come to school. Some schools have even installed metal detectors comparable to those at airports. In fact, as of early 1992, a quarter of large urban school districts in the US had begun to use such metal detectors. Armed police patrols are now taken for granted in many big-city high schools. Because whatever school administrators and law authorities are doing is failing to provide safety to school children, even children in elementary grades have begun to arm themselves. Nationwide, 20% of school children are said to be carrying some kind of weapon, with 5% carrying a gun. A common code question among children has become, "do you carry?" Many teenagers routinely carry top-of-the-line firearms, and even Uzi assault rifles. Some US schools have started what they call DBS drills (which stands for drive-by shooting) and "drop drills," which teach children how to hit the floor when gunfire breaks out. Some schools have as many as six "grieving rooms" to accommodate all the grieving to be done after a school shooting or violence outside the school affecting schoolmates. Despite what is going on in the schools, no national statistics are kept on the number of shooting and gun-related incidents in US schools! (Newsweek, 9 March 92).

Despite such facts, it took the Littleton massacre to wake a lot of people up.

*There is a long tradition in the US, going back to its beginnings, that children might carry firearms and go hunting by themselves. Also, some Western states had a long tradition of allowing the carrying of handguns. This is why in some states/localities, it required special ordinances that forbade minors to carry firearms without parental permission.

*Before schools began to crack down in the wake of the Littleton massacre, every day at least 100,000 US pupils had been bringing guns to school, 160,000 had skipped classes because they were afraid of being hurt, and 40 were actually either getting hurt or killed by firearms (Time, 25/1/93).

*In 1998, the board of education of the city of New York approved unanimously a take-over of school security and its force of 3,300 by the city police department (AP in SHJ, 17/9/98).

*Who would have thought it necessary that laws would have to be passed that require public schools to adopt codes of conduct and file them with the state, and that reports of violent incidents in schools would have to be filed with the state as well?

*Grade schools have been giving or selling their pupils milk pouches with pictures of cheerleaders on them, which is a form of premature sexualization. Some ten-year-old boys then pretended the pouches were breasts, and stuck straws into the nipples of the cheerleaders--whereupon three ten-year-old girls protested, and a teacher called this sexual harassment. The school suspended the boys for two days, upon which the mothers of the boys announced plans to sue for $100,000, rather than teaching decency and respect to their boys (SPS, 17/2/00). It is just one perversity heaped upon another!

*In Britain, almost a quarter of head teachers are sinking into melancholic alcoholism out of despair over their pupils and the schools. Others are developing psychosomatic disorders, go to shrinks and end up on shrink drugs. It also affects their family life (Manchester Metro, 13/7/00). At Christ College in Wales (of all places!), the chaplain gave a graduation address emphasizing that greater freedom brings greater responsibility--shortly after which many students engaged in riotous...
behavior, boozing, having sex in public and urinating into places people don’t like other people to urinate into.

*Here is a dramatic example of how school children bent on having weapons while in school can defeat even metal detectors. In New Orleans, a middle school boy passed properly through the metal detector, but then went on the playground and had an accomplice hand him a gun through the wire-link fence, later engaging in a gun fight with a fellow pupil (AP in SHJ, 27/9/00).

*According to US principals, about 5% of school children are so disruptive as to make it almost impossible for the other 95% to learn, but the 5% have all the rights and the other 95% have no effective recourse (Time, 9 Oct. 00). Principals have been pleading for some sort of removal of the unmanageable 5%. Some school districts have gotten so desperate that they have sent their Afro-American troublemakers 6,000 miles away into the African bush to live with the Swahili, and apparently this reality exposure works on some of them. There has also been a movement back toward "residential schools" (formerly called reform schools and reformatories) (Time, 9 Oct. 00).

*We reported on school bombing and bomb threats at length in the Dec. 1999 issue. Below follow further items on this issue.

*One thing that had been kept so secret by the media that we had not even caught onto it until recently was that the 2 Littleton killers apparently were homosexual, and were in rage about being discriminated against for this reason by the sports jocks and their molls. So their massacre act apparently was a "hate crime" against straights, with this fact being carefully concealed by the PC media.

*The liberals and many others simply insist that people who do things such as the two Littleton killers did must be "mentally ill." The Littleton massacre was a watershed event in further strengthening the shrink stranglehold on the public’s epistemology, and in setting in motion hunts for "mental illness" in children.

*The divorced parents of one Littleton victim, plus the new fiancée of the father, quickly launched a new ministry (and a periodical) with some peculiar elements. Another of the victims had reportedly been shot after professing faith in Christ. Her parents immediately rushed a book into print, She Said Yes, that became immensely popular in Christian circles. More recently, it has come to light that it was really another girl who was martyred for professing Christ, but that has not stopped the other steamrollers.

*Among the aftermaths of the massacre, some Littleton high school kids are praying more, many are going to shrinks more (24 are mentally paralyzed)--and some are drinking more.

*Apparently, few Littleton parents (many in very decadent lifestyles) blamed themselves and the culture they have embraced and handed on to their children, but instead blame others. A favorite scapegoat these days is the school. As one Littleton father put it, the school "did nothing to protect students from each other." However, the principal has been saying that "Columbine was a good school and still is" (Newsweek, 13/12/99).

*The Littleton, Colorado, high school killers in 4/1999 had been inspired by violent movies and videos. In late 1999, Time ran a cover story on the 2 killers and what made them do it. Here is one thing Time said: "The normal culture of adolescence today contains elements that are so nasty that it becomes hard for parents (and professionals) to distinguish between what in a teenager’s talk, dress, and taste in music, films and video games indicates psychological trouble, and what is simply a sign of the times. Most kids who subscribe to the trench-coated Goth lifestyle, or have multiple body piercing, or listen to Marilyn Manson, or play the video game Doom are normal kids caught in a toxic culture." It said that the 2 killers had been "completely soaked in (media) violence." And then, in the very same issue, Time shamelessly and apparently unconsciously of itself heaped praise on several new violent media products such as "The Matrix," the very film that had been a major inspiration to the killers (Time: "demonically hip, the second best movie of the year"), "The Sopranos," ("the best TV series of the year"), and "Rage Against the Machine" (a profanity and
violence-laden music album, "The best music of 1999"). The Univ. of Washington promptly began to teach a philosophy course based on "The Matrix." We remind readers what we said above about the media warfare against children.

*The Littleton fire department made a training tape that included 30 minutes of footage of the 1999 high school massacre there--set to a rousing pop-music soundtrack, but thankfully not from "The Matrix." The film also got made available to the public and has been used coast-to-coast, to the outrage of the bereaved parents who had to fight in court to get a copy of it for their inevitable lawsuit.

*The Columbine massacre had one good consequence: More parents are facing up to the hopeless bankruptcy of the US public school system, and are beginning to home-school their children (Time, 27/12/99).

*There have been post-massacre violence threats at Columbine High School, plus "anniversary" violence and threats, plus aborted massacres, elsewhere.

*It only takes a phone call lasting about three seconds containing a bomb threat to a school district to result in the evacuation of perhaps tens of thousands of people and the paralysis of entire school districts. After schools had been evacuating their premises religiously after each and every bomb threat, no matter how credible, some of them found this so burdensome that they began to evaluate the credibility of such threats before ordering evacuations. Some school districts ceased evacuating for any kind of threat except those that specifically mentioned a particular building as being under threat, because otherwise, they would have had to evacuate every building in the entire school district.

*After umpteen false bomb and fire alarms, and 3 in one day, yet another attempted evacuation at a Syracuse high school triggered a student riot that brought 12 police cars to the scene.

*A 6-year-old boy who in early 2000 shot a 6-year-old girl to death in a Michigan elementary school lived with his mother and an uncle in a crack house. His mother was incompetent, the father in jail for drug use and dealing. The boy had attacked the girl before, and his discourse was pervaded by the F word (that is now commonplace in Time and Newsweek as well). The family had been reported on several times before by neighbors, with no results.

*The child victims of school violence and threats are not always so innocent either. One 13-year-old boy who went on a rampage killing a teacher in Florida had been seen by fellow pupils with a gun earlier, and had told them he would bring it to school--but none of the children told any responsible adult (SHJ, 31/5/00). There was no father in the boy's home, and the mother was in denial claiming it was all an "accident" (SHA, 28/5/00).

*A fire chief rushed to a school in the Albany, NY, area where an explosion had been reported, and was promptly stoned and struck in the head by a student (AP in SHJ, 2 Dec. 99).

*Teachers also do not always come off well. One high school teacher gave an essay assignment in 1999 on "If you had to assassinate one famous person who is alive right now, who would it be and how would you do it?" (Source clipping from Kristin Caproni).

*On college campuses that have dormitories, the equivalent of calling in a bomb threat is to set off the fire alarm in a dormitory. Actually, this has been an extremely popular sport through the entire 1990s, though going almost unrecognized by the public. Particularly thrilling is setting off a dormitory fire alarm in the middle of the night on an extremely cold winter day, because by regulation, everyone is required to leave the building at once.

*In late 1999 and early 2000, there was so much violence in some French schools that teachers, parents and students became deeply discouraged, and many schools simply shut down or were shut down by the parents or the teachers. The authorities had simply lost control of these schools. Apparently, pupils from unassimilated immigrant ("diversity") families are extremely
disproportionately involved in this violence (AP in Boston Globe, 1/00; source item from Kris Caproni).

*Japan is shocked by the dramatic increase in violent crime by teenagers, some of whom even go on killing sprees. Parents are becoming increasingly afraid of their children. Most of these crimes are neither crimes of passion, avarice, nor gang-related, but seem to be the result of being disoriented and alienated. Some of the youths become withdrawn and develop symptoms that in our culture would be called chronic fatigue syndrome (Time, 28/8/00).

*Miners (not minors or mynahs) used to take canaries down into the mines with them because canaries would die quickly when coming in contact with poisonous mine gases that were not detectable to the miners. Thus, when the canaries showed signs of malaise, the miners would quickly get out. Nowadays, one could almost say that the children of our society are its canaries. These child canaries are obviously doing very poorly, but the miners (the privileged majority) are not reading the signs, and must therefore be expected to be overcome soon by the societal gases (simile drawn to our attention by Ray Lemay).

Religion in Society

*Howard, T. (1969/1989). Chance or the dance?: A critique of modern secularism. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. (Re-edition of 1969 version, Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw) This is a highly acclaimed deconstruction of the culture and ideology of modernism, and even though the author obviously writes this with a Christian mentality, the book should not be offensive to non-Christians as long as they are open to deconstructions of the materialistic ideology and mentality. Here is what it says, among other things.

One of the hallmarks of the materialized mind is that it makes war against significance and meaning in the world. The universe is certainly not seen as purposive, and possibly not even ordered. This implies that there can be no valid religion in the usual sense. Things, events and phenomena do not mean anything, they simply are, and there can be no meaning to human experiences such as suffering or sacrifice. In a materialist world, one can finally seek release from servitude to deities and their rigors, liberate oneself from the tyranny of superstitions (including religions) with their creeds, codes, and obligations, and one seizes at self-determination and then gets to work refashioning the world in this (one's own) new image. One consequence of this mentality is the inordinate love of the inductive process that is so prevalent today, and the constant assertion in the world of modernism that "every case is unique; there are no general rules."

As a result of all of this, people's attention shifts from the search for order and meaning in life and in the cosmos to a preoccupation with what is inside of oneself. One finds this exemplified in much of the theories of Freud, James Joyce, and the surrealist painters. For instance, one can say that one's guilt feelings inside one become more important than the question of whether one is actually guilty because of one's behavior. We can also see the disappearance of significance in the world of art, where modern paintings, poetry, drama and music are invested by the culture of modernism with little or no significance, other than that they may signify lack of significance, as when an empty canvas or a random pile of bricks is shown off as art. Exploration and experiment in art proliferate, and yet leave much dissatisfaction. The form of a piece of art becomes more important than what it signifies, as exemplified in cubism, and even in impressionism and expressionism.

However, a peculiar thing happened on the way to liberation from religion, namely the casting off from ancient moorings resulted in a culture of mental confusion and mental anxieties if not outright ennui, alienation, inner emptiness, and all the things that go hand-in-hand with these, such as drug addiction, crime, family instability, and an explosion of mental instabilities, exemplified by panic attacks and anxiety states, and a rush to shrinkery and psychiatric mind drugs to regain some semblance of stability. Modern humans are simultaneously frantic and yet bored, euphoric but also sniveling and embittered, vexed, and so on. "Reality" has become so ambiguous that people prefer to exchange it for an illusion, aided by philosophies such as constructivism which lead people to even invent new identities, "stories" and pasts for themselves. Being set adrift in the world, humans cast about frantically for an anchoring place. This fuels their fantasies that places, jobs or dwellings other than the one in which one is are superior or even perfect, and unconsciously promotes mobility, rootlessness, and endlessly disappointed utopian hopes. Much of this is a yearning to escape from
least-worst lives in this fashion. Apparently, the burden of being a godlet is simply too heavy upon the modernistic human being.

One is also struck that these days (maybe always), there seems to be an inverse relationship between people's concentration on themselves and the degree of their personal happiness.

*A rabbi reflected on the "religious schizophrenia" of modernistic people, and their turning to pitiful Internet spirituality. He surmised that the collapse of communism, the lack of any credible national purpose, and a loss of faith in the political process, have contributed to people being ideologically adrift. He also believes that the traditional denominations are underestimating the spiritual appeal of Internet religion (Rudin, in SHJ, 15/1/00).

*Observers of modernism have asserted that more and more people are trying to blend materialism and spirituality, and may even explicate that they do not believe in God or a life hereafter but are spiritual persons nonetheless. Surprisingly, this movement has come as much from theists as from atheists or agnostics. One side tries to spiritualize the material while the other materializes the spiritual. Someone has described this position as implying that the human being is a "spiritual machine." One expression of this belief is the effort to seek immortality through one's computers, i.e., by perpetuating personal identity through computer software, though such thinkers do not seem to be aware of the gradual decay that is now recognized to take place in computer storage of data.

*It has become very popular these days to say something along the lines of "I am not religious, but I am spiritual."

*One common mentality these days is that people want to "choose" their faith, rather than to find truth and faith, and truth in faith.

*One commentator (B&C, 1/00) said that these days, people are vastly more likely to ask, "how can I feel good about myself?" than "how can I be saved?" That is probably one of the big problems with the self-esteem movement that puts feeling good about oneself above being and doing the right thing.

*A columnist (SHJ, 31/3/00) spoke of "religious values without identifiable content."

*Much as high school texts cast marriage into the idiom of health, so do they cast religion in the idiom of therapy, support groups, stress reduction, etc.

*An amazingly large number of atheists and agnostics attend Christian churches. According to one survey, 12% of them will attend a religious service on an Easter Sunday. At least in America, almost a third of them read the Bible, and even more amazing is that most of them believe that there is such a thing as a heaven, and 20% of them will actually pray to God during a typical week (FT, 3/00). One can only conclude that there are Christian and non-Christian atheists, and that the Christian ones are rather incoherent. Perhaps they have taken seriously the interpretation of religion as a way of coping with life's stresses.

*In one survey, 48% of Americans agreed with a statement that "all religions were equally true and good," including an amazing 25% of allegedly born-again evangelicals (B&C, 1/2000).

*A new phenomenon, perhaps influenced by a New Age mentality, is for professed atheists to go on religious pilgrimage to places such as the Marian shrine at Lourdes. One such pilgrim described the physical demands of the pilgrimage, solidarity with other sufferers, and a ritual of a very long tradition, as having considerable restorative capacities (B&C, 11/99). Apparently, the incoherency in their logic does not particularly bother such people.

*Incoherency: In Britain, 69% of people believe that a marriage ceremony should be religious, though only 62% believe in God, and even fewer (51%) believe in life after death (NC Reg., 18/6/00).
*In 1998, a large survey of Americans revealed that those people who said they believed in God also claimed to do so because of the good design, beauty and complexity of the universe—but thought that other people who believed in God did so because of their emotional needs and for their own comfort (How We Believe, 1999).

*An estimated one-third of Venezuela’s population is believed to be participants in a religion made up of elements of pre-Columbian religions, spiritism, voodoo, and Christianity (Civilization, 4/2000). Some people believe that the country’s president, elected in 1999, is an incarnation of Simon Bolivar.

*This is further information on the fact that superstitions in a materialistic world tend to go haywire, and are now deeply entrenched in mainstream American social systems. The New Age culture has extensively embraced the Feng Shui superstition that some physical settings do, and other do not, have qi which brings prosperity and success. This superstition has also deeply penetrated American business firms, including even Merrill Lynch (don’t entrust your money to people who are superstitious!), Donald Trump, the Deutsche Bank, Hollywood, and even city managers. Real estate agents can hardly function without knowledge of Feng Shui in Los Angeles. Some of the Feng Shui voodoo gets performed by "intercultural consultants" that one can hire. One sinologist attributes all this to a "nostalgia for the spiritual" (Time, 3 July 00).

*"At the threshold of the twenty-first century the gods are coming back. They climb out of flying saucers. They send telepathic news from other dimensions. As signs of the zodiac they determine the karma of the mortals. As mighty animal spirits they enter their followers and change them into superhuman beings. For their sake hordes of post-modern priestesses go on pilgrimages to the temples of Mexico and to places of worship in Crete; for their sake clever businessmen organize journeys of self-experience to the pyramids of Egypt and to Stonehenge... Everywhere in the former Soviet empire one finds an abundance of shamans with magic pendulums, soothsayers who talk to the dead, witches who tell fortunes... Today the secret, or not-so-secret, religion of a majority of continental Europeans is vaguely neo-pagan: it consists equally of gnostic, pantheistic, and deistic elements... Complicated topics such as sin, penance, and forgiveness are not often mentioned in Christian houses of worship nowadays. Instead Protestant ministers open themselves to astrological influences, light fumigating sticks, invite Hindu preachers, meditate, and learn from the various psychological cults." (FT, 11/99, p. 38).

*Headline (SHJ, 27/12/99): "Powerbead bracelets latest New Age craze to sweep the nation." These were bought for everything from relief for PMS to boosting intelligence, and sold from big mainline department stores to street vendors. Men and women, children to the senescent bought them. Some are made so cheaply that they sell for $1, while others come in gold and diamonds for the gullible rich. Their appeal is said to derive from Americans looking ever more Eastward for spirituality. A Saks Fifth Avenue manager gleefully proclaimed, "It's incredible!" However, it seems to us to be one of the shorter-lived crazes.

*There are now entire catalogs which list nothing but books on crazes and/or New Age topics, there being a very strong correlation between New Age and crazes, though not necessarily between crazes and new age.

*A Manhattan rabbi observed that in Reform Judaism, after 16 years of religious schools, a pupil may never have heard the word "sin," and a principal of a Catholic school said that children no longer "relate to" language about sin and repentance. The most one could tell them is "this is not allowed." Much of this is done in service to (worship of) the psychopop construct of self-esteem.

*A young Jewish man wrote an article in Newsweek (18/9/00) explaining at great length that even though he wears a yarmulke, it doesn’t really stand for anything, and that people should quit assuming that it does—which is asking a little much.

*Even PC and anti-Christian Newsweek (3 April 00) noted that there are two problems with modernistic spirituality that seeks transcendent thrills coupled with radical individualism and license: (a) it motivates spiritual searches that "preclude the possibility of a destination" (e.g., there will not
be a Last Judgment, only a Last Discussion); and (b) individualistic spirituality is very hard to pass down to your kids." It also noted that one can hardly "build a house of obligation on a foundation of choice."

*More and more former churches in the UK are being converted into pubs. We can just see the altar becoming the bar (3, 7, & 11/2000, Speak Out).

*Rather ominously, the chasuble worn by an Episcopal woman priest when she was installed at Cleveland’s Episcopal Cathedral featured rows upon rows of bottles against the background of an urban skyline (Time, 3 July 00). No explanation for this was given.

*A prominent British scientist, Rupert Sheldrake, has come out with a belief system that animals and humans can communicate through telepathy (Discover, 8/2000). One of his books on this topic has been near the top of the popular science best seller list worldwide, and his presentations are politely applauded by very august scientific bodies in England. He explains such phenomena through what he calls morphogenetic fields and morphic resonance, which come close to a platonic worldview of interaction between a deeper immaterial reality (with what Plato called "forms") and the material reality with which we are familiar, with quantum mechanics being apparently a major window of contact. He also asserts (in our opinion, correctly) that the geneticists fail to admit to many of the problems that they cannot answer and are presenting a very false front to the public and fellow scientists, implying that genes behave in orderly mechanistics ways. Even the entire dogma of reductionism--that one can find ultimate explanations by examining the smallest material components of living and non-living things--he claims to be out-and-out religion because it has never been proven. While he thusly makes some excellent points, he distressingly has allied himself with New Age figures such as Matthew Fox.

*A zoo in Cornwall, Britain, called in a faith healer to lay hands on a lion who had a weak back that made it impossible for him to mate. Wisely, the lion was first anesthetized for the weekly laying-on treatment lest the lion lay hands on him (Manchester Metro, 13/7/00). Zoos are supposed to be places of science.

*American TV quickly learned the trends and began to launch a number of TV series with themes of the occult that go far beyond forerunners such as "Bewitched" and "I Dream of Jeannie." While a lot of people may see this as innocent entertainment, Hollywood itself is fully aware that such programs are tools of its war against traditional religions. It’s the old dupers vs. dupes or dupees game, where only the dupers know what is going on (NCR, 20/8/00).

*Time (28/8/00) produced a very insightful article about the peculiar phenomenon of many TV shows featuring spirits or angels from the domain of death, who are generally presented in a positive fashion. Ghosts generally seem to speak in a combination of new age and therapy idiom.

*On-and-off lesbian actress Anne Heche walked up to a rural house in California and declared to the startled occupants that she was God (4 Sept. 00). Apparently, even though the poor woman is constantly in both the eye and the news, no one thought that this was particularly remarkable, and it was barely reported in the media. Also, someone constantly adulated by the media world might well get the idea that he or she is divine. Maybe someone even told her, "dahling, you look divine!" Or maybe all the occult shows on TV got to her.

*Wicca, which is a modern witchcraft, claims to have somewhere between 300,000 - 1.5 million adherents in the US. It was recently given a big boost by the Harry Potter children stories in which the hero goes to school to learn witchcraft, rides a broom and casts spells. This is one reason why Wicca practitioners delight in these stories (SHI, 30/5/00).

*A growing number of US college students are declaring themselves to be "pagans." This has been called "coming out of the broom closet." There are now "pagan" associations on over 100 US college campuses; and overall, 1 million Americans may now identify themselves as "pagans." Some pagans seem to lean to the wicca cult, others toward a New Age environmentalistic spirits position (NCR, 26/11/00).
The Fall equinox day (21 September) has been designated Pagan Day in about 70 US cities, though actually observed for a whole week. In Syracuse, this was done with a "pagan pride" event. Rather appropriately, funds raised during the event were donated to a service for people with AIDS, (SHJ, 23/9/00), since HIV infection is a common consequence of orgies. Several of the pagan leaders sing in the local Unitarian Church choir.

The Catholic cathedral in Syracuse has started celebrating the Winter solstice, with songs to goddesses, a celebration of John Lennon and the Peanuts Schultz, and strobe lights against a background of dense smoke. Perhaps in a few years, this celebration will include the sacrifice of the last Catholic virgin on the altar.

A Disney subsidiary made the 1999 film "Dogma," described by one of its stars, Ben Affleck, as "a rumination on faith. With dick jokes." It features a young woman as God, a woman descendant of Jesus who works in an abortion clinic, a long-forgotten 13th ("black") apostle, a prophet with vulgar vocabulary, a stripper, and a mix of poop, prophecy, scatology and eschatology. Inexplicably, but understandably, Time (15/11/99) called it "the most devout movie in a modern setting since Robert Bresson’s ‘Diary of a Country Priest’ (1951)."

A French-English consortium has created a video cartoon series that it is trying to get on British TV. It is called "Popeman," and depicts the adventures of a mentally retarded Pope with an emotional age of about seven. Its originators openly admit that their intent is to attack the Catholic church and its teachings (NCR, 23/7/00).

Propaganda works! Even though East Germany was the most successful of all communist countries in virtually eradicating Christianity, its citizens have since reported that they were not aware of any actual "persecution." However, they considered the state's actions against religion "justified." Similarly, even in communist countries where Christianity remained strong, only a quarter of the citizens thought that there had been "persecution." All this reveals that communist propaganda had been very effective even on people who were opposed to the respective regimes (NCR, 23/4/00). If the propaganda type of brainwashing works so well on a topic as important as this one, then imagine how much more it will work on any number of other topics, including those related to human service, e.g., shrink propaganda, how "necessary" mind drugs are, propaganda about how good services are, etc., etc.

In recent years, the media have given huge publicity to waves of arson at "black" churches, and attributed it to racism. Not reported was that (a) some such arson was perpetuated by "black" people; and (b) Christian churches, and especially Catholic ones, have suffered from much arson for many years. About 15-20 Christian churches are set afire each year in the US. While about a third of such arsons are motivated by racism, another third are motivated by hatred for Christianity, with Satanists and quasi-Nazism playing a major role. However, arson is merely the tip of an iceberg of church vandalism, which is very disproportionately aimed at Catholic churches, and has been on the rise. Whatever the motive, the vandals and arsonists are often also mentally unstable (NCR, 17/9/00).

Considering that the media are constantly harping on the religious right, how come one never hears of the religious left, which certainly must be exemplified by numerous people such as US President Clinton, Vice President Gore, Jesse Jackson and innumerable others?

Towne, E. T. (1916; 1923 printing). Social problems: A study of present-day social conditions. New York: Macmillan. (Social Science Text-Books). Before the US Civil War, two big Southern arguments in support of slavery were that it was divinely sanctioned, and that the separation of church and state did not allow the church to speak to the issue since it was a political one. Each age tries to shape religion peculiarly to sanction its own evils. Today, we are told that efforts to uphold family, check indecency and promiscuity, prevent abortion, etc., are an invasion of religion into matters of state.

Many schools allow Hanukkah and Kwanzaa religious symbols, but no Christmas symbols that have any religious significance (SHJ, 22/12/99). How peculiar.
*While Westerners have been looking East, many Hindus find Jesus attractive because of his messages of compassion and nonviolence, "but they find the notion of a single god unnecessarily restrictive," as Newsweek put it (27/3/00).

*Not long ago, there was a debate, much commented on in the media, whether God listens to the infidel. Thereupon, someone with a sardonic sense of humor said that out of deference to the American Civil Liberties Union, God does not listen to prayers by public employees (ET, 5/99).

*In an upcoming issue, we will have more coverage on the peculiar contemporary relationship between science/technology and spirituality, and especially occultism.

Religion in Human Services

As we keep pointing out over and over, whatever the religious trends are in the larger society will be intimately reflected and played out in human services. However, we do not have as many specific items on this this year as in some years past.

*Braceland, F. J., & Stock, M. (1963). Modern psychiatry: A handbook for believers. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. We ran across this book, and assumed that it was for true believers in psychiatry, but discovered to our amusement that it was intended for people with religious beliefs.

*A glamorous woman with a divinity degree is going around North America giving a series of 12 5-day spiritual conferences, based on her Inner Focus School For Advanced Energy Healing. Among her conference topics are "learn to believe in yourself," "realize your greatest dreams," and "be a conscious partner with your higher self." Goals include "learn healing skills, transform your life, discover magnificence," etc. (Parabola, 11/99).

*When a teacher in Houston discovered that two sisters were carrying Bibles around, the children were pulled from class, and were threatened that they might be surrendered to Child Welfare authorities (SHA, 18/6/00).

*An 8-year-old Florida girl was told at a Boys and Girls Club summer camp that she could not sing "Kum Ba Yah"--long a campfire favorite--because the word "Lord" occurs in it (SPS, 14/8/00).

*One reason the Girl Scouts have not been attacked the way the Boy Scouts have is that already in 1993, the Girl Scouts had made God optional in their Girl Scout pledge, while the Boy Scouts kept it; and the Girl Scouts actually have badge-earning exercises and activities that deal with "ending a pregnancy" and "supporting a decision to pull a life-support system from a dying relative." Furthermore, some Girl Scout chapters have mentoring programs for lesbian Girl Scouts, and one Girl Scout has been competing for Girl Scouting's highest honor by starting a teen group called "Queer Youth Exists" (NCR, 29/10/00).

*Beyond arguing that homosexuality either is inborn, "natural," or at any rate cannot be changed once it becomes established, some homosexual Catholics have gone one step further and called homosexuality a "God-given gift" (NCR, 29/10/00).

Philanthropy

*Americans gave more than $190 billion to "charities" in 1999, amounting to 2.1% of gross domestic product, which is close to the average of about 2% over the preceding 30 years. People are giving less through their employers, and less (only $4 billion) to the United Way, which apparently has been losing people's trust. They are giving large amounts to fewer charities, perhaps because they do not want to be bothered with multiple check-writing. In response, employers and the UW have allowed more ear-marking of donations (SHA, 24/9/00).

However, giving tends to go up and down with the economy. The recent economic boom accounts both for people giving more (1.8% of personal income in 1999), and for the investment holdings of foundations having burgeoned in value in recent years, obliging them to give away more.
Massachusetts, a very liberal state, has the third highest percentage of wealthy people, but its citizens rank at the bottom of all the states in per capita giving to charity, while poor little Arkansas ranks first, and Mississippi second. In fact, the nine poorest states are at or near the top (FT, 3/99; Time, 2 Oct. 99).

While traditional forms of civic volunteering, and of participation in altruistic voluntary associations, continue their steep decline in the US, one of the new and growing forms of volunteering is for people to give up somewhere between one to three weeks of their vacation to contribute to some civic cause such as wildlife preservation, restoring vintage railroads, performing a work project in a poor country, etc. Some organizations are even working out less strenuous options for older participants (Newsweek, 10 July 00). This is all wonderful, but can never make up for the above-mentioned loss of an ongoing, long-term sustained involvement. One can view this as "here-and-now-volunteerism" that is reflective of the minds of modernism.

British charities were caught investing funds in the very companies whose actions they oppose, such as polluting mining and petrochemicals, the arms trade, genetic modification of crops, Nestlé’s powdered milk that alienates Third World women from breast feeding (Guardian, Summer 00).

A senior official of the Ohio chapter of the American Cancer Society embezzled $6.9 million from it, which he deposited abroad, and then called his wife and said he was never coming back (AP in SHJ, 7 June 00).

Social Advocacy

Advocacy is hardly advocacy if it is not costly. The 56 signers of the US Declaration of Independence also signed that "we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor," and many did indeed pay a high price for their advocacy: 5 were captured and tortured to death, 9 died fighting or from their wounds or hardships, 2 lost their sons in the war, several were constantly sought and had to flee about with their families, several lost all their "fortunes," many had their homes looted or destroyed, several lost family members in British prisons, etc. (Person to Person: CA Newsletter, 7/00).

The Citizen Advocacy project in Holyoke, Mass., reported in 5/2000 that its 12-year-old history showed that mentally disordered people who had citizen advocates have fewer "hospitalizations," use crisis services less, take less "medications," and depend less on paid services.

In 2000, a 71-year-old Ohio woman died of a heart attack. She had been taking care of her bed-ridden 37-year-old son who was schizophrenic, diabetic, and a double amputee. Her helpless son, who could apparently see his mother lying in the hall, died from dehydration a few days later. It took a month before their bodies were discovered, and that only because of an overflowing mail box. This also informs us about how isolated this family had been (AP in Syracuse Herald-American, 8 March 2000, p. A11). Once again, episodes such as these underline how important it is that vulnerable people be interconnected, and that when their usual protectors or advocates become vulnerable themselves, that additional and/or others are recruited.

Laird, C. (1995, January-March). When one door closes, another opens! Citizen Advocacy Forum, 5(1), 21. (Reprinted from Citizen Advocacy News (Citizen Advocacy of Chester County), Summer 1994). For the best benefit to an advocatee, it helps if an advocate can think creatively. For instance, in the advocacy culture, it is virtually normative for advocates to press for options, settings, programs, activities, etc., that are more advanced than what the advocatees had been getting, thereby opening doors, gaining promotions, eliciting greater expectations that in turn result in greater performance and growth, etc. However, a creative mind will also be able to perceive when that which appears to be less advanced is the more favorable context for an advocatee. For instance, one advocate discovered that the special education class for the "educable mentally retarded" in which her protégé had been placed was absolutely chaotic, and that the teacher had a defeatist attitude. After unsuccessfully requesting a part-time aide, efforts were made to transfer the child to a "trainable mentally retarded" classroom which, in a sense, was a demotion, but in which she thrived because
of a wonderful teacher. After a period of stabilization, she was able to transfer to a special education program in a parochial school, in which she also did well.

*Just how confused even advocacy bodies are about what advocacy is was exemplified by the "ombudsman" program for people in long-term care facilities in the greater Syracuse area going begging for contributions to put calendars in these facilities (SHJ, 16/12/99).

*In the late 1990s, the State of New York came out with five principles to underlie its services to "persons with developmental disabilities," and lo and behold, four of the five have to do with self-determination, independence and choice, and only the fifth one said that such a person "shall receive supports and services that are effective and meet his or her needs." It is doubly ironic that the very first principle is that "a person with a developmental disability shall relate to his or her family, friends and communities when and how he or she chooses, consistent with the rights and wishes of others," which is riddled with inconsistencies, and also implies that people must be forced to choose to do as they please. This reminds us of J. J. Rousseau who pontificated that people had to be forced to be free if they did not want to be free of their own accord. Next one knew, the very same principles (slightly reworded) were adopted by private agencies for other kinds of people, such as people with acquired brain injuries.

*In a Blondie cartoon (17 April 2000), Dagwood’s boss tells him he will "volunteer to work tonight." When Dagwood resists the use of the term "volunteer" for something he is being forced to do, he is told that he will soon be called a "former employee," and so decides that "volunteer has a nice ring to it." These days, many youth programs, high schools, churches, etc., make some form of "volunteering" a requirement, e.g., in order for students to graduate, be confirmed, etc. It would be more accurate for them to call it merely unpaid service, unpaid work, a practicum, etc. Similarly, it is both confusing and inaccurate for paid human service workers to be referred to, or to refer to themselves, as volunteer advocates for the people they serve, yet this too we have seen. But certainly, "volunteer" is a more image-enhancing name than impressed slave laborer, which would describe Dagwood's situation if not that of many human service workers.

*We were amazed to read in Mouth ("Voice of the Disability Nation," 3/2000) that "the only way you can help people is to ask them what they want and assist them in getting it." We can just see a person falling in the water with a big gurgle, and potential rescuers who had been intimidated by the self-determination and self-advocacy political correctness culture calling out, "what do you want, tell us quick or we won’t be able to help you," and unable to understand the person’s gurgles as he or she slips under the waves, the would-be helpers congratulate each other proudly on having remained politically correct even in the face of ultimate tests.

*In 2000, there was an organization in Syracuse named Helping Empower Incarcerated Young People (HEIYP). We can think of all sorts of things to do that might benefit incarcerated teenagers and young adults, but empowering would be just about the last thing we would want to do. This just goes to show how meaningless the phrase "empowerment" has become, and how HYPE it is.

*We remind readers that we mentioned in an earlier section of this TIPS issue that Hillary Clinton has advocated de facto self-determination and empowerment for children since the early 1970s: "the legal status of infancy or minority should be abolished and the presumption of incompetence reversed," affecting things such as sex, schooling, abortion, and presumably age of legal marriage.

*Among the innumerable peculiar advocacy groups in the culture of modernism is a new one, called the Pink Pistols. It lobbies for pro-gun policies, rights for homosexuals, and marriage among three or more people (Newsweek, 18/9/00).

*The First International Conference on Self-Determination and Individualized Funding was held in Seattle on July 29-31, 2000. It produced a Declaration on Self-Determination and Individualized Funding, with 4 paragraphs of introduction and 35 principles. Some of the principles are reasonable, e.g., to ask that individualized funding be flexible, that the provisions for these should be easily understood, and that affected parties participate in decision-making. Other principles
would be reasonable if only they were nuanced. For instance, one is that people should not have to forego income and ownership of personal assets in order to gain funding. In many instances, it has been a requirement that in order to be eligible for funding and services, people have to strip themselves to a poverty level. On the other hand, without some nuancing, this principle could be interpreted to mean that even very wealthy people ought to be supported by the public purse, rather than use some of their own resources to pay for what they need.

But most of the principles are very problematic, in exalting self-determination, choice, and "quality of life" as the most important aspects of service and funding provision. For instance, "self-determination for people with disabilities" is said to be "the founding principle of public policy" and "a birthright." Nowhere does there seem to be an acknowledgement that a great many people who would presumably be eligible for services and for funding are not capable of self-determination—though their families might be, but even this distinction is not made. Nor does there seem to be any acknowledgement that there may be limitations on resources (e.g., the public purse), and that other parties may have valid claims to public funding too. Nor is the question addressed what the responsibilities might be of competing parties to resolve their competing claims reasonably. The overall tone of the whole document is one of demands on society, and especially on government, service agencies, and funding bodies, to do whatever "people with disabilities" and their families or advocates desire, with a strong emphasis on the centrality of "self-determination" and individualized funding. Only once are responsibilities mentioned (principle 4: "All people, including individuals with disabilities, have rights and responsibilities to live as full citizens.").

The overall tone of the whole document is one of demands on society, and especially on government, service agencies, and funding bodies, to do whatever "people with disabilities" and their families or advocates desire, with a strong emphasis on the centrality of "self-determination" and individualized funding. Only once are responsibilities mentioned (principle 4: "All people, including individuals with disabilities, have rights and responsibilities to live as full citizens.").

The declaration also smacks of the notion that "people with disabilities" know best, and should run things that affect them, even though other people have to pay the bills. This is very different from saying that they should be consulted, their views solicited, their involvement assured, etc. All in all, the Declaration reflects contemporary selfishness, entitlement attitudes, and a decadent welfare mentality.

*Because self-determination is a de facto religious concept, researchers have begun to find it necessary to distinguish between a person’s degree of self-determination and the person’s degree of "control," by which latter is meant what formerly might probably have actually been meant by a person’s ability to be self-determining. In other words, we are now getting to the absurd situation where a person may be said to be self-determining but not controlling, and conceivably vice versa. Furthermore, some researchers have begun to distinguish between self-determination competencies and self-determination per se.

*A mentally retarded young woman who was unable to drive was permitted to buy herself a new automobile on which she will have to make payments for many years. The young woman had also planned to buy herself her own home, which however she will not be able to do until the car is paid off! Rather than interpreting this as an example of imprudent profligacy, it was interpreted by her mother, the president of The Arc of the US, as a shining example of "rationally making choices" (The Arc Today, Summer 2000).

*Much of social advocacy is wrong-headed, but vastly worse is that some of it is outright phony. In many cases where lawyers enter class action litigation, in the end it turns out that the supposed beneficiaries—i.e., the class action members—receive virtually no benefit while all the fruits of the litigation go to the lawyers. For instance, in one class action suit against the bank of Boston,
class members ended up paying about $50 in legal fees to the lawyers for every dollar that they received in settlement. Furthermore, the trial lawyers sometimes collect punitive damage awards which far exceed the actual damages inflicted by the defendants (Time, 17 July 2000). Legal fees for tobacco lawsuit settlements alone were approaching $20 billion by the year 2000.

*We are afraid that in the entire so-called "supported decision-making" culture that has sprung up in connection with the self-determination religion, there may be a lot of attribution of decision-making to retarded persons when the decisions are really made by other persons, but this is not acknowledged in order to avoid an image that self-determination is not being exercised by the impaired person. Yet further, we are deeply concerned that this phenomenon is being extended to decisions about a person's life supports, with the decisions to deny further medical care, or even to perform "euthanasia," being attributed to a mentally limited or incapacitated person.

*The epitome of stupidity and false enlightenment/modernistic assumptions about human nature: After succeeding in getting the federal government to require that alcoholic beverages have notices on them that one can get drunk, certain advocacy groups have concluded that people who still get drunk must have failed to see the label, and to get educated and wise. Accordingly, they are now lobbying for bigger warning labels. What will they put their hope in once these fail? After all, people who know that the labels are there, and what is on them, but ignore them, are practicing self-determination and empowerment.

Contemporary Morality

Morality in Government

*Moving to consolidate nations and governments has advantages but also disadvantages. In the European union, it is no longer legal to reveal where food was actually grown. This is of course an anti-consumer law pushed through by imperial powers (Private Eye, 28/7/00). One-world government isn't all it's cracked up to be by some utopians.

*Many members and employees of the US Congress were in arrears on their taxes. The delinquency rate of senators was 7.5%, and of representatives a whopping 8.9% (SHJ, 3 April 00). Do as we say, but not as we do.

*Even though the Whitewater investigation of Hillary Clinton exonerated her, the investigators themselves ended up convinced that she had lied to them, but could not generate enough evidence to indict her (Time, 1 May 00). Considering that she made $100,000 on an investment of $1,000, we certainly think something was fishy.

*Most people would be astonished to learn that the US government has classified nonviolent resisters of its policies (such as the Plowshare activists) as "terrorists" (NCR, 2 Oct. 87, p. 4).

*The legislature of NY State is a sham. Three of its leaders control everything, in part by handing out pork-barrel handouts to local projects, and "lulus" (a form of extra-legal bonus to legislators at the end of a term). The key bills are hammered out in secret, and presented to the representatives late at night before a deadline, so that members have no time to even read the bills, much less study them. No wonder citizens lose interest in the political process, except for extracting money (actually, their own) from it. One problem with all this is that NY is one of the biggest and wealthiest states, and the major world finance center.

*Around 1990, it became a practice in Italy for pornography queens to run for public office (often bare-breasted, at least thusly making a clean breast of it), and being in many cases enthusiastically elected. There is much logic to this: if politics becomes obscene, they have the experts on obscenity run it.

*Time (10 April 00) reported that the international space station, promoted in 1984 as costing $8 billion, and to be built in 8 years, will cost up to $100 billion eventually, mostly to be paid by
US taxpayers, and that the project is virtually irreversible because too many aerospace contractors and congressional districts have vested financial interests in it.

*A lengthy story in *Time*(25/9/00) pointed out that due to deals made by politicians, gambling on college sports is illegal everywhere in the US except in Nevada, but that the legal gambling in and through Nevada is distorting the entire college sports scene as well as the political process because of the huge donations made by gambling interests to politicians and political parties. In an 8-year period, such contributions increased about 15-fold.

*Entry into more than 500 professions, covering about 10% of American jobs, requires government permission in the form of something like a license (*Newsweek*, 15/5/00). Professions lobby legislatures for such laws largely in order to restrict competition. Trying to bend public power for the private economic advantage of an individual or an organization is called "rent seeking" by economists.

*Time*(7 Feb. 00) made the following revealing and provocative inventory of how special-interest groups that give money (de facto, bribe) the legislators control the US Congress in a way that expresses itself in the lives of ordinary citizens in things such as the following, that it called government for the few at the expense of the many.

You [i.e., the citizen] pick up a disproportionate share of America’s tax bill.

You pay higher prices for a broad range of products, from peanuts to prescription drugs.

You pay taxes that others in a similar situation have been excused from paying.

You are compelled to abide by laws while others are granted immunity from them.

You must pay debts that you incur while others do not.

You are barred from writing off on your tax return some of the money spent on necessities while others deduct the cost of their entertainment.

You must run your business by one set of rules while the government creates another set for your competitors.

In contrast, first-class citizens—the fortunate few who contribute to the right politicians and hire the right lobbyists—enjoy all the benefits of their special status. Among them:

If they make a bad business decision, the government bails them out.

If they want to hire workers at below-market wage rates, the government provides the means to do so.

If they want more time to pay their debts, the government gives them an extension.

If they want immunity from certain laws, the government gives it.

If they want to ignore rules their competitors must comply with, the government gives its approval.

If they want to kill legislation that is intended for the public’s good, it gets killed.

*Economist Allan Sloan predicted that US politicians will piss away the anticipated budget surpluses and actually leave the nation even deeper indebted 10 years hence than now (*Nwk.*, 9 Oct. 00).

*Even decadent *Newsweek* (7 Feb. 00) noted that in US politics, we see the phenomena of candidates strongly affirming vague beliefs, weakly expressing strong beliefs.

Miscellaneous Phenomena of Contemporary Societal Morality

*It was sociologists who began all the talk about "values" in a morally-neutral context. It has been pointed out that one problem with talking about people’s "values" is that everybody has values (Hitler and Stalin had them), but not everybody has virtues. Another contrast between values and virtues is that values are these days said to be "chosen" while virtues are habits that are difficult to develop and to sustain.

*We continue to report that colleges and universities in the US recruit academically unsuited jocks for their intercollegiate sports competitions, and spit them out into obscurity after 5 or 50 years when they have failed to graduate. Some such jocks attend 4-5 colleges, but remain virtually illiterate (*SHL*, 22/1/00). As our newspaper editor (*SHL*, 4 Dec. 00) put it, "Colleges who simply
let student-athletes take up classroom and dorm space for four or five years are just using them until
their value as jocks is used up."

*The highest-paid employee of Syracuse University, the football coach, gets a salary of
$509,000 a year, with his total compensation being $616,000. The basketball coach was the second
highest employee with a mere $303,000 of total compensation.

*The hyperliberal Canadian Broadcast Standards Council declared in 5/2000 that it will
henceforth censor anything said on Canadian radio that is critical of homosexuality, which obviously
includes the interpretation of certain sex-related practices in the "gay" culture, such as having sex
with thousands of partners, and licking another person’s butthole, as "abnormal," "aberrant" or
"deviant." It also interpreted critique of such practices as "willful promotion of hatred...against an
identifiable group." It further came right out in asserting that freedom of speech was less important
than preventing such critiques. Such dictatorial censorship could never happen in the US.

*Hepatitis B vaccine was developed by deliberately experimenting on mentally retarded
children at the Willowbrook Institution in New York State, and infecting them with the virus for
research purposes. If this had been done on Jewish children or Russian prisoners in Nazi Germany,
it would have been called a medical war crime. One can thus see how some people might have moral
scruples having themselves or their children vaccinated with this vaccine. Yet in Syracuse, children
who had not yet received this vaccine were not permitted to come to school. Thus, a parent who had
moral scruples about having their children given this vaccine would not be able to have their child
in school (SHJ, 27/9/00).

*In 2000, the list of real estate properties in Syracuse that were behind in paying their local
taxes was made public, apparently for the first time. And lo and behold, it turned out that many of
the leading local figures were delinquent: elected officials, lawyers, physicians, rich people, etc.
(SHJ, 11 March 00). Syracuse is unlikely to be unique in this respect. One can also see why the
scoff-laws would not want this information made public.

*As you sow so shall you reap; or birth, life, death and judgment, according to the Australian
cartoon poet Leunig (The West Australian, 23/11/96):

Between the whimper and the bang Spinning heart and spinning brain,
Life is like a boomerang. Spinning pleasure, spinning pain.
Thrown by some great hairy hand. Spinning out and spinning round
Spinning out across the land, And spinning back towards the ground.
Spinning out across the years. A graceful loop across the land
Spinning lies and spinning tears. Then back into the hairy hand.

The Collapse of the Culture of Modernism & Its Social Institutions

What would you say about this pronouncement: "The country is down the drain. Everyone
knows it. People have lost it to the politicians, bureaucrats, drunk Congressmen, lying Presidents,
White House preachers, CIA, FBI, Mafia, Pentagon, pornographers, muggers, buggers, bribers,
brother takers, rich crooked cowboys, sclerotic Southerners, rich crooked Yankees, dirty books, dirty
movies, dirty plays, dirty talk shows, dirty soap operas, fags, lesbians, abortionists, Jesus shouters,
anti-Jesus shouters, dying cities, dying schools, courses on how to [have sex] for school children."
No, we didn’t say it--nor was it said recently, but in 1977, by novelist Walker Percy in his
novel Lancelot. Since then, there has been a lot of down-defining or normalization of deviancy.

The Collapse of Citizenship, Polity, & the Democratic Process

Some of the coverage under this heading and the next one relates to what we say later about
US elections.

*There has been a whole series of news pieces on the "indifference" of younger Americans
to important issues. Many do not read the newspaper and are ill informed on public affairs generally;
a large proportion does not vote; and many are showing little concern for needy populations, such as the homeless. One commentator interpreted all this to mean that there is a lack of the most elementary sense of public responsibility. To all this, we have two interpretations to add. One is that this indifference has some justification, in that societal leaders themselves have become so corrupt and blinded in recent years that one is well justified in writing off the salvageability of innumerable societal institutions. On the other hand, as we have pointed out repeatedly, the young generation is indeed very empty and decadent—but again, the ruling structures have long worked to assure that this be so. For instance, in 1968, the average network "sound bite" was 42 seconds—which was bad enough—but already by 1988, it had declined to 9 seconds. Also, the ruling sectors have managed to systematically squash or pervert virtually every effort at reform.

*A major theory of polity is that cultures need the glue of shared knowledge if they are to function with any kind of internal unity. However, one problem with this is that perhaps the single biggest chunk of shared knowledge these days is the media and pop culture. For instance, children are vastly more likely to know from memory some kind of advertising jingle than any noble poetry or songs (Smithsonian, 10/2000).

*Someone said that even about 25 years ago, one could still unite people around larger causes, but that these days, everybody has a highly personal cause that is different from that of most other people, making it very difficult to generate enough support for larger causes that would enable it to be promoted by a sufficient number of citizens to move it forward (Newsweek, 17/7/00).

*Other countries are undergoing a very similar process as the US, of having courts beginning to run the minutiae of daily life, instead of the governments. The (erroneous) assumption is that courts can do what governments cannot. For example, in Germany, it is its courts rather than the laws that have begun to specify things such as that dogs are not allowed to bark before 7 am, after 10 pm and between 1:00 and 3:00 pm when many Germans take a nap; and that if one lives in an apartment house with a balcony, one may barbecue only once a month plus must give neighbors two days notice in advance (AW, 28/8/99).

*The county in which our hometown, Syracuse, is located has nearly 800 governmental units, boards and agencies with power to tax! As a consequence, our population is the most-taxed in the US (SHJ, 23/6/00).

*The US tax code is so insanely complicated that for any tax returns beyond simple ones, neither tax experts nor IRS employees are likely to compute the same tax correctly, or the same tax return the same way so as to agree with that of another expert (SHJ, 22/2/00).

*The US Declaration of Independence of 1776 included the following grievance against the king of England: "He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance." Now, our own governments do the same thing to us, and we seem unable to gain our independence from this.

*The disenchantment of Americans with government seems to be reflected in TV programming in which public officials are given the worst occupational image, closely followed by civil servants (SHJ, 8 May 99).

*Having business in the Syracuse federal building in 1999, we ran a gauntlet of police check points, with several police or security officers stationed in front of the building, several inside the door, and more in front of all sorts of offices on all floors—only to discover upon departing that on the street running along the side of the building, only about 10 feet from it, a yellow Ryder rental truck was parked, and apparently nobody had thought about watching who parked on the street. It was the use of a yellow Ryder truck as a bomb against the Oklahoma City federal building that precipitated all this employment-generating security nationwide.

*Here is a very good example of how modernism is ruining polity in democratic countries. Democracies were set up to function for generally well-behaved people capable of functioning with normative adaptive autonomy. The judicial systems in democracies function under a rule of law that
bends over backward trying not to convict the innocent, and that observes innumerable safeguards upon individual rights. This also means that judicial proceedings are quite slow, and can only handle a certain number of cases. However, criminality in many democracies has increased so much that not only the police cannot cope with it, but certainly not the courts. For instance, in Germany, criminality has increased so much, in part because of the influx of people from the second and third world who bring with them different socio-political concepts and practices and a much greater criminality than the native population, that the courts simply have to let the majority of offenders go because they cannot deal with them. In turn, this has enraged the police who have done their part by catching them, and then discover that it was all in vain, including the risk to their own lives that this often entails. This sort of thing is certainly a set-up for a disenchantment with democracy, and already a very large proportion of Germans in the former communist provinces would prefer order over democracy (AW, 29/8/98).

Also, in a democracy, legal case is as good and legitimate as another, and the courts are not in a good position to decide that they will take some but not other legitimate cases. Thus, while violent criminals are going free because courts cannot get around to trying them, the German Supreme Court was tied down deciding how much space a hen in a de facto egg-laying factory is entitled to. Until recently, this was about as much space as a letter-size sheet of paper, which the Supreme Court ruled had to be increased by about 20%. This may soon come up before the new European Supreme Court because hen advocates demand almost 100% more space (AW, 17/7/99).

Someone commented that the good news about the endless Clinton impeachment procedures was that the government was too preoccupied to do much else (Time, 15/3/99).

Writer P. J. O'Rourke tried to understand the American government, studied it, discovered that it does not work, and explained it all in Parliament of Whores, a phrase that alludes to an English Renaissance work entitled Parliament of Fools. Among his conclusions were that giving money and power to government is like handing a teenage boy whiskey and car keys.

Columnist Meg Greenfield (e.g., Newsweek, 8 March 99) also wrestled herself over the years to the conclusion that the US political system is simply not working anymore.

Collapse of Other Civil Systems & Institutions

During late 1998, the Syracuse school district received an average of one bomb threat a day. The papers quit reporting most of these, probably in order to prevent fueling this epidemic through even more copycatting.

Some schools are launching marriage courses, but one think tank guru said that he knew that the schools were failing to teach math, science, history, literature and foreign languages, and therefore wasn't sure that they could do any better teaching marriage. Another one said that it was deeply incongruous about schools on the one hand handing out free condoms--and then imagining that they could teach children to think ahead for the long term as marriage would require, not to mention that the school would be teaching two mutually contradictory messages (Time, 21/6/99).

Schools have been indoctrinated, and come to believe, that they should not be teaching morals, but since things are now falling apart on them so that schools are no longer manageable, they have started something new which they now call "character education" so as to avoid the awful stigma of moral indoctrination. Some of this is being taught under a rubric of "good citizenship" (Time, 24/5/99).

Since public schools are in a state of collapse, and since it is extremely likely that in the name of "rights," diversity tolerance, and political correctness, all sorts of awful things will get done to children in public schools with parents not only having no say, but not even getting informed, we are all in favor of home schooling. We see the explosive rise in such schooling as a vote of "no confidence" by an increasing number of citizens. Unfortunately, this leaves the public schools stuck with an ever larger proportion of children whose parents are less competent or less involved, contributing yet further to school disfunctionality, in a vicious circle. We see no end of this short
of a constitutional convention that redrafts the US constitution, and that gives collective welfare at least as much emphasis as individual rights.

*Americans generally do not know that in Europe, there has been an increase in sabotage of the train system. In England, this often causes all sorts of train delays, with trains often stopping in the middle of the countryside. The public is often not told what the true reason for the delay is. In Germany, tracks are already being patrolled by helicopters, and on elite trains, police sit in the locomotive with night vision equipment.

*Virtually every day in early 1999, for weeks on end, there was a phony anthrax threat somewhere in the US, each time requiring FBI involvement. An FBI official said that some day, there will be a real anthrax threat, and it will not be taken seriously (AP in SPS, 3/3/99).

*A very powerful example of the normalization of deviancy is that there are 150,000 estimated gang members in Los Angeles alone, which once would have triggered a major national alarm but is now just simply taken for granted (Time, 21/6/99).

*Even though the crime total is down in the US, many cities nonetheless have the equivalent of war zones, where it is unsafe for police officers to adhere to the usual "rules of engagement," and where the reflexes employed by soldiers in combat are more fitting to the context. It would take police officers who place little value on their own lives, or who have mentally offered up their lives, to function by the usual rule book. This needs to be understood even as one disapproves of the hair-trigger behavior of police in such areas.

*Unhealthy societies are, in a sense, very expensive societies, even just on the level of material resources. In unhealthy societies, there are such destructive and consumptive processes as much wastefulness, crime, and vandalism, all of which are expensive. For instance, as regards crime alone, there are the expenses of criminal arrest, processing, and detention, plus measures to try to protect potential victims from crime. Such societies generate a perceived need for all sorts of safety and security measures which add costs and efforts that instead could have been invested in constructive things. For instance, consider the vast amount of security measures of a physical and material nature, as well as of a social and human nature (e.g., time), that are being expended in our society today in defense against possible crime, vandalism, terrorism, and insane or irresponsible behavior. And this is just one example of how expensive unhealthy, and even decaying, societies can be.

*In England, a community service has to conduct a formal "risk assessment" for 24 domains (toilets and hygiene, electrical appliances, staff working at night, etc.). As the editor of Speak Out (3/99) cried out: how can they find time for personal contact with the service recipients?

*For generations, the Lions (a civic confraternity) has subsidized services to visually limited people, including by sending eyeglasses abroad to poor nations. In the 1960s, the Syracuse Lions Club had 160 members; by 1999 the number was down to 32, a third of whom were above 75, as a result of which the club had to stop its services. This is a widely recapitulated phenomenon in the culture of modernism in which people want to be go-getters instead of go-givers.

*Even in Europe, the public water supply is collapsing. About 15% of water supplies are polluted, and small water-borne epidemics keep breaking out (AW, 27/3/99).

*Localities all over the world have been selling the management of their public water supplies to firms from other countries. Why would an Australian city sell its water supply to a French firm, a Bolivian city sell its to an American firm, and so on, in a form of (very wet) musical chairs? At the very least, it violates the principle of subsidiarity, and this is a set-up for disaster, but beyond this, we suspect PPP dynamics at work.

*Strangely enough, some systems that are still working reasonably well are actually forced into collapse by an insane populace or government. An example is the US public utility system that
had been one of the relatively functional systems in the US, but deregulation, which commenced in the late 1990s, began to rapidly tip the electric power supply toward disfunctionality.

*We have concluded that Britain is going down the drain, based on our recent workshop experiences there, and research is now bearing this out: 25% of Britains consider their future "hopeless," 30% feel "downright miserable," and 10% believe that they would be "better off dead" (Time, 30/10/00). Now if we were "compassionate liberals," we would hasten to help them being better off dead.

*Soon, in an upcoming issue, we will have more to say about the fragility of the computer culture.

Collapses of Citizen Functionality

*There are some interesting deviancy trends among Latino immigrants to the US. They bring or keep the less worthy aspects of their culture, drop the better and worthy ones, and absorb the worst rather than the best ones of American culture. In the second and third generations, their diet gets worse, their health goes downhill, they have higher delinquency and drop-out rates, more divorce and domestic abuse, and the girls have had an increasing rate of unwed pregnancy, recently even surpassing that of "blacks." They do less homework, their grades go down, and even their aspirations decline. Apparently, second and subsequent generations also deal less adaptively with discrimination than their immigrant parents. Of course, the children in the second generation learn English, and rather amazingly, their self-esteem starts booming, which of course underlines how little self-esteem has to do with attainments in today’s psych culture (Newsweek, 12 July 1991).

*According to Newsweek (7 June 99), boys as young as 4 and 5 all over the US play games such as "girl trap" in which they fantasize about somehow capturing and immobilizing a girl and doing all sorts of awful things to her. We do not know how common such boy fantasies may have been earlier and elsewhere, but we wager that never before have boys that young had them in such numbers. Might this qualify as decadence?

*Close to 10% of Russia’s population (and therefore a much larger percentage of its adult population) reportedly are alcoholics. One contributor is that vodka is still very cheap while many other things are hard to get (SPS, 8 April 99). Very likely, the government is keeping vodka cheap as an "opium for the masses," as Marx characterized religion.

Entitlement Mentalities & Litigiousness

*Someone has proposed a new formulation of Newton’s third law: "For each action, there is an equal and opposite lawsuit" (SHJ, 4 Dec. 00).

*A 15-year-old boy in New York State failed to obey his father’s command to come straight home from school and instead went off driving around with other boys, which is always a recipe for disaster. Indeed, the youths had a car accident with the boy ending up in a "persistent vegetative state." Feeding and oxygen tubes sprouted from the boy’s body, and doctors had to remove part of his skull and brain to save his life, but the father sued the hospital that took care of the boy after the accident, claiming it did not provide suitable therapy. He also blamed the school district for not ensuring that the boy got on the bus after school to go home. When the boy recovered sufficiently, the school district provided speech, physical and occupational therapy, but the father deemed this insufficient and sued to have the boy included in an educational program, despite his comatose condition. Altogether, the father sued the school district in a virtual warfare of litigation, accumulating 250,000 pages of documents and asking for $12 million. The school district has spent a quarter million dollars on the boy during a four-year period, plus another $275,000 to defend itself against the father’s suits.

Apparently, the father did not think that he or the boy bore any responsibility for what happened, and felt no gratitude for all that got done for the boy. Obviously, we have here a case of modernistic anger (rage) at fate, with a determination to find somebody who is at fault or responsible and who can work a miracle cure. The father was very clear when he said, "I want him
back the way he was." This one-track pursuit drove his wife away who filed for divorce. Despite all this, there were a number of rights radicals who sided with the father (SHJ, 14 Aug. 97; One Step Ahead, 8/97).

*Usually, we pay the people who stick fingers up our recta to check what's there. But how much would you charge to allow someone to stick a finger up your rectum for a nonmedical reason? Ignoring for the moment the "gay" culture where things such as these are done for free, we bet that some people would charge as little as $50 (even less if really hard up for a drink or fix), and that only a remnant would hold out against an offer of $50,000. However, a pretty rough character in Syracuse with a long arrest record got an impromptu "cavity search" by a police officer, and promptly sued for $10 million. A little stiff, we would say.

* A cerebrally palsied 9-year-old boy in Oklahoma was not allowed to play on his school's soccer team. His parents promptly sued under the ADA, claiming he should be allowed to come on the field using a scooter-like 4-wheeled walker (AP in Syracuse Herald-Journal, 12 Nov. 99, p. A8). This would mean that the other 21 players would never again be able to play a normal game of soccer while the boy was in school.

* An Irishman who got drunk crashed a rental car in which his girlfriend died. A Florida lawyer sued the car rental firm on the grounds that the firm "should have known about the unique cultural and ethnic customs existing in Ireland which involve the regular consumption of alcohol at pubs as a major component to Irish social life," and the Irishman should not have been allowed to drive on American highways. When the lawyer was called on this highly non-PC suit, he recanted--and decided to file for damages on some other grounds (AP in SHJ, 20/6/99).

* An apparently relatively new practice by teenagers who seem always to have lots of money is to go to a motel, rent a room with cash, and then invite all their friends (or pre-inform them) to drop in and start drinking, and sometimes have sex. Normatively, these parties get rather loud, and soon there are complaints from other customers. Some motels have tried to refuse renting rooms to teenagers, but others are afraid that if they do not, they will be sued for age discrimination (SHJ, 18/5/99).

* Considering over what many consumers are suing manufacturers, columnist George Will strongly suggested that there could be warning labels on sleds that they should not be eaten, on TV dinners that they will be hot after being heated, on sleeping pills that they might cause drowsiness, and on clothes irons that clothes should not be ironed while on the body. Far-fetched? A consumer sued a toothbrush firm for "toothbrush abrasion," caused by both natural and synthetic, and firm, medium and soft toothbrushes, and that buyers of toothbrushes had not been warned about this potential injury even though it was "reasonably foreseeable considering the nature and intended function of the product." There is even a web site on which fellow sufferers can unite (Newsweek, 10 May 99, p. 92).

* As a column in Newsweek (7 June 99) puts it, laws by Congress lead to rules from bureaucrats, then to a torrent of federal litigation, and finally to fiats from federal courts. (However, sometimes it all starts with rulings from federal courts, leading to an avalanche of changes in laws, lower court rulings, new government and private regulations, etc.).

The only reason why schools and other bodies must comply with all sorts of federal rulings is because they receive federal funds. It is therefore hopeful and refreshing to note that schools and other bodies are being sued these days for allegedly violating federal and court rulings, and sued for sums of dollars that far exceed the funds that they receive from the federal government. It is devoutly to be hoped that when structures learn that they are paying more out in federal damage suits than they are getting from the federal government, they will learn to do without federal dollars and hence without federal regulations.

* In Syracuse, a church discontinued its child care center for 84 children and 32 caregivers because, as the pastor said, "day care has become increasingly difficult to provide without a lot of fear, because you are constantly worried about liability issues, safety issues and security issues" (SHJ,
Constant fear?! Again, if this is not a very good example of the breakdown in our society, we hardly know what the words would mean.

*An Anglican diocese in western Canada faced a string of lawsuits related to alleged abuse of children more than 30 years earlier at Anglican schools. Facing the likelihood of bankruptcy due to legal costs, the diocese simply dissolved itself and announced that it would no longer formally serve its members in the area (NCR, 22/10/00). This is certainly one way to get rid of all the churches, or for that matter, any incorporated entity: simply keep relentlessly suing them so that even if they are not convicted, they will go bankrupt.

*One of the largest-ever pyramid schemes in US financial history was that of the Bennett Funding Group and 9 affiliates that went belly-up in 1996 with a debt of $1 billion to about 22,000 creditors. By 1999, the bankruptcy lawyers had extracted $125 million from the insurance companies behind the firm, and promptly demanded that they get $27.5 million of this, or 22%, to be of course subtracted from the pittance that the creditors would recover (e.g., SHJ, 18/3/99). Three guilty parties: hooded ransacking the gullible investors who wanted something for nothing who got taken by swindlers.

*From suing President Clinton, Paula Jones (who had once reportedly been flattered by his lascivious attention to her) received $850,000, but her legal bill was $874,000—so much for standing on principle (Time, 25/1/99).

*Complaints against lawyers are at an all-time high in Britain too, and more government regulations over them loom.

*In 1999, we saw 2 cartoons that compared lawyers with alligators. One said that when you cross a lawyer with an alligator, you get a litigator.

Disfunctional Formalization as a Response to Disfunctionality

*One of the US Supreme Court justices opined that the 1994 Individuals With Disabilities Education Act severely restricts the ability of schools to take disciplinary actions against students with "behavior-disorder disabilities, even if the disability was not diagnosed prior to the incident triggering discipline." If this became a majority opinion of the court, then every discipline problem in the schools could be interpreted as the result of emotional problems, and beyond any disciplinary response of the schools (Newsweek, 7 June 99).

*There are laws or regulations in the US that forbid libraries to tell anyone who it is who has got a particular book checked out. Presumably, telling someone what a person is likely reading would violate that person's "privacy." It must have been addicts to pornography who got such laws or regulations passed.

*So many physicians have said that because of increasing red tape, they would not enter the field again, that younger people have become discouraged from becoming physicians, leading to a steady drop in applicants to US medical schools in recent years (AP in SPS, 6 Sept. 00).

*In Virginia, an elementary school boy was suspended under the school’s drug policy for handing out Certs peppermints (Clipping from Margaret Sager).

*Among the innumerable stupid things that our authorities would do to counter the symptoms of societal decadence is to require by law that stores make song lyrics available to the parents of youths who want to buy them. Another congressman, after attending a Marilyn Manson (decadent) concert, wrote a proposed bill to require warning labels on concert tickets (Time, 21/6/99).

*We must consider the innumerable security measures that have been and are being installed everywhere in society as a version of formalization. This development is a consequence of crimes being committed that formerly used to be rare, and the response is to impose ever more restrictions on people’s access to places, and ability to perform certain functions, without actually being screened.
G. K. Chesterton once said that "if men will not be governed by the Ten Commandments, they shall be governed by the 10,000 commandments." Obviously, what this means is that if people are not governed by a small number of high-order ethical principles, and more or less voluntarily so, then the powers-that-be will impose an infinity of specific rules upon them, and this pretty much describes the culture of modernity that is governed by ever more specific and formalized laws, rules, regulations, etc.

The Tottering Financial Structures

*In 1998, the world financial market had a near-meltdown scare. First, the Thailand currency collapsed, then fearful investors pulled funds out of other "developing" countries in Asia, Korea teetered, Brazil had a currency crisis, Russia defaulted on its debt, and an elite American investment firm (LTCM) with many PhDs and two Nobel Prize-winners on its team hemorrhaged 90%(!) of its previous assets of $120 billion(!). Once again, the US Federal Reserve had to stick together a bail-out. How many more such bail-outs can one count on?

*Japan recently had its version of the US savings-and-loan bail-out scandal, with the government spending $70 billion to bail out various of its over-extended banks (Newsweek, 16/8/99).

The Spectre of (Military) Dictatorship

We keep pointing out that when civil structures become nonfunctional, dictatorship usually steps in.

*In Italy, crime has become so prevalent that the government has announced plans to deploy the armed forces in police actions, including schools (AW, 21/7/99). It is actually a long-standing practice in many countries, especially in Europe, to use the armed forces for police functions, or to blur the difference between the police and the military, as by constituting a military-like police.

A few democratic countries have set up defenses against such practices as being threats to democracy, but we have pointed out repeatedly that the US has been drifting toward deploying the military for police functions.

*The US Defense Department continues to get huge allocations for medical research which could just as readily be conducted in the private sector. It is particularly astonishing that the Pentagon funds one of the larger breast cancer research projects ($135 million) (Science, 12 June 98). In a democracy, it is very dangerous for the military to take over ever more civilian functions, as we keep pointing out in virtually all our December issues.

*The 4/00 pictures of expletives-shouting SWAT-like federal police officers breaking into the house where the illegal immigrant boy Elian Gonzalez was, pointing automatic rifles at the unarmed civilians in it, and shouting "we'll shoot, we'll shoot," gave us the willies. We can understand the police spraying pepper at the crowd on the street outside, but not this. And to imagine, during and after 5 months of the preceding rigmarole, no one had thought of teaching the federal police officers some manners and a civil tongue!! If compassionate liberals will do such things, what can be expected of compassionate conservatives?

*Everywhere one is and looks these days, people are going about wearing identification badges and cards (usually with id. photo), commonly hanging from their necks. One even sees this more and more in small, private, and even church-operated, agencies. The lavish carrying of such cards is of course a sign of collapse of safety in public places due to societal decadence, yet the very people who go around wearing these tags might deny that societal degeneracy and collapse are in process, demonstrating the "defining-down of deviancy" phenomenon.

*The old tyrannies of Europe, and their democratic successors, have had a long tradition of requiring their citizens to carry passports at all times. This practice has been repugnant to American culture--until recently. It has been predicted that soon, almost every American will be carrying a national identification card, and that those who do not will not have access to a myriad of basic venues and services, or even get jobs (LA, 11/98). The medium of this development will apparently
be the driver’s license which (how amusingly clever) will be handed out to non-drivers as well with a "restriction" notation that the holder is not allowed to drive.

*In many sectors of American society, one’s social security (SS) number already serves like an ID or passport, and even babies are being forced to have an SS number for purposes unrelated to the Social Security Act or its functions.

**The 2000 US Election, & Elections in General**

*In US political campaigns, voter participation seems to be declining in proportion to the amount of money being poured into the campaigns, so that now, candidates may be spending as much as $140 per vote cast, and of course, much more than that per vote cast for oneself (Time, 6/2000). Even in the 11/2000 presidential election, for every presidential vote cast, about $40 had been spent campaigning!!! Altogether, the 2000 presidential campaigns spent almost as much money as the country spends on laundry detergent every year.

Even on the state and local levels, the money spent per vote is astronomical. In the Syracuse area, some politicians spent up to $28 per vote in 1998. In a primary election in NJ, one US Senate candidate spent $142 for every vote he received. His opponent only spent $14 per vote received, and lost (Time, 19/6/00). Who is giving politicians all this money? The people who end up controlling them if they get elected. This also explains why so many special interests give money to both opposing sides in elections; this way, they cannot lose.

*Hardly mentioned by the media was that of 435 House members, 64 had no major-party opponent, and 300 faced only token opposition! Also, the re-election rate of House incumbents has only ranged between 79-98% since 1946, and usually is above 90% (USA Today, 23/10/00).

*One common practice of politicians running for office is that they promise to solve even the most severe societal problems without inflicting any inconveniences on anyone. And in fact, a politician who honestly spelled out beforehand the hardship that an effective measure would entail would not get elected.

*Just before the election, Newsweek (16/10/00) ran a column inventorying a long list of lies by Gore, Bush and Cheney, but for some reason did not document Lieberman’s lies.

*It is really very important for people to appreciate that the Democrats would rather have Lucifer elected on the Republican ticket, and the Republicans would rather have Beelzebul elected on the Democratic ticket, than either party would like to have God elected on a third-party ticket. This accounts for the relentless propaganda that people should vote when nobody is running who is worth voting for. It also explains the vituperative persecution of small-party candidates on the right and the left, such as Buchanan and Nader, because they are seen as vastly greater threats than they are because they might give people the idea that some party other than the two major corrupt ones and their candidates might be worth voting for.

*When Gore was asked whether a federal law should prohibit the execution of pregnant women, he was stumped. However, he regained his wits, and at a later press conference clarified that a woman should have her "choice" on whether or not to have her baby before being executed (NCR, 30/7/00). The least worst one could say about the 2000 presidential race was that it was between the well-funded unthinking and the even better-funded unknowing.

*Since we don’t vote for deathmakers, liars, thieves and cheats, we hardly ever are able to vote for anyone running for public office, but we nonetheless make it a point to punctiliously "go to the polls." Fortunately, voting procedures in most US states permit voters to ignore the slates of candidates of various parties, and to write in the name of a candidate of their own choosing. The candidate some of us keep thusly writing in for most important offices, Felix von Krischer, our noble and capital, mouse, house and court Siamese, has never won, even though he is honest, makes no promises he cannot keep, has a good heart, and is quite open about what he is trying to steal on the rare occasions when he tries to. If only the country were to awaken to his virtues and qualifications.
Also, by writing him in, we exercise our right to vote while also being understood as protesting against a bankrupt feudal two-party hegemony.

However, the established imperial powers and parties are such that protest votes, blank ballots, votes for nonofficial candidates, etc., are often relegated into the category of invalid votes by snooty election officials, which apparently was the case with many votes in the bitterly contested vote count in Florida. Such votes are not even reported by the news media—not even the local ones when they report the results. None of the imperial powers wants the public to know how many politically disaffected citizens and voters there are. Eventually, candidates may be elected with a mere handful of votes, and with no revelation of how many voters did not vote, or how many cast protest votes.

We believe that a constitutional convention is needed from which established politicians are banned.

*We liked the "Non Sequitur" cartoon from just before the 11/2000 election in which a newscaster announced that due to a renewed sense of civic responsibility, there was a record low voter turnout.

*The presidential candidate of the reform party in the US, a world-famous physicist, has been into New Age stuff, and once brought 4,000 "yogic flyers" to Washington to reduce violent crimes through mass meditation (during which the murder rates soared) (Newsweek, 17/7/00).

*Ralph Nader apparently allied himself with the compulsory "treatment" and drugging of mentally disturbed people. Apparently, Hillary Clinton has also come out in favor of compulsory drugging of problematic school children (Mouth, 7/2000). While we consider certain instances of compulsion (e.g., confinement) of disturbed people as acts of mercy to them, and/or of justice to others, we view compulsory mind drugging as profoundly objectionable, except perhaps in certain extreme cases. It is less worse to restrict the body than to try to dominate the mind.

*The media were very quiet about the fact that for his misrepresentation of Jewish teaching on abortion, homosexuality and "gender integration" in the military, Sen. Lieberman, the Democratic vice presidential candidate, was "excommunicated" by the New York Torah Court in 10/00, well before the election.

*Trial lawyers have become the biggest contributors to US election campaigns, displacing previous big-time contributors. Democratic candidates particularly are most likely to be thusly supported. Most of this money comes from the trial lawyer sector that sues people for money (Reader’s Digest, 1/2000).

*As soon as the polls had closed in Florida in the 11/2000 election, the American Bar Association, dominated by the Democratic party, sent out an e-mail to its membership asking for 500 lawyers from all over the country to stream to Florida to try to overturn the election results (SHJ, 29/11/00)—and hundreds did indeed heed the call!

Persecutions & Wars

*In a 1995 poll, 61% of American men said that if they had been in a position to do so, they would have ordered the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima; 29% of women said the same, which is both good news (only half as many) and bad news (almost a third of the women) (CS, 27/7/00).

*In order to clean up the country in preparation for a 1998 visit by Queen Elizabeth, Malaysia systematically poisoned thousands of foreign refugees and migrant workers in its detention camps, shot many, and then deported the rest. Many were religious and political refugees from Indonesia (Observer, 26/4/98). Very little was made of this by the media.

*Many Holocaust survivors and Jewish citizens called for "non-interference" in the Balkan wars of the 1990s—but all over the world, synagogues set off sirens on Holocaust Remembrance Day (12 April) in 1999, and there are plenty of parties to blame for not "interfering" with the Holocaust.
*The government-subsidized (to the tune of about $7 billion) arms exports of the US reached a record level ($21.3 billion) in 1997, much of it ($8.3 billion worth) to nondemocratic nations. The US Department of Defense employs 6,500 full-time people just to promote and service foreign arms deals (CC, 3/00).

*The new practice of third-world countries to make children fight its wars was a stroke of evil genius, vastly increasing the size of fighting forces. Worldwide, children now account for a third of all war casualties. Many of these child armies (remindful of the children's crusade) are supplied with weapons by the US.

*The trouble with giving money to poor countries instead of to its poor individuals is that the governments may use it for making war. Two of the world's poorest countries, Ethiopia and Eritrea, had been locked in a war until recently that cost each of them $1 million a day (Time, 5 June 00). As recently as 12/98, Ethiopia contracted to buy $150 million worth of military hardware and supplies from Russia (AP in SHJ, 30/12/98).

*According to American principles, and democratic ones generally, civilian leaders rather than the military should decide whether a nation goes to war. However, if the missile defense system promoted by both major US parties is put into place, then the decision to launch missiles against another nation would be made on extremely short notice. At best, they would be made by military officers, possibly even of relatively low rank; but more likely, they would be made by a computer, with little or no human participation. After all, some missile defense plans require that an intercept missile be launched within five minutes of the launching of an enemy missile. One policy analyst said that in the future, "there just won't be any time for mere human meddling" in the decision to launch (SHA, 9 July 00).

*The proposed US missile defense shield ("Star Wars II") is estimated to eventually cost $30 billion, is expected to be ineffective, and all the tests on it so far have been de facto faked which, however, did not keep two of the three tests from failing altogether anyway. Major newspapers have pointed out the ineffectiveness of the scheme, but nothing seems to be able to stop it because of the vested commercial interest in this typical PPP way of distributing and consuming the wealth.

*It has been proposed to put the combined computing power of the computers in 700 Iowa schools, libraries, hospitals and government offices into service as a back-up to the military, and for National Guard training (CR, Summer 00).

*How thoroughly the truth is being kept from the public these days became dramatically apparent in the following vignette. In 5/2000, an American general was being investigated for having started a battle with an Iraqi army two days after a cease fire had been declared by the Desert Storm command in 1991. In this battle, about 600 Iraqi armored vehicles, guns and trucks were destroyed. We had followed closely the events of Desert Storm and had never heard of this battle which apparently had been kept a secret, and which we are now being told as if it were old and familiar news (Newsweek, 29/5/2000).

*Similarly, it was only in 6/2000 that we learned for the first time that on a single day during the Korean War, 16 Russian pilots in North Korean jets shot down 20 Australian jets that were engaged in ground support.

*For almost 50 years, the Pentagon told us that the Korean War cost the lives of 54,000 US soldiers. Now the Pentagon did an "oops, we made a 17,000-lives-mistake," and revised the figure to 37,000 (Time, 12 June 00). If this is hard to believe, wait for future revelations!

*Soldiers and sometimes other people are given the impression that gas masks would be useful in case of a gas attack. However, more than half the gas masks tested by the US military proved defective (Time, 3 July 00).

*Almost every year, the Pentagon has changed its story as to the Gulf War syndrome. The latest (as of 10/00) is the admission that about 30,000 US soldiers had been exposed to nerve gas in
1991. As recently as 1997, they had been told that they had not been exposed. Now the story is that the exposure was too low to pose health risks.

*Good news: the percent of the US gross domestic product devoted to "defense" reportedly declined from about 5% to 3% between 1990-2000.

*A lot of nonmilitary spending provisions get opportunistically tacked on to the US defense budget by congressional hoods. Examples in 2000 were millions for artificial hip research, tracking desert tortoises, and an $8.5 million subsidy to the Ernest Gallo alcohol research center (Time, 7 Aug. 00).

Reflections on the Olympics

*We noted a peculiar phenomenon while observing the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, namely, a surprisingly large number of foreign athletes live in rich countries, including the US, but compete for their native countries. Apparently, they are double-dipping because they have a better chance of getting into the Olympics by competing for their native country to which they may never return except perhaps as visitors, than competing for the top-heavy (American) teams. Further, a surprisingly large number of former Olympic medal winners from other countries are now living in the US; and yet further, even some of the trainers who train foreign-born athletes abroad may live in the US. We heard no one comment on these peculiar arrangements. Similarly, many of the foreign athletes were actually studying in the US, or had studied there not long ago.

*There was massive publicity in the media, including cover stories in Time and Newsweek, about Olympic athletes in large numbers engaging in illegal drugging. It appears that in many sports, athletes who do not do drugs simply don't even come close to winning anymore, and the ones who do--almost to a man and woman--lie about it. These abuses have caused some people to speak of the "chemical Olympics."

*However, as Newsweek put it (18/9/00), Olympic athletes who cannot win can at least score, in that the Olympic Village came stocked with 50,000(!) condoms. But with Olympians fornicating around the clock, and the Cubans stealing condoms by the suitcase full for sale on the Cuban black market, yet another supply of somewhere between 20,000-50,000 more had to be rushed in. Considering that there were only a few thousand Olympians, and that at least a few did not forniciate, the majority must have set a new record of fornication of Olympic proportion, at about 100 each, or 3 a day per. Perhaps this should not surprise us in that drug use and sexual immorality tend to go together, plus that some of the drugs probably inflame libido.

*The latest in men's magazines is to show naked female athletes, this trend having apparently gotten a big boost from the 2000 Summer Olympics (SHJ, 15/9/00).

*The good news is that in 2000, the media for the very first time gave significant coverage to the Paralympics, even though these have been held following the regular Olympics on several previous occasions. However, the Paralympics were unfortunately as permeated by drugs as the "real" one, and several competitors were disqualified (USA Today, 23/10/00).

News of the Season

Halloween is only surpassed by Christmas in terms of commercialization of holidays in the US. What is even worse is that Halloween is being embraced all over the world, including in countries without a Christian tradition which, after all, accounts for Halloween being the vigil for the November 1 feast of All Saints. Also, Halloween is no longer an evening or day, but a season, and it starts ever earlier, now about early October. Since the same is happening with Thanksgiving and Christmas, we have begun to see a syncretism of the symbols of the 3 feasts, starting in October! While about 75% of Americans believe that Christmas holiday displays in stores are too early, they themselves start putting up Christmas displays and trees ever earlier. For most of them, Christmas is over when it finally arrives, even though it is supposed to last from the eve of December 24 to January 6.
*Cole, J. S. (2000). Getting life. Louisville, KY: Advocato Press. (Review by Susan Thomas) This is a novel about several people who live in a nursing home. Although elderly residents are mentioned, the main characters are all physically handicapped people who ended up there either as a result of an accident, or because their families no longer could or would care for them at home. The main character is a woman who has such severe cerebral palsy that she hardly has any bodily control, is in a wheelchair whenever she is not in bed, and cannot speak. She also has difficulty with the muscles of her throat, and therefore has problems eating. The gist of the story is that as a result of a serious incident of abuse against her, this woman is put in contact with first a state office which investigates such abuse and is charged with monitoring quality in service settings, and then with a group of physically handicapped people who live in community settings (usually their own homes or apartments). These latter meet regularly to talk about their situation, to inform and help each other, and to assist other physically handicapped people to learn what they need to know and to make the arrangements they need to get out of nursing homes into similar living arrangements. Over the course of the story, the woman is helped to get an adapted wheelchair, to obtain a board that she can point to with a light attached to her head that enables her to communicate, and eventually, with both live-in and drop-in staff support, to move out into an apartment with two other physically handicapped women.

The author claims that she wanted to show how bad nursing homes are not only for the people who live there, but also for those who work there, and although she occasionally makes remarks about the difficult working conditions, and the fact that so many such workers come from the lower strata of society and are themselves beset with all sorts of problems (abusive relationships, raising children without a man, low incomes, etc.), there is actually very little in the book to give one an understanding or sympathy for people who work in such situations.

Also, the book suffers from being a combination of a novel and a "lecture" at nonhandicapped people by handicapped people and their advocates, about the bad conditions of nursing homes, the much better conditions of life in the community, the advantages of handicapped people being able to control their own aides and staffing, and even hints on how to arrange such situations and how to take advantage of funding schemes, etc. For this reason, there are passages in the book that one would really prefer to just skip over because one knows after reading just the first sentence that this is going to be one of those lecture or information-giving passages. Perhaps this aspect of the book came about as a result of the fact that the author consulted widely with physically handicapped people as she wrote it, and in fact did regular readings of the book with a book club composed of physically handicapped people who gave input to her. Perhaps it was they who suggested that she include these various sections which unfortunately are apt to limit the book's appeal to the ordinary reader.

Also, during the course of the story, the woman meets a handicapped man who is very active in the disability rights movement, with whom she falls in love, and at the end of the story they consider moving in together. One of the physicians who had early on befriended this young woman and actually was very instrumental in putting her in touch with the physically handicapped activist offers to secure a birth control method for her if she so desires it. This element of the story is a bit of a template these days in telling the story of handicapped people who get liberated to some degree.

In the afterword on page 301, the author credits Wolfensberger as having described inhume conditions that lead to deathmaking, but unfortunately his name is spelled Wolfensburger.

*In 11/2000, we attended a lecture by the famed critic of psychiatry, Thomas Szasz, who is himself a psychiatrist and lives in retirement in Syracuse. He has been criticizing certain psychiatric practices all of his career, though he himself claims not to be a critic of psychiatry, but only of psychiatry's alliance with the state, which we consider to be an understatement. He claims he has no objection to "psychiatry between consenting adults." Among the points he made at this lecture were the following. There is no such thing as mental illness or mental disease, only overt behavior and misbehavior which can and should be described objectively, somewhat akin to the way that behaviorism has called for. For instance, "hearing voices" can be stated as "talking to oneself." Animals have diseases pretty much the same as humans, but there are hardly any analogues in animals to what is called mental illness in humans. Furthermore, humans do not die from mental illness, while they can die from almost all other kinds of diseases. Psychiatry is a secular religion and psychiatrists are successors of the medieval priesthood. He points out that while a disease is a fact, diagnosis is only a word or a verbal phrase, and is tremendously subject to ideological and political
pressures. Many of the psychiatric diagnoses are merely reformulations of the seven deadly sins, e.g., lust is now "sex addiction"; what was once the deadly sin of anger has become the psychiatric construct of hostility. If it were true that there is such a thing as mental illness, then why would it not be neurologists instead of psychiatrists who would be in charge of it? Also, one is allowed to deny that one has some medical affliction, but things go very ill with one if one denies that one is mentally ill when the shrinks have said one is. It is terrible to call facilities into which "mentally ill" people are put "hospitals," when one is allowed to leave any real hospitals, but mental hospitals are the only ones where one is forcibly detained. To call a place a psychiatric "hospital" if one cannot walk away from it he likened to calling a concentration camp a labor camp. He also noted the irony that one can force people to take psychiatric drugs these days, but cannot force them to take all sorts of other drugs, not even when they have TB. There is also a great irony in that psychiatry has long been invoked to prevent suicides, but is now recruited to help people, including some identified as insane, to commit suicide. The insanity defense is a travesty. For instance, a person who is called schizophrenic can get away with murder when he claims that God told him to kill his wife, when one would not be equally likely to attribute a claim that God told one to be nice to one's wife as being a symptom of mental illness. He also said that psychiatry is a proselytizing religion in contrast to some religions that are not; and like many proselytizing religions, it is prepared to kill those who resist it. Altogether, he said that the psychiatric cure is worse than the disease.

*Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation. (1998). Risk management system. Boston: Author. People in human services tend to be remarkably indifferent or insensitive to risk factors. This is the reason why one state agency had this monograph developed that systematically reviews risk factors for people under residential care. While the inventories of risks, and the proposed ways to anticipate them, in this monograph could paralyze one, they also could serve at least as a consciousness-raiser to many people (source item from Nancy Rampulla).

*Calcium channel blockers were introduced around 1980 to great fanfare as lowering high blood pressure. Eventually, 28 million people were taking them, including almost 13 million in the US. Yet in 9/2000 we are being told that these drugs had actually caused 85,000 heart attacks and heart failures a year (Time, 11 Sept. 00).

*Reportedly, every state Medicaid long-term care dollar in Missouri is now supposed to "follow the person," with over 53,000 people being eligible (Mouth, 7/2000). This is called a personal care option, and supposedly makes so-called Medicaid waivers unnecessary. If it really works, it means that nursing homes will lose "beds" (actually customers), and the home care business would thrive, and in turn what that means remains to be seen. However, no one should declare victory yet and go home. We find it too good to be true, or not to get perverted.

*A study (MR, 8/99) found that direct care staff turnover in group homes for retarded people was 46% a year, and that of these 46%, almost half left in the first six months.

*A mother declared (TASH Newsletter, 412000, p. 35) that her 26-year-old handicapped son had had at the very least a thousand paid caregivers in his 27 years at school, at home and in the community. She knew of at least eight instances of him having been physically abused by them, and wonders how many more instances there were that she never found out about.

*An alarming new development is that Kaposi's sarcoma, which occurs almost exclusively in people infected with HIV, may be transmitted via saliva, hence by kissing, and particularly by so-called "deep kissing." Despite this discovery, a spokesperson for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hastened to say politically correctly that there were not enough data to recommend that people with HIV avoid deep kissing (AP in SHJ, 9/9/00). In contrast, we would strongly recommend they do not kiss at all. The next danger is that this disease could invade the heterosexual population by way of kissing among bisexuals.

*Mr. Feelgood McFeely from the "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" TV program for children visited a sheltered workshop in Pa. in 3/2000. Alarmingly, it was announced that his visit might be marked by "other events." We hope these are not feeling-up ones (source item from Betsy Neuville).
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Miscellaneous Non-Service News

*The US Constitution requires a national census every 10 years in order to allocate congressional seats. For the year 2000 census, one propaganda theme constantly trumpeted was that people should cooperate because the census would determine how federal money gets distributed for housing, education, health, transportation, crime "prevention," etc., none of which is the primary purpose of the census. The propaganda theme fell on rather deaf ears of (a) that portion of the population (the lowly) who for good reason, all over the world, for thousands of years, have had reason not to trust census-taking, and (b) those American Indian groups, such as the Onondaga Nation near Syracuse, that do not receive federal money. Also, the Nation sees the census as an encroachment on its sovereignty, and has not participated in the previous four.

*There has long been a utopianist mentality that assumed that whenever nations somehow join together, or form supra-national bodies, then everything is bound to be or become better. Accordingly, many people have had utopian hopes for the UN. In time, many shortcomings of the UN and comparable bodies have become more apparent. In more recent years, and apparently in years to come, the UN is bringing to many poor nations not food but contraceptive pills, not sanitary services but abortion clinics, and not health care but free sterilization. In some cases, these things are being brought into nations that do not want them. Argentina had declared to the UN that what needs to be eradicated is poverty, and not the poor.

Furthermore, in many cases, rich western international organizations have gone into poor countries and have picked people to attend international conferences in order to there promote an agenda that is contrary to that of the people from their own country. For instance, the Planned Parenthood Federation, and population control groups, will give delegates from African countries relatively huge subsidies to go to international conferences and pretend that they are representing the poor of their countries, and that these want abortions, sterilizations, contraceptives, etc. (NC Register, 18/7/99).

*Upon learning of the many problems in Africa, a writer proposed that the needed response was to send contraceptives to African women, and condoms to their men (Time, 8 May 00).

*Bit by bit, the ideologically-inspired anthropological mythology that everything about culture was relative, and that there are no universals, is being rolled back as more and more human and cultural universals are being discovered, or at least acknowledged. For instance, a major historian of different cultures found that capable, cheerful and civil people are liked everywhere in the world, while arrogant, bitter and boastful ones are liked nowhere (The Importance of Psychological Traits, 1998).

*We were amused to learn that when 100 neo-Nazis and extreme right-wingers met in Cologne, 25,000 left-wingers protested against them on the streets, requiring 2,000 police officers. This is both like generals fighting the last war, and fighting it badly at that, and like dropping an atomic bomb on a gnat (AP in SHA, 10 Dec. 2000). We would be more impressed if 100 people had protested against 25,000 plus 2,000 police.
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