



• June was a hellish month in politics. A No-confidence vote against Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa conduced to the crack-up of his Liberal Party, portending finito to its 38-year dominance of Japanese politics. British Prime Minister John Major's approval rating slipped to 16 percent, the lowest for any British prime minister since the end of World War II. Even Lady Thatcher expressed sympathy. President Bill Clinton's approval continued to decline, and by month's end was lower than that of any American president at the end of the first quarter of the first year of his last term in office. Then Mr. Henry Leon Ritzenthaler emerged from the swales of Paradise, California, with positive proof that he is our Boy President's long lost half-brother, and all America marveled as the president and Mr. Ritzenthaler spent days valiantly attempting to get through. It took days before they reached each other, though the press was in hourly contact with both. Oprah, Phil Donahue, and Sally Jesse Raphael all dreamed of getting both clods on the air for a good cry. Bill was willing, the chatter-show audiences being about his only remaining supporters.

• Yet there are on this orb those happy spots where all is political bliss and progress. In Mongolia's leading metropolis, Ulan Bator, amid the oxen and streptococci, in a land where no Miss Universe will ever walk but where fat yogurt barons doze through drowsy afternoons, their children splashing in the mud puddles, their women picking their teeth in the kitchen, political history has been made. Fifty-seven percent of the electorate have returned President Punsalmaagiyn Ochirbat (sic) to office in his country's first direct presidential election. He beat Mr. Lodogiyn Tudev, lending credence to sociologists' widely held belief that Mongolians are suckers for long unpronounceable names.

• The authoritative, and occasionally quite ribald, *New England Journal of Medicine* reports that a 56-year-old woman—unnamed!—began inexplicably to turn into a man seven years ago after what was admittedly an unusual menopause spent somewhere in the New Jersey interior. Doctors were initially tipped off to the irregular condition when she began to grow a beard. Then, coarse, dark hairs appeared on her chest and arms—all against her will. Presently she began to go bald after the fashion of so many middle-aged New Jersey men, and her bowling game went to hell. After she completed a process that doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital have dubbed “virilization,” her driving improved. Though married for many years, the woman had remained nulliparous. Still, doctors insist that the woman's sex life was “completely normal” (whatever that might mean in New Jersey). Ultimately, when doctors discovered dangerously high levels of male hormones, androgens, in the woman's blood, they took action and removed her ovaries. Her symptoms immediately subsided. Most interesting of all, her hair grew back, suggesting a rather dramatic cure for balding in those rare instances when a bald man actually has ovaries.

• The environmentalists' case for the fragility and general benignity of the environment is going to be a good bit harder to make if five hikers in Cilegon, Indonesia, have anything to say about it. All were injured when the famed Krakatoa volcano gave off a small eruption just as they were peering over it, and their companion, a Miss Kelly whose first name is still unavailable, was killed. Once again we see the wisdom of that sadly neglected maxim, “We must get the environment before it gets us.” In Liverpool, England, controversy rages over whether Mr. James Evans, a 43-year-old teacher at Gateacre Comprehensive School, did

indeed call a 15-year-old pupil, Miss Alimatou Fofana, a golliwog. Mr. Evans denies the charge, but certain of his pupils testify that the pronunciation of Miss Fofana's last and first names defeated the embarrassed teacher, whereupon he turned to his class and blurted out, “Never mind, we'll just have to call her golliwog.” Wearing a 30-lb. silk wedding kimono and sweating profusely, Masako Owada, a Harvard graduate, became the crown princess of Japan by marrying Crown Prince Naruhito. Conway Twitty died, and safety experts continue to express their shock that a recently fired USAir pilot, Captain Jon Swartzentruber, allowed an off-duty flight attendant, Miss Jane Zweber, to sit in his seat during a landing. “I'm shocked,” declares Mr. Brent Bowen, director of the University of Nebraska's Aviation Institute. “I don't know what they could have been thinking of.” Perhaps Professor Bowen has not seen *la* Zweber's nicely turned ankles. Or has he taken the side of the rebarbative feminist hordes?

• There has been more violence on the tobacco front. In Timonium, Maryland, Miss Debra J. Lowenstein, 40, was assaulted in the smoking section of the Happy Cork restaurant after she refused Mr. Paul Korotki's order that she stop smoking. Allegedly Mr. Korotki, a lawyer of unsavory repute, grabbed Miss Lowenstein by the neck and struck her several times, all the while shouting “Heal!” Then he tied her legs to her chair with string as friends at his table laughed uproariously. A criminal summons has been issued for the abstemious prankster. In Vienna, Austria, former President Jimmy Carter evoked repeated boos and guffaws when he delivered a human rights speech before the U.N.-sponsored World Human Rights Conference, and the thirty-ninth President has not lost his knack for betraying his country when abroad and

sniveling up to any Third World poseur who might reproach his country. After the boos abated, this pert jackass then allowed that he too disagreed with many American policies.

- That San Francisco disc jockey who made bold to mock Our President's historic haircut by blocking rush-hour on the Bay Bridge while he had his own hair treated was fined \$500 by Judge Charlotte Walter Woolard and condemned to three years probation and 100 hours of community service. The disc jockey, Mr. Mancow Muller, also faces a civil lawsuit. In Indianapolis, Indiana, Special Judge Nancy Broyles demonstrated that there are limits even for environmentalists protesting in the country's growing anti-fragrances movement. She sentenced Mr. Kenneth P. Frost, 48, to sixty years in prison. On October 23, 1990, Mr. Frost murdered Miss Kathleen O. Boyd, because her bad breath offended him. In Los Angeles, California, the efforts of Mr. Rollen Frederick Stewart, also known as "Rainbow Man," to herald the second coming of Jesus Christ at a Los Angeles hotel led to his conviction on six criminal counts on June 11. Mr. Stewart's heralding had involved taking a hotel maid hostage and issuing "terroristic threats."

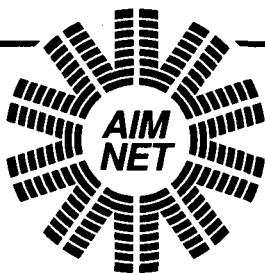
- Fighting continued in Somalia and Bosnia and Azerbaijan, and in Chicago, Illinois, where three sports fans were killed and over 1,000 arrested during nocturnal festivities in celebration of the Chicago Bulls' third straight National Basketball Association title. In Liberia, 300 refugees were slaughtered by Liberian rebels in what observers are esteeming the most heinous atrocity in recent African history. Many of the corpses had been reduced to a kind of grisly puree by the machete-wielding reformers. Two Indonesian adulterers were nabbed in a remote village and forced to have sex in public with their clothes off while villagers watched and chewed catshat, a local euphoriant. In London, Mr. Pankaj Popat, owner of the Birchy Hill nursing home, charged Miss Deborah Wale, a nurse, of putting a dead mouse in his sandwich. Miss Wale denied the charge and claimed sexual harassment involving breast claspings and bottom grappling.

- Also from London comes word that Miss Lisa Chapman, 23, homeless and unemployed, has been fined \$120 by a

British court for leaving Ziggy, her pet rat, unattended for six days. In Venice, Italy, members of the insect rights movement scored an unexpected victory when Japanese artist Yukinori Yangi was ordered to release 5,000 ants that he was displaying in a series of bizarre transparent boxes at the Venice Biennale, a prestigious art exhibit. The ants were quietly dispersed in a garden after activists threatened legal proceedings against the entire Biennale. In Teheran, Iran, morals

police began a crackdown against infractions of the Islamic dress code by arresting over 800 women for wearing sunglasses. The Commerce Department reported that the American economy grew at only 0.9 percent, inspiring Commerce Secretary Ron Brown to insist on the passage of his boss's budget bill. Quite possibly Mr. Brown is a more thunderous economic illiterate than Boy Clinton.

—RET



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## The Silent Squeam

To take issue with anything in Matthew Scully's uncommonly generous review of my book (*For the Sake of Argument: Essays and Minority Reports*, TAS, June 1993) might seem paltry on my part. But he suggests that, for the sake of my journalistic hide rather than for the sake of argument, I have dumped two positions that I once held dear. Let me assure him that I still firmly believe there was dirty work at the crossroads in the 1980 election, and that I still affirm the right of the unborn to be called a child. Some of the columns in which I said this did indeed fail to make the cut, being too much of their time and place. But on page 13, as concerns "The October Surprise," and on page 258, as concerns my own "squeamish" line on abortion, I hold tight to the views that he suspects me of concealing. Since I anticipate that the same accusations will recur in the correct press—especially on the abortion point—may I ask the hospitality of your pages to utter a premature clarification?

—Christopher Hitchens  
Washington, D.C.

## Matthew Scully replies:

Actually, *all* of Hitchens's eloquent pro-life writings failed to make the cut, which seems sad, given the courage it took for a man of the left to publish such things in the first place. This is especially true of the 1989 column I quoted ("In order to terminate a pregnancy, you have to still a heartbeat, switch off a developing brain and, whatever the method, break some bones and rupture some organs . . ."). If he thinks this column is dated, "too much of its time and place" to belong in the collection, he underrates the power of his own words. Nor is a single, passing admission of squeamishness (the only such comment to make the cut, and that in a column deriding as a "ghoul" the world's best-known prolifer, Mother Teresa) my idea of "holding tight" to one's dearest convictions.

As for the whole October Surprise business—again, mentioned in just the one passing sentence he cites—I suspect this omission was more the decision of his editors at Verso, squeamish in a less admirable way and willing to tolerate only so much of Hitchens's dissenting spirit.

## If I Ruled the World

In your June issue, you published a series of exchanges between Dr. Bruce Ames of the University of California and *Sierra*, the Sierra Club's national magazine, which I edit. It appears that you did so in the belief that these texts reveal a lamentable impulse on our part to censor ideas that might discomfit environmentalists. I will acknowledge that by publishing verbatim our invitation to Dr. Ames to contribute to a collection of essays on how one might solve the world's environmental problems if given unlimited power to do so, followed by the text of Dr. Ames's submission and finally by our letter to him explaining why we were unable to use his contribution, you have introduced no errors into the historical record. (My compliments to your typesetters and proofreaders.) But by prefacing these documents with the observation—borrowed from another publication—that an authoritative point of view such as Dr. Ames's "deserves to be known even if it is non-conformist and attacks preconceived ideas," you appear to suggest that we sought to censor Dr. Ames because his essential thesis—that synthetic pesticides are not as harmful as many environmentalists believe, and do not warrant the huge expenditures of money and effort required to eliminate them—is anathema to True Believers in our movement. That it may in fact be a troublesome assertion to some is likely the case—but it is very much not the case that we sought to censor Dr. Ames's expression of this view, and I cannot permit the suggestion to stand.

Why, do you suppose, did we approach Dr. Ames in the first place? Because we came across his name early in our perusal of some alphabetical directory of pundits, and wondered what he might say if asked? So that we might waste our time and his, for the anticipated pleasure of rejecting him? Because of the slight chance that he might, in a fit of apostasy, submit to the seductive pleasures of hyperregulation? Anyone not already preconditioned to assume statist conspiracies fueling any public-interest endeavor will see that we declined to publish Dr. Ames's essay because it didn't answer the question we asked. Period. He was not alone in this oversight: several other po-

tential contributors were politely turned away for the same failure. As for any assumed anti-conservative bias on our part, your readers deserve to know that we also sought contributions from, among others, Julian Simon, the late Warren Brookes (who told me he was delighted by the invitation, and who was working on his contribution the day he died), *Reason* magazine editor Virginia Postrel (whose promised essay never arrived), high-ranking members of the then-newsworthy Bush administration, and at least one member of your own editorial board.

We made this effort in sincerity and in earnest, because we don't perceive our readers as susceptible to off-the-rack ideology-mongering, trusting them instead to sort through a variety of facts and opinions and make decisions for themselves. All we ask of our contributors is that they conform in some meaningful way to the context we mutually agree upon for the presentation of their thoughts—something Dr. Ames declined to do in this case, for reasons best known to him.

—Jonathan F. King  
Editor-in-Chief, *Sierra*  
San Francisco, California

The value of a magazine such as yours is the publication of items like Prof. Ames's article and the accompanying letters. Of great interest in the letter of invitation are the revealing terms, the equivalent of "Suppose you were dictator of the world . . ." The seductive appeal of dictatorship reveals much about the mindset of the editor of *Sierra* magazine. It is no surprise that the essay was not accepted. Which rejection—as happens often in dictatorships—draws attention to the essay.

—Gabriel Austin  
New York, New York

## Burmese Gays

Your June 1993 issue, under "The Gay American Saloon Series," included an article entitled "Club El Malaria" (by Ian Forman). Although touching, it appears to be anomalous in your particular magazine.

We are at a time when homosexuality, formerly referred to as sodomy, is being promoted in high places. . . . Your article offered sympathy and tears . . . for two

(continued on page 79)