

Joshua Dressler

# Shooting looters: why not kill drunk drivers, too?

The call to assassinate the unemployed and minorities is being heard again. It is couched in more palatable language—"stop fleeing felons," or, most commonly, "shoot to kill 'looters'." The effect, however is the execution of poor people, without trial, and without logic.

The New York City blackout was the most recent stimulus. Rather than focus on Con Edison's negligence, some New York politicians and national columnists focused on those who stole food, clothing, television sets and other small items, namely the New York poor and chronically unemployed.

Almost regretfully, we are told that the "looters" got off too easily; nobody was shot. Never mind that the police arrested anyone near stores being ransacked, whether one was stealing or just observing. Never mind that the arrested were housed in 110-degree heat without adequate water, food, or sanitary conditions. Never mind that they were not arraigned within the time required by law, and that some families were desperate with fear because they could not track down their missing loved ones. Never mind, also, that at least one person died from jail conditions. Never mind all of this. They got off too easily. Shoot them next time.

And, in Johnstown, Pa., the mayor called for just that during the recent flood.

The call to kill "looters" is a common one. It comes during any period when private property is seriously jeopardized. Sometimes the order is couched in euphemisms; sometimes it's graphically clear, as when Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago ordered his police during unrest to "shoot to kill arsonists, and shoot to maim or cripple looters."

Ordering one's law enforcement agen-

## The American criminal justice system has never enforced the law equally or rationally. Corporations have stolen far more from us than all the looters.

cies to do this is perfectly legal. Traditional legal principle, born in England, permits police to shoot fleeing felons to prevent flight.

### The original logic.

Originally, there was some perverse logic in this, since felonies in England were once all capital crimes. The argument went that punishment was simply meted out early.

This remained the law in this country, even after the death penalty was limited to only a few felonies. Gradually, however, courts and legislatures began to realize that the English rationale no longer pertained; killing a felon in the street for a crime that entailed only a short prison sentence lacked credibility. So the law was narrowed: only those who committed "atrocious" felonies can now be shot.

One such "atrocious" felony is burglary. Originally, burglary consisted of breaking and entering another person's home during the night for the purpose of committing another felony inside. The burglar, therefore, by his or her conduct, violated the dweller's "castle." This was defined as a crime deserving of lethal action by law enforcement (or by the private homeowner, for that matter).

The problem, however, is that just as

the rationale for killing all felons lost its vitality by changes in society, so too, has the reasoning for killing burglars. Burglary has generally been redefined to include any entry into any building at any hour. The home is no longer necessarily involved. In California, for example, one who enters a public grocery store with the intention to shoplift is a burglar even before any shoplifting is attempted. Likewise, those who stole from New York stores were more than "thieves"—they were "burglars," the talisman for legal execution.

There is no logic to such legal principle, much less humanity. If a person grabs a bag containing \$10,000 from someone's front yard, this is theft, and the police may not usually legally shoot to kill. If a person grabs \$5 from someone's home or office, he or she is a burglar and is subject to rapid demise.

The law has thus converted the taker of mere property, if done from a building, into an atrocious criminal. His life is a privilege, no longer a right, one that any law enforcement official can revoke.

### Class justice.

And, of course, this is class justice. A 1968 Rutgers study demonstrated what

common sense tells us—that the person in the sight of a police officer's gun is the person who has no property, the poor person.

Recently, however, in the midst of this barbarism, one note of sanity was heard from a federal court that declared laws that permit police to shoot fleeing felons unconstitutional. The court noted that such laws deny the citizen the constitutional right to the presumption of innocence, the right to trial, and the right to due process of law.

The American criminal justice system has never enforced its laws equally or rationally. Corporations have stolen far more money from us than all the "looters," but their only punishment is the drudgery of watching their stolen millions draw interest. And, as then Attorney General Ramsey Clark noted in 1968, persons under the influence of alcohol killed 25,000 Americans in accidents in 1967 alone, while no looter killed anyone during any of the rebellions of the 1960s. "Why not kill drunk drivers?" Clark asked rhetorically.

Clark went on to say in a 1968 speech: "The use of deadly force is neither necessary, effective, nor tolerable. Anyone who thinks bullets are cheaper than adequate [police training] values life cheaply and misunderstands human nature. A reverence for life is the sure way of reducing violent death."

Maybe. But as long as private property takes precedence over human life, we probably cannot expect to see Clark's ideals ever reached.

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## "Household technicians" organize to gain equal status as workers

The "maid" is now a "household technician." And always was. As a professional, with more years of experience than the one who hires her (men being rare in this occupation), she usually knows more about her work than her employer, despite the jokes about "maids" propagated in all forms of media.

That fact, and much more, comes out—and is the subject for some laughter—in a remarkable new film made by a remarkable woman, Martha Stuart, who has the (it has to be native) ability to let her subjects tell their own story without any visible help from her, without the artificial interviewer or the interview format. There is just this roomful of wonderful women talking about their lives as household technicians, what they like and don't like about it, and how they intend to make changes.

There is a lot to change. You can't always quit, as one of the women in the show said she did when too much was being asked of her. "I had to let her go," she said of her former employer.

### No joke.

Conditions of work are no joke, though clearly the film shows that having a sense of humor helps in putting up with what can't be changed—or until it can be. It's not that the household technicians don't like the work (some didn't), not that they don't consider it important, and not that they don't take a professional pride in doing a good job as much as other crafts-workers do. But consider these working

conditions:

The median annual income for the million and a half household workers is \$2,732 for year-round, full-time employment. Yet, the household worker is probably the head of a household and she is a decade or more older than her female counterpart in other occupations. Furthermore, she has no job security or protection from on-the-job injuries—that is, neither federal unemployment insurance nor workmen's compensation. She has no sick leave, vacation or holiday compensation benefits, and is ineligible for most state Medicaid programs.

The new film, aided by the Ford Foundation, is part of a campaign by the National Committee on Household Employment to change the concept of household workers "toward making the dignity of our labor a reality, not just a dream," says Anita Bellamy Shelton, NCHE executive director. "Let us move toward the day when our children can take pride in what we are doing. That day will come only when we have done all that needs to be done to elevate this honorable occupation to the position it deserves."

The language and the dream are the same one all workers have expressed. Why were the household workers the last to be included in the 1974 Amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act, and why are they still so far behind? Liberals, radicals, and sympathetic people in general have been eager to help agricultural workers, sharecroppers and lettuce workers, welfare mothers and woodcutters. But

household workers have had to organize themselves. They did that beginning in 1965. They now have 44 local units of Household Technicians in 25 states.

### NCHE priorities.

They mean to make real changes. Here are some of their priorities:

"Redefinition of Household Work. NCHE will launch a multiphase educational and consciousness-raising program involving feminists, church women, and trade unionists to improve the image and treatment of household workers, and increase the value placed on household work.

"Develop Model Cleaning and Service Agencies...owned and operated by household workers, which will recruit, train and supply personnel to employers, and develop new ways to meet the needs of working women outside the home."

NCHE also plans to seek funds for a concentrated drive in the South, where 54 percent of all household workers live and where their wages and benefits are the lowest. Their program carries the slogan, "NCHE Organizing the Unorganized." With 1.5 million to organize, there is a lot of it to be done.

They need help. The film is one of their ways to reach the general public with their message. It is up to those who care to see that the film is shown on your public broadcasting station, to church groups, at local union meetings, to women's organizations of all kinds and to political and civic groups. The film can be rented (or bought) from Martha Stuart Communica-

tions, Inc. (66 Bank Street, New York, NY 10014) for \$50 for the 16mm film or \$35 for the videocassette (\$325 and \$250, sale prices). It's 28½ minutes and in color.

### Enforcing the law.

Another facet of the campaign is to obtain compliance with the law. They have a sticker for those who do: "This is a fair labor standards household." The NCHE goal is to have 10,000 homes across the country displaying this sticker in their windows or on their doors. A great deal of educational work must be done so that people know what the law requires in order to be able to conform to it. If you employ a household technician you should be sure you are observing the law. Your next job is to help spread the information to others. A packet of information, the NCHE's brochure on what the law requires and its own Code of Standards—and a list of other things you can do to help—are obtainable from the NCHE national office, 7705 Georgia Ave., NW, Suite 208, Washington, DC 10012.

As Anita Shelton says—and it comes across clear as a bell in the film—"Our employers trust us with their children, their valuables, their household appliances, their automobiles, the preparation of their food, their health and their safety. Yet, we are the lowest paid workers in the United States."

*Dr. Donna Allen is director of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press and editor and publisher of the monthly Media Report to Women. They are located in Washington, D.C.*



# DIALOG

## The Ruth Yannatta campaign: Here's what really happened, her manager says

Dave Lindorff's report of recent elections in Los Angeles (*ITT*, July 6) contains factual errors that appear to stem from his dislike of electoral politics, particularly within the Democratic party.

As campaign manager for Ruth Yannatta, I had intimate knowledge of her campaign.

The article stated that Yannatta "soft-pedaled" the issues, made little, if any, effort to reach out to the minority community, and had not excited much enthusiasm among left activists. In contrast, Jim Stanberry, a candidate for the L.A. city council on the Peace and Freedom ticket, was reported to have run an authentic left campaign, to have raised issues, and gone down in a noble defeat.

True, Yannatta didn't run as a "Socialist." That was not our strategy. As *ITT* readers know, those of us associated with the Hayden campaign and other

left efforts such as Berkeley Citizens Action think it is self-defeating to run on such a label. We may be wrong, but in order to assess our strategy people must know what we actually did.

Ruth ran on the general platform of "economic democracy," which we defined explicitly in our campaign literature. Our goal was to put together a strong left coalition of labor, women, minorities, environmentalists, consumer activists, and community organizers. I think we were successful.

Lindorff claimed that we made no effort to reach out to the minorities in our district. In fact, we made every effort, and the difficulty of the task can only be judged by reporting accurately on what we attempted and then evaluating our success. We had a photo of Ruth with black Congressman Ron Dellums in our literature. We were endorsed by strong leaders in the black community. We had black precinct walkers from a local black political organization walk every black precinct in the district.

Why didn't we receive more black votes? Because one of the other candidates (there were 13 in the race) was a black city councilman from Santa Monica—a rightwing politician who attacked Ruth's and my personal life, called us extremists and our programs dangerous and socialistic.

In this district black voters tend to be professionals or small businessmen—and their outlook is relatively conservative. This is the political reality in many areas—and it can be changed only when there are black political organizations that register blacks to vote and with which white leftists can form alliances.

Ruth ran well among Chicano voters and in the Japanese community.

We mailed women who registered with Ms. in front of their names a special card listing Ruth's endorsements from all the major women's political organizations in the country.

We mailed all Democrats a special issue piece on housing and taxes. This piece called for a special tax on speculators to penalize those who buy and sell homes and apartments without living in them; the piece advocated state loans to tenants to form cooperative apartments, as well as a system of low-interest government loans for homebuyers; the piece supported tax reform to make the state income tax more progressive and to eliminate capital gains benefits. The mailing was well received, especially among senior citizens.

We made a special effort to win senior citizen votes. We had a senior citizen coordinator—an elderly man active in the community—and a person on our staff visited every nursing home in the district. Ruth spoke at least twice at every senior citizen lunch program in the district.

On the final weekend of the campaign 200 people walked precincts for three days straight.

With all this effort, why didn't we win?

The answer is that our opponent was the establishment personified. His name was Mel Levine, an ambitious young lawyer. Mel comes from a wealthy family with wide political connections. His father had for many years been a fundraiser for the liberal Republican Senator Tom Kuchel, and was close to the liberal Republican Congressman from our area. Both endorsed Mel.

In a special election in California, voters can "crossover" and vote for candidates of the opposite party. Levine mailed five to seven pieces to Republican voters.

The regular Republican candidates—both conservative—attacked Ruth, not Mel. They called her a puppet of Tom Hayden and said that economic democracy really meant socialism. The local conservative Republican Santa Monica paper attacked Ruth throughout the campaign as a tool of Tom Hayden.

Levine's father also had political connections with moderate Democrats, and Levine received the endorsements of Sen. Hubert Humphrey and Alan Cranston. Every Democratic voter received a "personal" computerized letter on "official" stationery from Humphrey and from

Cranston saying what a fine young man Levine was.

In addition, Levine was actively supported by the state's Democratic party leadership who feared that a Yannatta victory would strengthen Hayden within the party and give leftwing Democrats a voice in the state legislature.

The most expert campaign managers in the state flocked to Levine's campaign. Over 30 different letters of endorsement from a variety of front organizations were mailed out.

Altogether, Levine spent \$200,000 defeating us in the election. We spent about \$100,000. Most of his money came from business interests.

In spite of the opposition that we faced from moderate Democrats, from business, and from Republicans, Ruth almost won. Levine beat her by 1,500 votes—a margin of 2.5 percent. The crucial difference was Republican crossovers. 4,500 Republicans voted for Democratic candidates, at least half, it appears, for Levine.

Ruth lost because Levine unified the center: liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats. A similar phenomenon happened in Berkeley where Republicans and moderate Democrats united against the left slate. Levine also did well among Jewish voters—a group he targeted with a strong "I'm for Israel" stance.

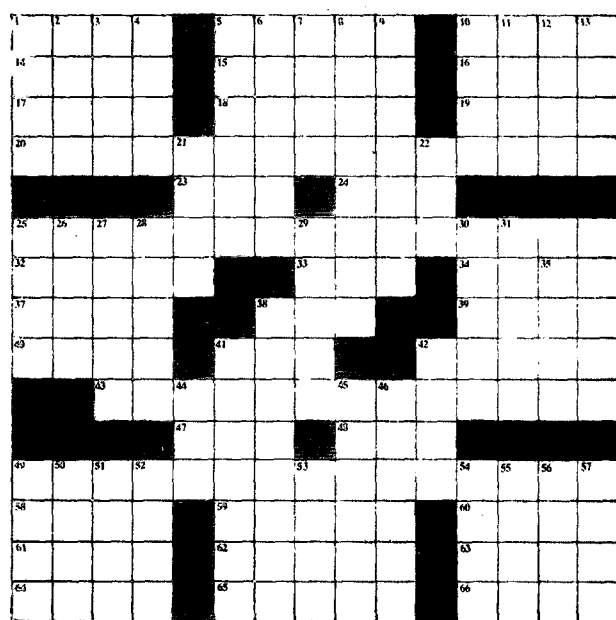
What are the lessons of our experience?

I'm not certain. We established the left as an electoral force on the west side of Los Angeles, and Ruth should win the Assembly seat when Levine, who is very ambitious, moves up politically. We have 1,000 names of supporters and have good relations with women's groups, some labor unions, and a number of community groups. The press and many citizens consider Ruth a spokesperson for her community. We learned many skills needed to run an electoral campaign. We also learned a great deal about the community in a way and with an intensity that is practically impossible in day-to-day work. Campaigns have a dynamic and excitement that other political work lacks, though of course there are dangers in getting hooked on campaigns. Campaigns also force the left to learn to communicate with a mass audience in a clear and intelligible way.

—Derek Shearer  
Los Angeles

## Utopia

By David Mermelstein



### Across:

- 1 Licentious festivity
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ New World
- 10 Cushions
- 14 Send a message
- 15 Read, in Essen
- 16 Mine, in Nice
- 17 Collar or jacket
- 18 Type of squash
- 19 Found at Shea Stadium or Lincoln Center
- 20 Published in 1891
- 23 Counterpart to Rep.
- 24 Mary Todd's husband
- 25 Author of 49 Across
- 32 Christian priest at Alexandria
- 33 Pub drink
- 34 International air org.
- 37 Soapy water froth
- 38 Pen
- 39 Look over
- 40 Often are fragile
- 41 Anti-liquor group: Abbr.

### Down:

- 42 George \_\_\_\_\_, Eng. dram. & poet
- 43 Author of 20 Across
- 47 Hebrew letter
- 48 Lobe or muff
- 49 Published in 1888
- 58 Social Security abbr.
- 59 Muse of poetry
- 60 Ex-CIA operative
- 61 Chinese god
- 62 Wickerwork material: Var.
- 63 Dies \_\_\_\_\_
- 64 Ottoman
- 65 Methods: Abbr.
- 66 Brook \_\_\_\_\_, founded by George Ripley

### Down:

- 1 English reformer associated with New Harmony
- 2 Ceremony
- 3 "How does your garden \_\_\_\_\_?"
- 4 Urges
- 5 What the trumpets did

- 6 Fix one's hair again
- 7 Biblical name
- 8 Pertaining to spring
- 9 Exalt
- 10 Trail
- 11 Love, in Nancy
- 12 Activist
- 13 Beget
- 21 Belonging to the 32nd president
- 22 Algonquin
- 25 Comfort
- 26 Aspirin or LSD
- 27 Golf \_\_\_\_\_
- 28 Also, in Dijon
- 29 The child \_\_\_\_\_ TV Dinner every night
- 30 Scrooge was one
- 31 Lie, in Toledo
- 35 Dutch E. Ind. weight
- 36 Once: Scottish
- 38 Fish capable of inflicting painful wounds
- 41 Arrangers
- 42 Some appropriations
- 44 Chou En-\_\_\_\_\_
- 45 One buys \_\_\_\_\_ the butcher
- 46 Cities in Georgia and France
- 49 \_\_\_\_\_ Horizon
- 50 Hawaiian island
- 51 Dare, in Lyon
- 52 Twist
- 53 Baseball equipment
- 54 Homeless child
- 55 Site of Taj Mahal
- 56 Bring up
- 57 Have an opinion

answers to last week's puzzle:

DAD WASTE SUDS  
UTAH CORN TREC  
COMPROMISE ELBA  
CANNABIS SUPROAR  
LUNE URINATE  
ALIEN ODSOC DES  
NEURON RECAPT  
DIEM TAURO TIPS  
OTHER MENACE  
AGE TEENY MCNEIL  
GRAMSCI SUGI WIFE  
ROSETO BAN WAVE  
ETTA BERLIN EVER  
ETON VALSEVEN  
SONS ENEMY PIRE

## More Letters

### Pans our pans, knocks our kudos

Editor:

Although your paper generally assumes an intelligent political perspective, your movie reviews have been an exception. Not only have you ignored many explicit political films around, but you have also consistently failed to discover the significant political content of the "escapist" films on which you focus. (Zilvermit's exposure of the sexism and racism of *The Deep* was an exception, but how important is a film like *The Deep* to thinking people?)

Hertel's unequivocal panning of *Welcome to L.A.* was both ahistorical and apolitical, finding in this (admittedly faulty) depiction of bourgeois decadence only "boredom and ennui." Similarly, Mavis Lyons' unequivocal tribute to *Annie Hall* ignored the political implications of its treatment of the left, women, and gay men.

But Garafola's treatment of *New York, New York* and Lyons' praise of *Star Wars* are your worst offenses to date. Garafola accuses Scorsese of never questioning the way in which his film relates to "real life," but in fact it is she who fails to explore this question because she is so preoccupied with form and style. Here is a film with one of the best depictions of the pitfalls of threatened masculinity and the ability of wo-

men to transcend this danger that I have seen in a long while, and yet your review reduces this political content to a brief mention of "machismo." Of equal political importance is the insight into the ways in which the racial segregation of the '40s shackled the development of culture and society. This is totally ignored.

Mavis Lyons acclaims *Star Wars* for being "two hours and three minutes of entertainment without sex or gore." In fact, the absence of "gore" is only because of the fascistic efficiency of the technocratic violence, which is the film's sole *raison d'être*. The conflict between the "good guys" and the "bad guys" only makes Lyons wonder "what will be the next miraculous effect?" Is this the most incisive political analysis that your newspaper can muster?

—Beverly Burns  
New York City

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