

CORRESPONDENCE

Weight Loss

In "The Continuing Crisis," November 1985, you mention my case against Jack La Lanne Health Spas. I should like you to make the following corrections.

A) The case involves their Yonkers, New York spa, not California.

B) They are charged by the New York State, not California, Division of Human Rights with violation of section 296—"Discrimination against the handicapped" (morbid obesity is a legal handicap as is any other physical impairment). The case is now awaiting its turn on the docket.

The full story is as follows: Due to a rare glandular disorder, my weight rose to over 45 stone. With the aide of Dr. Peter Wilk, the problem was surgically repaired. In a 60-day period following surgery I lost 5 stone. Doctor Wilk was worried that I was also losing muscle tissue and recommended swimming in a warm pool, aquatic aerobics, and whirlpools. The only place that fit these requirements was Jack La Lanne's. Under Dr. Wilk's prescription, I called the Yonkers spa. It took them 15 minutes to make the 10 miles from Yonkers to my home in New Rochelle. After an interview and learning of Dr. Wilk's orders, they signed me up for their "executive contract" (\$969.00 the first year, and \$69.00 each year after). The next two days I used the pool and whirlpool only (I was under strict orders not to go near the gym or nautilus equipment as it could do internal damage for the next few months).

I was feeling much stronger after the first two days. At the end of the second day, I was called into the office and told my contract was canceled because some of the "beautiful people" didn't want me in the same club with them. I had never been treated this way in my life! I've had the same friends for years, including many in the media where I worked as a performer, producer, and director of radio drama and records.

My family and friends were as shocked as I, and I went into a severe depression. At this time, I contacted Harry Lipsig, the famous damage lawyer (Lipsig, Sullivan & Liapakis). Suit was then filed with the Human Rights Commission.

If I would have had the proper therapy, I could have had my second surgery in January, and the third in April. Instead, the second was put off until May. My mother, who had liver cancer, had only one wish—to see me

back to normal. She died Mothers Day while I was recovering in a clinitronic bed. I could not even attend the funeral, and she never saw the results.

I now am 20 stone, and have 3 stone to go to my normal weight (I am 75" tall). My final surgery (cosmetic to remove skin folds from the rapid weight loss) will be at the end of April, and the last of the excess weight will come off on the operating table at that time.

—Ira D. Shprintzen
New Rochelle, New York

Toward a Theory of Pollution

Arch Puddington's "East Bloc Ecology" (*TAS*, March 1986) is an interesting and valuable examination of pollution problems in the Communist nations, but it is flawed in its underlying theory. Puddington asserts that "from a theoretical standpoint, Communism . . . should be able to manage the environment with considerably more efficiency than a system which gives relatively free rein to the market." Perhaps I misunderstand what he means by this assertion, but I am unaware of any theories which give that result (other than those which assume perfect information). On the contrary, economic analysis rather clearly predicts that the elimination of property rights will increase pollution problems. . . .

The economic theory of pollution begins, as all economic theory does, with people making decisions based on the costs and benefits they perceive. Whether or not the individuals' decisions will be good for the group depends on whether the costs and benefits they perceive are the "social" costs and benefits. For a case in which they are not, consider the hunting of buffalo a century ago. For buffalo hunters as a group, the optimal strategy would have been to limit the killing of buffalo so that the industry would maintain itself indefinitely. But if the individual hunter limited his killing, it is unlikely that he would have been the one who would benefit from that restraint. The buffalo which he did not kill would have been killed by someone else.

Ecological evangelists often resort to a good-vs.-bad explanation, blaming greed for these bad outcomes. (For example, look at Paul Erhlich's absurd explanation of "overwhaling" in *Social Science Quarterly*, March 1981.) But cattle raisers in the West were probably as greedy as the buffalo hunters, and

cattle were never in danger of extinction. The key difference between buffalo and cattle was that cattle were *privately owned*, and *all* the costs and benefits of killing cattle were borne by the owners.

The analysis of overhunting buffalo or overusing water and air for dumping wastes illustrates an irony of the ecological movement. Much initial enthusiasm of the movement seems to have been due to the attack on capitalism which the issue promised. But analysis of the problems ends with a powerful justification of private property. Property rights force people to take into account all costs and benefits of their actions, and thus make those decisions consistent with the good of the group. When resources are owned by all, such as buffalo, whales, air, or water, there is a strong tendency for individuals to misuse those resources.

If it were possible for air and water to be privately owned, pollution would be limited because the owner would charge for the use of these resources. When private ownership is not feasible, either technically or politically, the government can simulate private ownership. Though having the government simulate private ownership is better than no ownership at all—the buffalo are still here—there is no reason to believe that government simulation of private ownership will be better than the real thing. . . .

Puddington says that the major obstacle to environmental improvement in the Communist world is a tradeoff between economic growth and pollution control. This tradeoff is important, but it is not the whole story. One must also look to the increased difficulty of coordinating decisions—of making individual decisions consistent with the good of the group—when private property and markets are eliminated. This difficulty explains why socialism's tradeoff is so unfavorable, that is, why it simultaneously provides its citizens with a low standard of living and serious problems with environmental degradation.

—Robert Schenk
Rensselaer, Indiana

Troubles with Social Security

"Sun City for Social Security" by Doug Bandow (*TAS*, October 1985) is replete with factual errors, and thus comes to erroneous conclusions.

The \$165 billion figure that is referred to in connection with the 1983

Amendments is *not* "Social Security tax increases," but rather the additional financial resources arising in 1983-89 from tax increases, benefit reductions, and extension of coverage to more people.

It is most unlikely that the system will have any financing problems in the next few years, despite Bandow's statement that "the solution is likely to last little longer" than the 1977 "solution." The combined Old-Age and survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance Trust Funds on September 30, 1985 were \$12.1 billion larger than shown for that date by the pessimistic-assumptions estimate in the 1983 Trustees Report (issued shortly after the 1983 Amendments were enacted). The net trust-fund balance then (after deducting the loan from Medicare's Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, amounting to \$10.6 billion) was \$28.7 billion, and it is estimated now to increase to about \$84.9 billion by the end of 1989, according to the intermediate estimate.

At the same time, the Hospital Insurance Trust Fund (which is financed by a portion of the payroll tax that also finances OASDI) was \$12.6 billion higher as of September 30, 1985 than it had been estimated in 1983 to be then. The balance in the H.I. Trust Fund then was \$32.0 billion (including, quite properly, the loan to the OASDI Trust Fund). Although it was believed in 1983 that the H.I. Trust Fund would have financial difficulties before 1990, current estimates (which consider the favorable experience in 1983-85) indicate that no problems will arise for at least ten years, and more likely not for at least fifteen years.

Mr. Bandow points out, quite correctly, that the prestigious Committee for Economic Development stated that, if the economy performs even slightly less robustly than Congress assumed in 1983, the system may "be threatened again with insolvency before the end of the decade." But the important points not brought out are that (1) the financing developed in 1983 was on the basis of "worst-case" assumptions, not intermediate ones as the CED had thought, and (2) even then, the performance of the economy would have to be considerably worse than "slightly less robustly" to cause problems.

This brings me to my next criticism—the confusion as to the meaning of "Social Security" in the article. Usually, it is used as meaning

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EDITORIALS



TRUMAN BETRAYED

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

The fauna of Capitol Hill can be very excitable. Everyday the rude advances of modern life encroach upon a shrinking habitat of existential bliss. The electorate beckons and the creatures on the Hill grow irritable. Consider the recent embarrassment suffered by White House communications director Patrick J. Buchanan and his beloved boss. There they were making perfectly unexceptional arguments for providing \$100 million in aid to anti-Communist Nicaraguans, and suddenly there was outrage. The Hon. Michael Barnes from the great state of Maryland even conferred upon Buchanan the ultimate malediction, McCarthyism! And Buchanan was urged to depart public life lest his intolerance bring out the little creep in us all.

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.

Such outbursts come with increasing frequency, placing tourists on the Hill in more peril than they imagine and making intelligent debate difficult. After all, the arguments marshaled by the White House on behalf of aiding the contras are quite commonplace, and neither Buchanan nor the President should be restrained from observing the obvious: The Sandinistas are aggressively hostile to us and to anyone whom they perceive as an enemy whether that be a local Nicaraguan bishop, an independent journalist, or a non-Communist neighbor. In the first year of their rule the Sandinistas were given U.S. aid equal to about half of all the aid that we gave to Somoza during his entire sixteen-year reign. Nonetheless, aided and abetted by Cuba and the Soviet Union, they transformed Nicaragua into a garrison state and flattened the economy. They present American interests with a

serious problem. All that the White House has said is: if you are not part of the solution to that problem you are part of the problem. When this argument was employed by friendly liberals in the past, Mr. Barnes never failed to see its cogency. Now he is angry. He wants American influence to stay at home.

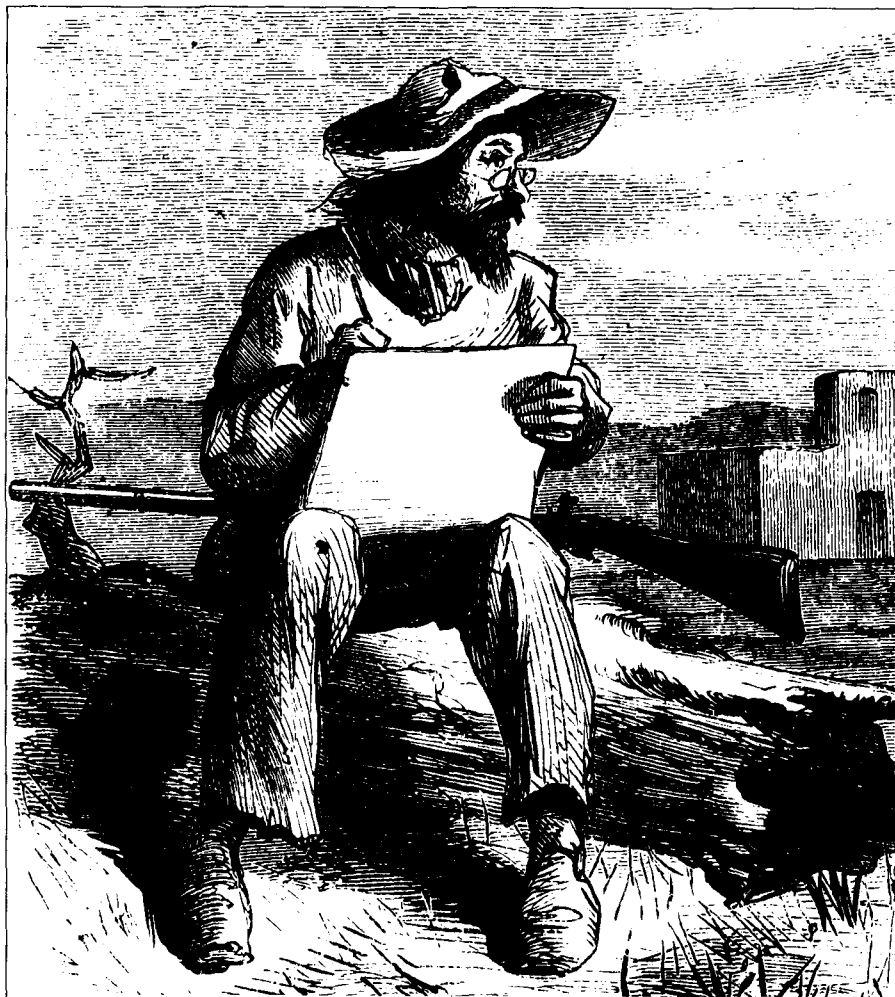
The solution to the Sandinistas' anti-American, anti-democratic regime is for the United States to give anti-Communist Nicaraguans the tools to achieve Nicaraguan freedom. In the past we have given those tools to others. Franklin Roosevelt gave them to the British in the late 1930s. John F. Kennedy made them available in the 1960s as Dwight Eisenhower had in the 1950s. Both men were building on the policies of the Truman Doctrine, established in March 1947 when President Truman declared to a joint session of Congress: "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

One of the regnant falsehoods in Washington is that Ronald Reagan's political success is owing to his incomparable charm and public relations wizardry. Actually his success issues from the easily observable fact that he embraces the values and the goals of a wide range of Americans, past and present. Particularly in foreign policy he is at one with Presidents from FDR to Gerald Ford. It was only during the

presidency of Jimmy Carter that high government officials broke with traditional American foreign policy and spoke of getting America on the "right" side of worldwide revolution, that is to say getting America on the side of anti-Western power-grabs. Well, there are those who believe that surgery can actually change one's sex, so I suppose it is possible to believe that oratory can change one's geopolitical role. But until a surgically created female gives birth, I do not expect to see the United States or any Western nation accepted into the happy fraternity of the revolutionary left.

Ever since 1960s idealists of radical disposition maneuvered their way into the hierarchy of the Democratic party, that party has been notably out of touch with the American mainstream, particularly on foreign policy. Its foreign policy has represented a break with the bipartisan foreign policy of the postwar era and a denial of reality. Its New Age addiction to negotiations was utterly impotent against our enemies today. Mainstream Americans know this.

Now Democratic party chairman Paul Kirk is attempting to bring the party back to the center. Last month's uproar over following traditional American policy of aiding "free peoples resisting attempted subjugation" demonstrates the struggle facing him. He must put down one-issue enthusiasts in his party councils and Haight-Ashbury isolationists on the Hill, Democratic solons who envision leftist revolutionaries as poets and folksingers. Poor Mr. Kirk. □



FIRST CHILDREN

The ancient Greeks were often judged by the quality of their children. Now that is sufficient reason for many of us to rejoice that we do not live in ancient Greece. There are other reasons, of course: various medical advances, the pop-top aluminum can, dozens of congenial deodorants. Today if Americans were to be measured by their children's records—school records, hygiene

records, police records—many would suffer immediate loss of standing in the community and some would be advised to seek exile.

I suppose there are brassy Americans pleased to be judged by their children's fine manners. Mr. John P. McEnroe Sr. comes to mind, as does a recent president of Mobil corporation. But others must recognize that to be judged by