



The Working Press

L.A. Times targets the 'mainstream reader'

Tortured thought sessions and those tiresome white, middle-class, home-owning Democrats.

GEORGE NEUMAYR

CONSERVATIVES OFTEN speak of the "MSM" — mainstream media — contemptuously. But left-wingers — upset that the mainstream media are settling into a gun-shy, cautious centrism — are piling on too. Reporter Daniel Hernandez recently left the *Los Angeles Times* for *LA Weekly*. His reason: He had grown tired of reporting stories according to the paper's "rigid" formula of pleasing white, middle-class, home-owning Democrats, he said in an August interview with *LAist.com*.

"Shortly after I got there, I started having these long, tortured thought sessions with myself about my participation in the MSM. I saw how the people and places the paper chose to cover were automatically political decisions because for every thing you chose to cover there is something you chose to not cover. I started realizing that the mainstream style on reporting the news that most papers employ is not really concerned with depicting the truth, but concerned primarily with balancing lots of competing agendas and offending the least amount of interests as possible," he said.

"I saw how so much was looked at from certain assumptions and subtexts, and a very narrow cultural view. When I raised questions about such things, I was told we were writing for a 'mainstream reader,' which I quickly figured out is basically a euphemism for a middle-aged, middle-class white registered Democrat homeowner in the Valley. From where I stand today, I had very little in common with this 'mainstream reader' and I didn't care to be in this person's service."

Hernandez' point, apparently, is that the mainstream media isn't sufficiently left-wing, and that he itched to write front-page radical editorials. In the

good old days, before it grew hesitant under the watchful eye of conservatives, the mainstream media appealed to Democrats in all socio-economic categories.

✱ ✱ ✱

Public relations executive Mike Sitrick of Sitrick and Company was the subject of a profile this summer in *Los Angeles Magazine*. The piece noted that the scandal-plagued archdiocese of Los Angeles has appeared on his roster of clients. "Accused of molesting children? Call Mike Sitrick," said the piece. Seth Lubove, the Los Angeles bureau chief of *Bloomberg News Service*, is quoted in the piece as saying: "Mike thinks of himself as a brawler. He's the Jew with a chip on his shoulder. Whenever he goes up against a news organization, he sees himself taking on the *goyim*. He's vicious, and he's proud of it. He's not literally a leg breaker, but metaphorically, sure."

In other words, Cardinal Mahony's kind of guy.

BUT THE story observes that Mahony's retention of Sitrick backfired: "That Sitrick's name is usually connected to bad news is problematic ... At times it seems as if the publicist represents a veritable rogue's gallery. 'When a company hires Sitrick, it immediately tells me that they're in a desperate situation,' says Lubove. 'Hiring him indicates that a client is either in deep sh-t or is about to go after someone. Lately, Mike's taken to asking me not to mention him when he calls to plant a story. But that's always a deal breaker. He's now part of the story.' Indeed, when the archdiocese engaged Sitrick, the *Los Angeles Times* played the news

George Neumayr is California Political Review's press critic.

on page one, thereby drawing more attention to the church's problem with sexually wayward priests."

Mahony, who (a leak revealed) once boasted that he had *Los Angeles Times* religion reporter Larry Stammer in his pocket, had no qualms about joining this rogue's gallery in search of favorable media to buy. I once wrote a column for *The American Spectator* about Mahony and his phony handling of the sex abuse scandal, noting that he had dipped into the collection basket to retain Sitrick's PR firm. I had also noted in the piece that Sitrick and Company was known to have represented Enron.

This produced an interestingly defensive response from Sitrick and Company. Allan Mayer, its managing director, wrote a letter to the *Spectator* saying: "I'm curious where George Neumayr got the idea that Sitrick and Company ever represented Enron. His 4/12/05 Media Matters column was the first I've ever heard of it, and I suspect I would know."

I had "got" the idea from a 2002 *AP* story that reported it and I noted this in my reply to Mayer. I didn't hear from Sitrick and Company again.

✱ ✱ ✱

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the once-famous muckraking *Mother Jones* is losing readers, editors, and influence.

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the condition of the radical magazine *Mother Jones* is increasingly wobbly. The once-famous muckraking magazine is losing readers, editors, and influence, according to the paper. Usually liberal magazines prosper after a Republican enters the White House. But *Mother Jones* is finding it difficult to break through the web-dominated media thicket.

Casting about for other explanations for the magazine's feeble impact, the *Chron* reports: "Another problem for the publication, which has been based in San Francisco for all of its 30 years, is geographical. 'In New York, the media is a bunch of reflecting mirrors,' said Deirdre English, who was editor in chief from 1980-86. 'A story in the *New York Observer* will be commented upon in five other publications,' English said. '*Mother Jones* can do something huge and the media doesn't comment.'"

While I'm sympathetic to the idea that nobody on the East Coast would take anything that comes out of San Francisco seriously, I'm not sure that's an adequate explanation for *Mother Jones's* descent into oblivion. After all, *Salon.com*, also based in the Bay Area, causes some ripples on the East Coast, as Virginia Senator George Allen can attest. In September, he wasted crucial campaign time trying to bat down a *Salon.com* story that raked up racial epithets he had allegedly used in college.

✱ ✱ ✱

Dog bites man is not news; man bites dog is news. That's what reporters are taught in Journalism 101. But perhaps a new cliché will emerge: man bites reporter. That's what happened to San Diego investigative reporter John Mattes in early September.

Mattes was bitten and beaten by a La Jolla couple, Assad Suleiman and Rosa Amelia Barraz. Mattes had been investigating the couple in connection with a



California's "go-to" think tank for policy solutions

The Pacific Research Institute is California's top resource for practical, non-partisan solutions for workers' compensation, tax policy, health care, education, and telecommunications policy.

Recent publications include:

★ **No Place to Learn: California's School Facilities Crisis**

★ **How to Fix California's Broken Workers' Compensation System**

★ **Telescam: How Telecom Regulations Harm California Consumers**

To learn more call 415.955.6120 or visit PRI's website www.pacificresearch.org to download a complimentary copy of PRI publications.

story he was doing on a real estate scam. Mattes suffered cracked ribs, gouged eyes, cuts to the face, and bite wounds from Suleiman. Barraz, according to news stories, had hoped to use a gun on Mattes but couldn't find one in time for the beating.

Naturally, the episode was captured on tape, and since Americans enjoy watching reporters and other hapless people beaten, it became a sensation on the Internet. According to the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, one web site advertised the tape as: "This video has it all! Bloody reporter, bleeped profanity, cops with guns drawn, you name it!"

But Mattes remains philosophical. "The great thing is, this is America," he told the *Union-Tribune*. "People can make money off a beating."

✦ ✦ ✦

The *Los Angeles Times* appears recently to have taken on the job of political damage control when way-

ward liberal office holders and candidates wander too far from the *actual* political mainstream. After Attorney General Bill Lockyer announced he was suing America's automobile manufacturers for contributing to the supposed "nuisance" of greenhouse gases in what was roundly denounced as a legally groundless grandstand play to aid his state Treasurer campaign, a *Times* editorial chimed in deriding the gambit as a "headline-grabbing stunt."

NOW THE *Times* has featured as its main Monday morning (Oct. 9) political story a report headlined: "Angelides Seen as a Drag on the Party" and sub-headed: "Democratic leaders, saying he has failed to redefine a campaign that thus far has gone badly, fear repeating the '94 ticket-wide collapse." After reporting that down-ticket Democrat John Garamendi recently disagreed publicly with Angelides on hiking taxes, the *Times* quoted Democrat strategist Garry South talking

WHAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TOLD ABOUT GUN CONTROL

By SAM PAREDES

At the close of an amazing 2006, freedom-loving Californians owe thanks to: the state's pro-gun groups, the governor and his staff, Assm. Jay LaSuer (R), Sen. Dennis Hollingsworth (R), and even "D" Assemblywomen Nicole Parra and Gloria Negrete-McCloud — thanks for calling a halt to recent history.

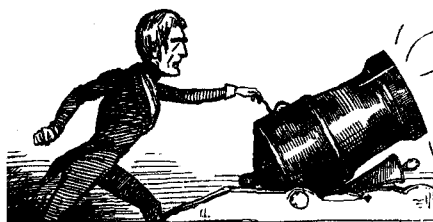
In California, once upon a time, law-abiding citizens owned any type of firearm. High school shooting teams were normal and children hunted on their way to and from school — no one thinking anything about it. But in 1975, Sen. Alan Sieroty assaulted the Second Amendment with a handgun ban, soundly defeated by Sen. H.L. Richardson's newly-founded Gun Owners of California (GOC), but the war was on. From '75 to '89,

GOC battled the gun-haters, beating Prop. 15, another handgun ban, in 1982, and defeating the Dean of the liberal left, Sen. Al Rodda. In two elections GOC gave more money to candidates than the GOP. Almost no anti-gun laws made headway in the Capitol. From statehood (1850) until 1989, California honored the Second Amendment.

Then in 1989 deranged maniac Patrick Purdy perpetrated his infamous school-yard shooting, and Second Amendment haters rode the emotional tide to pass an "Assault Weapons" ban. Gov. George Deukmejian, disastrously, signed it. The

tyranny-friendly flood began: a second so-called "assault weapons" ban, an anti-"Saturday Night Special" law mislabeled the Safe Handgun Act, loaded chamber indicator and magazine disconnect requirements — anything to erode the peoples' rights ... until now.

This year we defeated Paul Kretz' firing pin microstamping, bullet serialization AB 352, a threat to end all ammunition and semi-auto handgun sales. Even some of the Assembly's most liberal members couldn't swallow it. Schwarzenegger vetoed the remaining anti-gun bills, signed several good bills, and changed history. The governor has kept his word on gun laws. Before the recall, he said he would ban .50 BMG caliber rifles. He did. He also said we have enough gun laws, that it is time to enforce them. He has acted accordingly. Now we'll see whether history stays its new course. CPR



Sam Paredes is executive director of Gun Owners of California.