

couraging the reporting of such people to immigration authorities. The *Los Angeles Times* was on to this one, as was the *Orange County Register* because local congressmen Dana Rohrabacher and Ron Packard are backing it. (The *Times* in particular has sought to demonize Rohrabacher.) The Copley papers joined the hunt, but elsewhere, next to *nada*. This is a less savory vehicle for conservatives/libertarians than the Custred anti-quotas proposition. It is being pushed heaviest by the ideologically mixed group of grass-roots lobbies for border control, but those are also quarters where the press doesn't hang around.

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You knew this was coming. Barry Witt of the *San Jose Mercury News* detailed how Santa Clara County and others have proceeded to violate the express promises of Pete Wilson and all of the law-enforcement officials who campaigned for the Proposition 172 tax increase. They have used the money to fill gaps in their policing budgets which were created in order to transfer money to other uses not sanctioned by the voters. In other words, subterfuge. The *Riverside Press-Enterprise* earlier reported how its county supervisors were more forthright about the shift: they allocated 5 percent of the 172 monies to "midnight basketball" and other youth-diversion programs. Either way, the result is clear — Californians are stuck with a tax being used for purposes they didn't intend. Of course, Governor Wilson and Attorney General Dan Lungren and all the others who touted the measure had to expect this. It wasn't for nothing that the public-employee unions so desperately wanted its passage.

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Amid the tempest over the deletion of state reading test questions drawn from work by Alice Walker and Annie Dillard (and the subsequent backdown by the California Board of Education after Governor Wilson caved), at least one reporter resisted simply caricatur-

ing the conservative "values" side. That was Nanette Asimov of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, once again showing that in the most left-leaning major city in the state, readers get the most balanced (and sophisticated) coverage of cultural and public affairs.

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Nearly 15 years ago, a company called Hamilton Test Systems contrived to win a state contract to perform the kind of centralized auto-smog testing now about to be imposed on a portion of the cars in certain parts of California. The result back then was a scandalous failure. This year, the idea of having everyone in smoggy areas get in the same testing line has been revisited in California, pushed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and (for a while) the state Air Resources Board. Eagerly supporting the idea, the *Wall Street Journal* informs us, was a firm headed by a government-hallway schmoozer named Chester Davenport. The state eventually agreed to send 15 percent of the cars in the dirty-air zones to an operation headed by Mr. Davenport. (Quentin Kopp got the San Francisco Bay area exempted; Southern California lacks such an effective watchdog over the bureaucrats.) The press eventually got around to giving the EPA vs. California aspect of this story good play. But few noted that, in building his big testing concessionaire, Mr. Davenport last year acquired an idling company by the name of Hamilton Test Systems.

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The *SF Chronicle* splashed a damning report on the foster care program in San Francisco on its front page, but failed to provide context about what a nationwide mess this endeavor (and the associated group homes and shelters) has become. It's part of the underclass trap. California's foster-home population, which was stable or dropping until 1984, has more than doubled since, to about 90,000 through welfare or probation assignments. The feds will pick up most of

the costs through AFDC.

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When an Orange County-based state appellate court panel struck down the city of Santa Ana's ordinance banning "camps" of vagrants on the civic plaza, most press reports (as usual) failed to note who the jurists involved were. If these kinds of decisions were congressional or legislative votes, odds are we'd be told who the actors were. Many court actions are as political as they are judicial. In this case, as in so many others, the majority were appointees of Jerry Brown. It can never be said often enough how important judge selections are, and therefore how important it is who makes them.

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Not all legislative votes are adequately reported, either. When a measure by state Senator Marian Bergeson to allow Orange and six other non-charter counties to contract-out for services was defeated by the public-employee unions, it got virtually no coverage. The Senate floor tally was party line (Democrats against, naturally), and the two "independents" split, Quentin Kopp for the efficiency reform, Lucy Killea for the unions. Papers that report on the worsening fiscal woes of California counties might have taken notice of a bill that could have had a material impact on those budgets.

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Liberal media looked askance at the "three strikes and your out" phenomenon, and for some good reasons, but so did Debra Saunders, the *Chronicle* editorial columnist. And that was woman-bites-dog, because Saunders tends to be conservative and is especially hard-line on crime. More pundits (and politicians) on the right should have been as honest. (The *Orange County Register* also expressed misgivings.) But Saunders went too far in belittling the idea of life terms for "felony graffiti." Some of us think that would be letting the vandals off lightly.

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One more bouquet for the *Chroni-*

cle: reporter Carolyn Lochhead detailed how a San Francisco couple, James and Patricia Sturdevant, and other class-action attorneys have teamed with Consumers Union to file lawsuits that win pennies for the customers of deep-pocket institutions but millions of dollars for the lawyers and the consumerist lobby. The Sturdevants' favorite targets have been banks, which they've challenged on credit-card billing practices. Appallingly few journalists are as ready as Lochhead to hold Naderite litigators to account and pierce the righteous veil of these Pecksniffs.

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Some black voices have complained justifiably that whites shrink from honest discussions of race, but given the hypersensitivity to any potentially offensive utterings, the reluctance is understandable. Further evidence of this was a flap over an editorial cartoon in the *Sacramento Bee* that showed one Klansman reading of Louis Farrakhan's statement, "You can't be a racist by talking — only by acting," and saying to the other, "That nigger makes a lot of sense." The cartoon itself didn't make a lot of sense, in that the Klan historically has acted and not talked, but it was the use of "nigger" (by the White Press) that prompted the local NAACP to launch a boycott that cancelled at least 1,400 subscriptions. Truly it was reaching for slights to take aim at the liberal *Bee* and its editorial page editor Peter Schrag, whose ouster was demanded. If we're going to have "dialog" on racial and ethnic matters (see also the immigration debate), we're going to have to loosen the taboos.

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The Civil Rights Initiative noted above could have prevented an outrageous exclusion of 5,000 white applicants from a major firefighter exam in Los Angeles this February. The whites were barred in an effort to comply with an agreement with the U.S. Justice Department to bring the percentage of minorities in the LAFD to half. The *Daily News* made hay of the exclusion, which included some men who'd spent

thousands of volunteer hours with the department. The *L.A. Times* was then shamed into its own spot coverage (on page B3).

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The *Times* continues to be beaten by its local competitors on other stories of significance. The *Daily News*, *Los Angeles Business Journal*, and *Riverside Press-Enterprise* continue to outflank the *Times* on doings of the South Coast Air Quality Management District that affect the Southern California economy. The *Press-Enterprise* also noted, in a splashy comparison of general-relief rolls in the area, that Los Angeles County's recipient numbers per capita were an order of magnitude higher than those of the surrounding counties. (L.A. County officials estimate, by the way, that 1 in 5 residents are on the dole in some fashion — a statistic not to be seen in the *Times*.) Other state papers, starting with the *Bakersfield Californian* and continuing with the *San Jose Mercury News* and the *Orange County Register*, detailed the abuse of federal and state disability-welfare programs by alcoholics and drug addicts. This was enough to prompt action in Congress to curtail the abuse. (The Legislature earlier turned back an attempt by Republican Assemblyman Ray Haynes to place similar limits). Imagine what might have happened (and when) if the West's largest newspaper was paying more attention to abuse of government and less to the latest socio-political slop.

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Donna Shalala pronounced an "epidemic" of domestic violence, signifying a new offensive in one of the cultural wars, but the *Times* was ahead of her with a "Metro" story whose lead paragraph reported that participants at a local conference on the subject said "75 percent of women murdered are killed by their husbands or lovers." This seemed a bit high, even in the fevered climate of the times, so we checked with the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, not a group likely to understate the problem.

It uses an FBI figure of 30 percent.

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One had to wonder whether William Tuohy, writing from London for the *Times*, really worded a passage as follows: "Woe be to the British version of Los Angeles' shopping-crazy Valley Girls and Boys: Officials suddenly are saying 'no way' to suburban malls." (Italics are ours; are the words the copy-desk's?) While there's no doubt teenage males hang out in malls along with the objects of their desires, only a PC-crazed paper would suggest they, like the girls, are there to shop. (The copy editor might instead have quibbled over whether a Brit would say, "No way.")

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The *Times*' Rainbow Coalition of opinion page columnists includes Ron Harris for blacks, George Ramos for Chicanos, Robin Abcarian for feminists, and half a dozen white male liberals for the rest of the us. Most of these folks write pretty good, but it's fair to compartmentalize them because they make a habit of speaking to, or for, their group, rather than addressing a full range of issues. That's okay, but wouldn't it be nice if the paper's diversity push extended across the ideological spectrum?

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Our final *Times* PC barometer: With three new books out by black male journalists telling of anger at white America, the "View" section must have been in a quandary: how to deal with this glut of good fortune. The results are not conclusive: Ellis Cose (*The Rage of a Privileged Class*) drew a big cover photo and loving treatment from Lynell George. Nathan McCall (*Makes Me Wanna Holler*) drew a big cover photo and less sympathy from Bob Sipchen, who is "View"'s most searching mind and the writer of its (unfortunately) defunct fortnightly magazine column. Brent Staples (*Parallel Time*) has yet to have his turn. Maybe the viscounts of "View," hearing the rumored expressions of PC-fatigue from the Great White (oops) Father himself, Otis Chandler, decided enough whining was enough. CFR

# A Solution for Dysfunctional Liberalism: Work

What good is a job to someone who has no skills, no discipline, and thinks that when someone gives him an order that he's somehow being 'dissed'?

Paul Ciotti

HERE'S THE bad news — welfare in Los Angeles County is up again, 200 percent over the last four years. Currently, 1,839,000 people in L.A. County are on public assistance — one out of every five people you meet on the street is receiving AFDC, general assistance, food stamps, or MediCal, a grand total of \$3.1 billion a year.

No wonder there's no money for libraries, schools, and public amenities. When I grew up in western Pennsylvania, we had well-equipped parks, swimming pools, and tennis courts that were clean, cared-for, and graffiti free. In downtown Los Angeles, in contrast, you find people sleeping in the bushes and urinating on the walls. The lawns are raggedy and the shrubs are filled with litter.

And that isn't even the worst part — the tendency of people who grow up on welfare to commit crimes, deface buildings, destroy schools, and ruin the lives of everyone around them. Furthermore, there's no way to stop it — they hate themselves, they hate each other, and, most of all, they hate us, which is why Three-Strikes-You're-Out swept through the state capitol. The people were so mad at rampaging crime that not even Willie Brown could bottle up this one in committee.

The will of the people notwithstanding, most intellectuals and members of the media hate Three-Strikes-You're-Out. I don't know why they should since they suffer as much from crime as the rest of us. But there is this long-standing liberal aversion to seeing the

person who commits a crime as the responsible party. Instead, they point to institutional racism, pervasive racism, unconscious racism, seemingly neutral laws that nevertheless have discriminatory effects, culturally-biased entrance exams, and a middle class prejudice against non-standard English. They argue that we have to go after root causes — we have to provide more jobs for these kids and get them better after-school recreational facilities.

Well, jobs are great. Jobs are fine. But the kids committing most of these crimes are not the kind of people who read poetry during their lunch hour and Proust after school. What good is a job to someone who has no skills, no discipline, and thinks that when someone gives him an order that he's somehow being "dissed"?

As for the notion that another ping-pong table in the rec center or a new basketball court is going to stop young thugs from getting drunk and mad and blowing away rival gangs, that's sugar plum fairy time: not a rational plan.

We have an over-supply of unskilled, undisciplined, over-violent teenagers in the inner city and an under-supply of jobs they are qualified to do. In our increasingly technological society we are not likely to see increasing demand for unskilled workers. The only solution to the problem is to cut off the supply — find a way to discourage inner-city teenage girls with neither jobs nor husbands from having more babies at someone else's expense.

But then you run into yet another bias — the liberal assumption that most intact families are dysfunctional and that we'll be better off when most

babies are raised by the state, which is one reason the Clinton welfare reform plan calls for increased spending on child care. I have a better idea. There is no benefit in having five welfare mothers each sitting home minding their kids and watching the soaps. Why not make one welfare mother the designated child care mom and give the other mothers brooms and these big heavy duty plastic garbage cans with wheels and lids? I don't know what they cost. Probably \$30. The city of Los Angeles gave me two of them.

You could give one to a welfare mom, give her a pushbroom for another \$8 and a dustpan for \$5 and send her out to sweep the streets in her neighborhood. Four moms could sweep the streets. One mom could watch everyone's kids. Everyone has a job. Everyone is contributing. The streets are becoming cleaner. It costs practically nothing, reinforces the work ethic, reduces the stigma of being on welfare even as it provides a safety net for the temporarily down and out.

OF COURSE, it won't happen. Anyone suggesting it would be ridiculed as a simple-minded fool. Some public advocacy group would file suit. A judge would rule that it's forced labor and that's unconstitutional. It reminds me of when my dad worked as a foreman in an auto body stamping plant. He used to say that people would send for the committeeman if they broke into a sweat — they thought they were sick. That's the trouble with people who have never before worked in their lives. They think hard work is a terminal disease. CPR

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# Unrepentant Character Assassin

*Dan Walters responds, in his own way, to CPR Update's article on the Prosecution of Pat Nolan and raises a question: How might Walters handle a Nolan-like trial-by-ordeal of his own?*

John Kurzweil

IT APPEARS I touched a nerve. The *Sacramento Bee's* Dan Walters devoted his entire column ("Unrepentant political felon," the *Bee*, April 1, 1994) to answering my article "Prosecuting Pat Nolan" in the last issue of *CPR Update* (Winter 1994).

I had hoped that my article might induce Walters to consider, finally, some of the glaring holes in the prosecution case against former Assemblyman Pat Nolan: (1) the fact that *nothing* in the FBI's transcripts of their secretly-taped conversations with Nolan so much as hints at bribe-taking or extortion (on the contrary, Nolan specifically told the FBI's bogus lobbyist that "there's no way we can guarantee" that his bill would become law), (2) the strong possibility that federal

agents suborned perjurious anti-Nolan testimony from Karen Watson without which they'd have had no "evidence" against him at all, (3) the government's use of dirty tricks to squeeze and punish witnesses whose testimony supported Nolan, (4) the unconscionable delays, stretching into *six years*, in charging Nolan or in offering him his day in court, in the process exhausting his resources (in any case vastly overmatched by those of the government) for self-defense *before* any trial began, and (5) the court's refusal to move the trial despite compelling evidence that Nolan could not expect a fair hearing before a Sacramento jury.

Above all, Walters might have given at least passing consideration to the absurd proposition, inescapably central to any argument that Nolan is guilty, that Pat actually

risked his political career, reputation, family, and personal freedom in return for \$10,000 that he wouldn't receive himself, and that he trusted everything to a lobbyist he didn't know and a staffer who'd already shown her unreliability in avoiding appearances of impropriety. This Keystone Kops "case" against Nolan with its trivial motive and ludicrous scenario bothers Walters' finely-honed journalistic instincts not one bit.

AS FOR the government's abuse of power in gathering evidence, the sort of thing ethical journalists protest vigorously, Walters laughs it off: some joke — a law-and-order conservative lamenting harsh justice when visited upon him or his friends, as though the question of guilt or innocence were some sort of

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