

LETTERS

ACLU dissents

PEGGY DENNIS UNFAIRLY CHARACTERIZES the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) when she claims "...in the '50s the ACLU refused to defend dissent rights of Communists and instead joined the witch-hunting pack" (Letters, *ITT*, June 25). Undoubtedly, the McCarthy era was not ACLU's finest. Most notably, ACLU attorney Morris Ernst played footsie with Hoover, swapping ACLU internal records for a place in J. Edgar's good book. And ACLU is rightfully ashamed that in 1940 the Executive Board expelled from its leadership ranks Communist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (a decision posthumously rescinded in 1976). But to say ACLU "joined" the McCarthy crowd is just wrong.

Throughout the witch-hunting years, ACLU defended the constitutional rights of all dissenters—including Communists—in this country. To cite only a few examples, ACLU twice sued to challenge the mandate of the House Un-American Activities Committee. ACLU published the first exposé of blacklisting in Hollywood and challenged the Federal Communications Commission licenses of blacklists. ACLU defended Communists' right to print and distribute literature, to practice law, to receive their veterans' disability checks and to remain in the country. From the time of the introduction of the Smith Act in 1940, ACLU always opposed the act as unconstitutional. Yes, it's regrettably true that many ACLUers felt obligated to precede their defense of Communists with a recognition of the "conspiratorial nature" of the movement. Nonetheless, ACLU's actions were to defend the dissent rights of Communists, and ACLU most certainly did not join the witch-hunters.

More important, ACLU has grown and strengthened over the years, and is better able to defend the Constitution today. And while some may feel "compelled reluctantly to acquiesce to an ACLU defense of the dissent rights of right-wing, reactionary bigots," that defense is essential. For it's only by protecting the rights of these "sons of bitches" that we protect dissent rights for the rest of us.

Stuart Comstock-Gay
Executive Director, Maryland ACLU

Sweat shops and sex

THE CONFLICT IMPLIED BY YOUR EDITORIAL (*ITT*, June 25) between freedom of speech and pornography is not so "knotty" from a female perspective. If we consider that pornography is primarily visual and real human beings, women and children, are often used in actual sex scenes, the phony status of pornography as free speech is clarified. It would seem that a socialist editorial writer would consider also that the pornography industry is an extremely profitable one, organized by men, for male consumers, and that its employees are poor women or captive children.

Your editorial exemplifies pornography by a "best case," a multi-million-dollar, culturally-approved business enterprise: *Playboy*. But what is even this bland, conventionalized form? In fact—the raw material of the product is, like the sweatshops, poor girls who engage in it for economic survival. The product is "girls," dressed as bunnies with tails, entertaining affluent men. Or young women whose livelihood depends on photography of their private parts. However, pornography is not merely or mainly *Playboy*, but a vast, covert industry in child pornography and the public market in sado-masochism, the dominant type in the newsstands I have accidentally surveyed.

You also seem to equate "obscenity"

In These Times is an independent newspaper committed to democratic pluralism and to helping build a popular movement for socialism in the United States. Our pages are open to a wide range of views on the left, both socialist and non-socialist. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

with "pornography" and aver that "sexual expression" (whatever that means) is no different from political and religious expression, muddling the issue further. In fact, verbal or visual denigration of or incitements to violence against recognized ethnic, political and religious groups or minorities is proscribed in our law and custom. Women have not been so protected.

Claire Lindegren Lerman
Nashville, Tenn.

David Moberg replies: *An important distinction between speech and action lies at the heart of First Amendment protections. People employed by the pornography business deserve strong legal protection from abuse and exploitation, but then so do people in other businesses (some of which exploit women as much and pay far less under real sweat-shop conditions). But that will not—and should not—be accomplished by attempting to censor words and images, most of which are "bland [and] conventionalized" and not violent, hard-core images. In any case, neither law nor custom proscribe denigration of "recognized" groups. Our tradition—and law—of free speech indeed permits that, in general, as the price we pay for free expression and debate (see preceding letter). But we can deplore and criticize attacks or incitements against such groups, including women.*

Guatemalan belt-tightening

AFTER FIVE MONTHS IN GUATEMALA interviewing union members and leaders, I have a different slant on President Vinicio Cerezo's recently enacted economic package than does William Gasperini (*ITT*, June 11).

Both of the important labor federations in Guatemala have denounced the package as inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—designed to help the country pay its foreign debt by "tightening the belts" of the middle and working classes. (These federations are CUSG, funded by the AFL-CIO's American Institute for Free Labor Development, and UNSITRAGUA, which includes the more militant unions such as that of the Coca-Cola workers.)

Even Cerezo admits that the package is inflationary—in a country that experienced 35 percent inflation last year. Prices of basic foodstuffs such as corn, beans and rice have doubled or tripled since Cerezo removed price controls soon after taking office in January. High prices led to riots across the country in April.

Devaluation of the quetzal will indeed "increase private sector income"—that is, of the agro-exporters (coffee, sugar and cotton). By changing the rate at which they are paid for goods sold abroad they

reap a windfall that will be only partially offset by new taxes. Additional income to these plantation owners is estimated at \$65 million in the first year.

The package as Cerezo initially proposed it said that private employers should grant employees a \$17 per month wage increase. After "*concertación*" (Cerezo's new buzz word) with business leaders, this was changed to a recommendation that employers give raises if they could afford them. Union leaders expect this to produce exactly nothing.

Politicians in Guatemala have been stunned at the speed with which the Christian Democrat Cerezo has adopted economic measures that the right might have blushed to impose. Apparently Cerezo's idea is to encourage the plantation owners so that they will invest rather than speculate. Progressive leaders are doubtful about this strategy, however, especially when its short-term consequences will fall so heavily on the working class and unemployed. Guatemala's ruling class is not known for its willingness to sacrifice for the national good—currently only 8 percent of government revenues comes from income or capital gains taxes.

Perhaps the most glaring fact about Cerezo's economic policy is that it does not even mention land reform in a country where 2 percent of the population owns 70 percent of the land. The only long-term solution to Guatemala's grave economic crisis is to lessen the dependence on exports and create an internal market by giving land to the peasants and jobs at decent wages to the workers. Cerezo's package strengthens the traditional export orientation of the economy.

It is also indicative of which way Cerezo is leaning in his "delicate balancing act" that he has consistently opposed repeal of the decree passed by the outgoing military government which grants army officials amnesty for all crimes committed under their administration. The Mutual Support Group (GAM)—90 percent of its 1,300 members are Indian women whose husbands, sons or brothers have "disappeared"—has denounced Cerezo for this stand.

Jane Slaughter
Detroit

AIDS: a women's issue

I WAS INITIALLY PLEASED TO SEE THE LONG article on "The Cost of AIDS" by Rex B. Wingerter (*ITT*, May 28). As a long-time reader, I have come to rely on this paper for news coverage that is both in-depth and free of the distortions prevalent in the mainstream media. However, my enthusiasm faded rapidly as I realized that in its treatment of women and AIDS, this article is no more informative nor accurate than the local daily.

While most of the people with AIDS in this country are men, more than 1,200 (7 percent of total cases) are women. Wingerter minimizes the role of heterosexual transmission of AIDS in citing Center for Disease Control estimates that less than 1 percent of AIDS cases are men who have been infected via heterosexual contact with women. What of the 17 percent of cases of women with AIDS that resulted from heterosexual contact with an infected man? What of the widely supported belief that women are much more likely to contract AIDS from men through heterosexual contact than vice versa?

Also, with more research Wingerter would have found that there is no substantive evidence that prostitutes are a significant source of transmission of AIDS to the heterosexual population. In fact, prostitutes are more likely to contract AIDS from a client than the other way around. Prostitutes have served as a convenient scapegoat, as have gay men, for those who choose to portray AIDS as a "deviant" disease.

Also, no mention is made of the fact that a full 80 percent of women with AIDS are of color. Nor is there discussion of the sexism involved in the allocation of research funds. As a paper which is purportedly expanding its coverage of women's issues, *In These Times* has an obligation to tell the whole story. AIDS is a women's issue.

Laura Giges
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Berkeley leaders

IN YOUR ARTICLE TITLED "BERKELEY'S NO-iguera bucks '80s image" (*ITT*, May 28), you have once again distorted the record of political activity at U.C. Berkeley by promoting the misleading notion that those who have opposed a confrontational stance toward the University administration and its support of apartheid have "led" or "built" the movement. While we respect Pedro Noguera's commitment and intelligence, anti-apartheid activists on campus know that he has consistently opposed those "headline-making protests," that he has attempted to cool out "fervor" that others have revived and that he has tried to stop those "angry marches." To attribute the success of the anti-apartheid movement (or the Free Speech Movement celebration) to Pedro's charisma, organizing or politics is totally false.

Steve Masover
Billy Nessen
Ben Robinson
Berkeley, Calif.

No foreign priest

WILLIAM GASPERINI, IN HIS ARTICLE ON Nicaragua's divided church (*ITT*, April 16), erroneously identifies Miguel D'Escoto as "a foreign priest." Miguel is a Nicaraguan by birth. His father was a diplomat in the foreign service of the Somozas. He is a foreign priest only in the sense that he lived many years outside of Nicaragua and was ordained a priest in the U.S.-based religious community called Maryknoll.

Fred Ziertzen
Oakland, Calif.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

PERSPECTIVE

By David Bensman

WHEN PRUDENTIAL Bache economist Edward Yardeni addressed the annual convention of the American Iron and Steel Institute in New York on May 24, his advice was stark and simple: your best hope is collusion, he told the steelmen. Discuss how you can close down excess capacity and raise prices, Yardeni said, because there's no other way the steel industry is going to revive.

Collusion is illegal, but if the spirit of J.P. Morgan were to return, and steelmen were to revive the "gentlemen's agreements" of an earlier era, their actions would be understandable, for theirs is a desperate situation.

Consider the case of Donald Trautlein, whose resignation as chairman of Bethlehem Steel on May 31 was treated by the *Wall Street Journal* as a joke. His fatal flaw? Believing optimistic projections of his company's economists, Trautlein reinvested his company's earnings to modernize steel production. He also wasted his time lobbying Congress and the Reagan administration to protect the steel industry from subsidized imports.

Unfortunately for Trautlein and America's steel industry, the "Reagan recovery" never brought domestic steel sales up to projected levels: steelmakers shipped nearly 20 percent less steel in 1985 than in 1981. Why? The defense industry boom didn't consume much steel, and the strong dollar not only made imports of steel and steel-containing imports like cars and machine tools cheap, it also made America's exports expensive. Demand for domestically-produced steel has

How to escape steel's quagmire

remained low, and steel prices are still 8 percent below 1981 levels.

U.S. Steel's David Roderick had a different vision. A trained financial analyst, Roderick saw clearly from the beginning of his reign in 1979 that steel production was unlikely to yield the profits other enterprises took for granted: steel's average profit rate was 7 percent, while the average for manufacturing as a whole was 15 percent. So Roderick began to sell off the vast reserves of coal, iron ore and land that J.P. Morgan had amassed when he put "The Corporation" together in 1901. And with the billions of dollars Roderick obtained from those sales, he bought into what looked like a more promising market: oil.

When OPEC collapsed, an oil glut turned U.S. Steel's acquisition of Marathon Oil in 1982 and Texas Oil and Gas in 1986 into sad jokes. U.S. Steel took a \$351 million charge in just the first quarter of 1986 to write down oil inventories. Roderick now acknowledges that his company is reappraising the long-term outlook in oil and gas. That's why U.S. Steel—now USX Corporation—is dropping the word "Steel" from its name. In short, Roderick's policy of diversifying is proving as disastrous as Trautlein's attempt to modernize.

Roderick and Trautlein are not alone. Armco diversified into insurance and almost went bankrupt; Inland's modernization has produced only red ink; and LTV's much-applauded takeover of Republic Steel produced a crippled giant. Neither those who tried to "take on" the foreign competition nor those who fled the field have much to show for their efforts.

Will steel rise again?

Emblematic of the industry's woes is a cold-rolling mill that Inland Steel would like to build at its East Chicago, Ind., plant. The mill is based on advanced Japanese engineering, and Inland even plans to build the mill in partnership with Nippon Steel, a Japanese company. If it's ever completed, the mill would be the sole domestic supplier of high-quality sheet steel for the auto industry, and General Motors has already indicated strong interest in the mill's output. Nevertheless, the rolling mill may never be built. Inland is broke, and no lender wants to lend an unprofitable, highly indebted steel company hundreds of millions of dollars.

Without projects like Inland's cold-rolling mill, American steel will never be able to compete. But some steel companies, like Inland and Bethlehem, are losing the ability to make such investments. And others, like U.S. Steel, no longer have an incentive to make them. Is domestic steel production doomed?

Many analysts argue that steel will revive. Decreased oil prices are cutting production costs, and the strong dollar is boosting the price of imports—not just imported steel, but also Japanese cars containing Japanese steel. Furthermore, the Reagan administration promises that its Voluntary Restraint Agreement (VRA) program, announced in September 1984 (to nullify Democratic attacks on the president's free trade position) will finally begin to make a dent on subsidized imports. Eventually, these optimists believe, costs should fall and prices rise, and America's steelmakers should be profitable once again.

But steelmakers like Donald Trautlein have been singing this refrain for three years only to be disappointed again and again. For example, hopes that the president's VRA program would cut steel im-

ports to 20 percent have already been dashed. U.S. trade representatives have negotiated agreements that would permit imports to take 24 percent of the market. Moreover, Ed Yardeni believes, there's such a glut of steel capacity in world markets that lower oil prices, stronger dollars and VRA's together will not be enough to rescue steel unless significantly more mills are shut down.

Now is the time any sane administration would step in to save the U.S. steel industry. Just a bit of encouragement—such as federal funding for research and development, strict enforcement of trade laws against dumping, firm resolve to bring down the dollar, and loan guarantees for modernization projects like the Inland cold-running mill—and the steel industry could make profits once again.

The United Steelworkers of America (USW), caught in difficult negotiations with U.S. Steel, is promoting just such a program. Last winter union negotiators demanded as a pre-condition for the concession bargaining to come that the steel companies agree to cooperate in a lobbying campaign to enlist federal support for the steel industry. All but U.S. Steel agreed to do so. Subsequently, money from the USW and the steel companies paid for ads in newspapers throughout the country calling on Washington to save steel and other basic industries. Then on June 21 "Save American Industry and Jobs Day" rallies were held in union halls in 65 cities.

The union's plan

The USW's program for saving steel—the focus of the nationwide event—is remarkably sensible, as far as it goes. It includes implementing the VRAs to hold steel imports down to 20 percent, restricting indirect metal imports through legislation giving priority to U.S.-manufactured products and rebuilding the nation's roads, tunnels, bridges, dams and other public structures. Such public investment would boost demand for steel.

The USW's program is a step forward from previous efforts that treated the steel industry as a special and separate problem. On "Save American Industry and Jobs Day" the union and its invited guests made it clear that steel's future is inextricably linked to the future of other manufacturing industries.

What the Steelworker program lacked was a framework that would join its separate planks together. For example, federal action to restrain imports makes no sense if steel companies use their profits to diversify into other industries. Explicit *quid pro quos* would have to be part of any effective program to save steel. Further-

more, it would make little sense for the federal government to enforce the VRAs, thereby forcing steel-using manufacturers to pay higher prices for steel, if at the same time the federal government continued to dump hundreds of billions of dollars into high-tech military products. They consume little steel but spur other industries to grow, usually capital-intensive industries that employ few workers. In short, the Steelworkers' program should be part of an industrial policy.

Although conservatives denounce the idea of an industrial policy, the Reagan administration is carrying out an unannounced industrial policy of its own, and it's one that is forcing corporate America to abandon industrial manufacturing. High tech and financial services, on the other hand, will benefit.

Consider tax reform, the administration's major domestic initiative, for example. In the name of simplicity, and fairness, the new tax bill eliminates the investment tax credit, which will make it much more expensive for capital-intensive firms to finance new plants and equipment. Lower corporate tax rates will help high-tech firms and banks, however. Similarly, the administration's dogmatic adherence to its first economic principle, "free trade," renders enforcement of our trade laws ineffective. It's true that the "free trade" policy will make it easier for IBM to export computer technology and for Citicorp to expand its financial web in Europe. But steel, autos, textiles and farm equipment are being sacrificed on the altar of economic principle.

Finally, there is the military buildup. Hundreds of billions of dollars are being diverted from the civilian economy, where it might be used to make cars, build bridges or repair highways—all activities that consume large quantities of steel—and the money is being used instead to build high-tech weapons. And the federally-funded research that makes such weapons possible is quickly spun off to civilian uses by high-tech firms, while steel companies cut back on their research funding annually.

In short, the Reagan administration's unannounced industrial policy drives nail after nail into the coffin of steel and other heavy industries. Despite the fact that current economic conditions offer the steel industry hope for recovery, the federal government's economic programs are closing that "window of opportunity." Donald Trautlein is gone, but his nightmare lingers on.

David Bensman teaches labor studies at Rutgers University and is co-author of *Rusted Dreams*, a forthcoming book on the steel industry.

BLACKLISTED NEWS

No other book to date conveys the atmosphere—the people, places and events—which turned those dreams and schemes of the 1960's into the unbelievable realities of the 1980's.

The immediate post-war era was an exciting time to be alive. The CIA waged secret wars in Jamaica. In South Africa, mass riots drew the attention of the world. Washington rocked with demonstrations, protests and smoke-ins. The women's movement gained full momentum. Long hair turned into spiked hair. Native Americans had the Black Hills blown wide open, while anti-nuclear protesters hoped Diablo Canyon wouldn't be.



BLACKLISTED NEWS

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