

loads the system" with hypochondriacs which "actually interferes with the care of the sick." The same criticism has been leveled at socialized medicine.

Proponents of a nationalized HMO claim, on the basis of the private HMOs, there would be massive savings in a large, unified system. Fact one: HMO expenditures are going up about as fast as costs for individual doctor service. Fact two: Private HMOs generally provide group coverage only for working people, which excludes the poor and elderly who frequently, however, obtain free medical care from private doctors. A Federal HMO would have to serve everybody, not just those who could

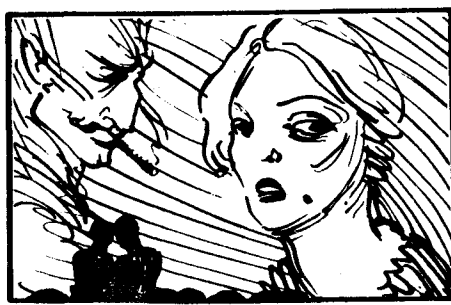
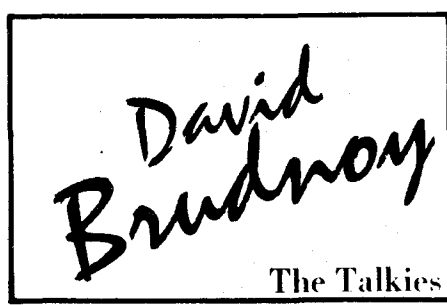
afford to pay. Fact three: Almost half of the people under HMO also use outside doctors, which at least suggests that HMO is not satisfactory as the only system of health care.

Perhaps the most damaging — and frightening — shortcoming of HMO is that while proponents claim it offers a financial incentive for the medical profession to keep people healthy, Schwartz finds that "HMO has an equally strong economic interest in having its seriously ill patients die quickly and inexpensively." In Great Britain, for example, there is medical support for mercy killing of old people with chronic illnesses in order to alleviate the tremen-

dous tax strain caused by socialized medicine.

"What is most astounding about the push for HMOs," Schwartz concludes, "is the insensitivity to the spirit of the times. We live in an age of alienation, when millions are suspicious of huge organizations which reduce them to numbers on punched cards. And nowhere are human contact and sympathy more important than in medicine." Unfortunately, "the political pressure is all the other way toward repeating errors of bureaucratic gigantism that have gotten us into the present mess in so many fields of American life."

W.J. Griffith, III



### Last Brando on the Reservation

Her \$850 brushed suede-skirts and \$400 primitive Oglala beads and complete Max Factor facial were, of course, perfect. Little Princess Littlefeather, the (perhaps partly) Indian professional girl despatched by Don Marlonone to the late Oscarfest, looked splendid, lacking only a few puffs of smoke to telegraph her message from the Don: "Me mad 'bout flick not-niceness to Indian; me no take little gilded man called Oscar; me speak with straight tongue, commune with Indian brothers at Wounded Knee." Me want to vomit that night, watching Don Marlonone's hoked-up little hooker doing her number for the greater glory of the Don and the delinquents avenging Geronimo in South Dakota. I had thought that the Prairie Avenger's imposition of himself on us throughout the 1972 campaign sufficed for South Dakota's impudence this decade; I erred.

How to get Don Marlonone's tinsely gesture out of mind and Marlon Brando the splendid actor back into focus? "Taint easy, McGoo. Left and Right, the commentators won't divorce the activist from the actor. For example, Mr. George Frazier, resident style-arbiter in the liberal *Boston Globe*, practically suffered seizure in a recent column as he licked the teepee floor on which Marlon Brando trod that Oscar-eve; of his "beau geste," Mr. Frazier could say only good; of Brando, Frazier acknowledges that he is "awed" by "our greatest actor"; of those that night and thereafter who nay-say the Brandoesque gesture, Mr. Frazier could only sputter insults that make mine of him seem like love bubbles. On the other side, Mr. Buckley reminds us (and saves me the bother of having to remind us) that Marlonone

has found the most ingenious ways of justifying his *Godfather* role — "I think *The Godfather* is about the corporate mind," Brando declares. "In a way, the Mafia is the best example of capitalists we have. Don Corleone is just any ordinary American business magnate who is trying to do the best he can for the group he represents and for his family" — then he casts stones at Hollywood's glass houses for Hollywood's mistreatment of the Indian.

Not that a glib disregard of the legitimate plight of the Indian is intended by these remarks. (A gentle reader wrote to tell me, after deep study of my output in this and other magazines over the past six months, that if I could "find a fag nigger Injun to defend" I'd "be in seventh heaven.") It's just that I do not particularly like to take my political cues from racy show folk, and wish very much that they'd behave like cab drivers and opine in small audience situations instead of unburdening their guilt on us in public. Well, the Brando play will long be remembered, and surely little Ms. Littlefeather is on her way to a glorious career in show biz. As for Brando himself, his politics is on about the level of sophistication of Shirley MacLaine and Joanne Woodward and probably deserves no more comment.

But let no one gainsay the Brando achievements: Stanley in *Streetcar Named Desire* (1952); Antony in *Julius Caesar* (1953); Sakini in *Teahouse of the August Moon* (1956); *Sayonara* (1957); *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962); at least ten minutes of *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967); and his physical presence, if not his spoken scenes, in

*The Godfather* (1972). By any standard, that's a record of no little significance.

Now, Brando as Paul in *Last Tango in Paris*, the current Bernardo Bertolucci film that Miss Pauline Kael almost single-handedly made into a sensation months before it opened, merely by devoting about eight million words of adulation to it in the October 28, 1972 issue of *The New Yorker*. With a build-up like that, and the promise that Brando would bare his behind for all the world to see, *Last Tango* could not fail.

Add 1 to that the *Playboy* magazine out-takes in gorgeous living color, the *Time* and *Newsweek* stories on *Last Tango* (and is it really true that somewhere in Spraypaint Village — New York to you — there's a computer designed to turn out virtually identical stories for the two great weekly newsmagazines on the same or adjacent Mondays?); add all that to the reserved seat treatment, and to those full-page ads of Brando buff playing toesies with Maria Schneider, and you've got yourself one hell of an advance sale.

Yet the film has its moments, largely Brando's, though Stanley Kauffmann makes a good point in *The New Republic*, observing the physical fakery of this "art" film masquerading as porn masquerading as art. "Porn" lifts sex out of context and is effective solely to the extent that it arouses sexual yearnings; "art" is supposed to transcend that. Let's be frank and admit once and for all that what people call "art" when differentiating it from film "pornography" is usually merely less explicit sex; somehow implicitness spells "art" to some

### Author's Query

I am writing an ethno-socio-history dissertation on "The Place of the 1953 Buick in Afro American Cultural Life," and I would appreciate the assistance of any brother or sister who could put me in touch with beautiful stories relating to 1953 Buicks.

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people while explicitness means "porn." Here's the rub in *Last Tango*: while the lovely young Maria Schneider, who plays Jeanne, Brando's three-day trick, shows all, Brando is discreetly protected from the full-front treatment: that is prurience and it is, as Kauffmann says, "fake."

The force of *Last Tango* is not, contrary to legend, its sexual directness, which is greatly overstated by commentators and quite tame in this film, compared to many others in recent years.

Its force and vitality is in its exploration of the mind of a man so distraught owing to his wife's death, so temporarily insecure about his manhood, that he sinks to the depths of debasement to expunge his misery. The movie should not, please, be dismissed as "dirty"; that simply is not a good reason in any case for pooh-poohing a film and here it really doesn't apply.

I ask of a "serious" movie not that it make me think better of things, but

that it make me think. *Last Tango in Paris*, for all its male chauvinism, for all its distracting touches of artiness, for all its oversell, does make me think. About many things, about the talents of Bernardo Bertolucci, Maria Schneider, Jean-Pierre Leaud, about the tenuous relationship of love to sex, and about Marlon Brando, whose brilliance as an actor is confirmed once again. It would be a pity were he to stay on the reservation. Come home Don Marlonene, you're needed in Hollywood. □

## Book Review

# The New Chastity

— and other Arguments  
Against Womens Liberation

by Midge Decter  
Coward-McCann, \$6.95

For several years it has been impossible for a woman to live in her own apartment, hold a responsible job, or make an intelligent remark without having some wiseacre sidle up and ask knowingly, "You a member of Women's Lib?"

Many women have no answer, because they may approve of some goals of Women's Liberation and despise others. Not all women who have their eyes open are unhappy, but clearly there is a major malaise among American women. Whether it is peculiar to them is moot, since many think they have a monopoly on this troubled spirit. In cases of desertion or divorce, it is all that some women have.

## Great American Series

Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.

— John Adams

Card-carrying parrots of Big Sister and easily threatened men who specialize in brute put-downs have failed to grasp the complexity of the woman problem. Assuming an endless litany of grievances for both sexes to recite, where does a sensitive person begin to construct a sensible pattern for living?

Midge Decter starts by pouncing on some of the radical claims of Women's Liberation. She confines herself to domestic complaints, which she elegantly labels, in the style of her adversaries, "Shitwork," "The Beast With Two Backs," "Wiving," and "Breeding." Each subject is introduced with a recap of the written literature of Women's Liberation. Much of this original rhetoric has all the stylistic thrill of a diabetic coma, and it gains little in the retelling.

Spokeswomen (excuse me, spokespersons) claim that women are oppressed, says Decter, but in fact they enjoy freedoms they can't handle. No female today has to become a housewife, a lover, a wife, or a mother. She chooses these things; they are not forced on her. If she decides not to perform these roles, she has no right to whine about social pressures that would have her be otherwise. For, in the author's view, the freedom to be a housewife is complemented by the option of having another career and sharing housework or paying servants; the freedom to have a lover or husband or child is also the freedom to have none. In fact, she concludes, the voluntary nature of these tasks places excruciating pressure on a woman to perform them perfectly.

Women's Liberationists who reject traditional female roles are avoiding responsibility, Decter says, avoiding "a life in hostage to the rhythms of time and mortality, to the needs and thus the ephemerality of flesh, and to the risks of opening oneself, making oneself available, to the demands of others."

The assertions of the author — counter-assertions to the Liberationists — are filled with eminently attackable generalizations of female psychology based on her personal perceptions. Example: "For a woman, coitus is a happenstance, roused and dispensed with on the same occasion, being only itself and touching nothing else."

Decter's willingness to be subjective leads, on the other hand, to intriguing but equally unverifiable insights. Of housework, she says that, rather than the lack of responsibility which Betty Friedan claimed was the root of dissatisfaction, the housewife "experiences this life as a constant process of decision and so a constant assumption of responsibility." Of the young girl on the verge of sexual initiation, she says, "Since there were no standards of conduct, either to obey or to violate, since she herself was to be the arbiter and the standard, she was pressed into a species of self-knowledge it had once been one of the purposes of sexual games and encounters to help her to attain to." And, hardly her most profound statement, but one of the more invidious: "It is difficult to say just how large a contingent of

lesbians has been exerting influence on and through Women's Liberation. One's impression is that it is rather large." There. Somebody said it.

This candor is no doubt one reason for the apoplexy of doctrinaire Liberationists. Another reason is the condescending, almost snide tone which dodges in and out of the writing. While a good astringent wave of argument has been needed badly for some time, perhaps the author has indulged herself at the expense of productive discussion of what is at least perceived by many as a crippling personal and social problem.

The deliberately limited scope of the book gives Decter room for an unmitigated assault on the theoretical underpinnings of the movement, but by demolishing the logic she does not make

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