

INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

Capitalism with syrup

"Maple syrup prices soar as production sags for a second year," read a recent headline in the *Wall Street Journal*. Yes, maple syrup now costs about 35 percent more than it did a year ago. A spokesman for Zabar's, an upscale New York deli, describes syrup prices as "atrocious." A farmer in Vermont reports that his maple trees are producing only 1,200 gallons of syrup compared to the normal 4,200. There you have it, *Wall Street's* view of the forces of the market interacting with the forces of nature—a warmer-than-normal spring and acid rain. Wrote the *Journal*: "Maple-tree die-off from acid rain again put a big dent in the syrup supply."

The "self-described" orgasm

There is an age-old tradition. Following the steps of the Catholic orders, the Puritans and the Shakers, the Women Against Sexuality (WAS) have decided that fleshly pleasures corrupt. WAS is a North Carolina collective that describes itself as "political, celibate and women-loving." Last month in New York City the group nailed their thesis—"Dismantling the Practice of Sexuality"—to the agenda of a conference titled "The Sexual Liberals and the Attack on Feminism." The group states, "Since we believe that the practice of sexuality politically subordinates women, we believe that the entire practice must be dismantled. Though we recognize that many women, including WAS members, have had self-described affirmative sexual experiences, we believe that this was in spite of, and not because, the experiences were sexual."

Elliott Abrams flexes his tongue

Assistant Secretary of State for Hemispheric Affairs Elliott Abrams turned his lidless gaze to Indianapolis, Ind., last month and spied trouble. The Hoosier capital is going to host the Pan-American Games in 1988, and that means Cubans in the U.S. So, as the Indianapolis organizers of the event were set to fly to Cuba to discuss the 1988 games (which will be held in 1991 in Cuba) with the infidel Castro, Abrams appeared with these words of warning. "He is one of the bloodiest and most ruthless dictators on the face of the earth," Abrams told *Indianapolis Star* reporters that he briefed the games organizers "about what they might expect when they get to Havana" and "gave them some material that described the human rights situation in Cuba and urged them to read it but not take it into Cuba with them because that would be overly provocative." Abrams was also worried that Castro himself might attend the Pan-American Games and wanted it made clear that "an invitation for a head of state would have to come from the government, and we are obviously not going to invite Fidel Castro to come to the U.S." Why all the fuss? Abrams explained all with this serpentine rationale: "I think what is happening is that the government of Cuba is trying to use these games for its political purpose. We've got to make sure that we as Americans don't let that happen... This is an athletic competition."

All trashed out and nowhere to go

The tiny Central American country of Belize became the second nation to reject the 3,186 one-ton bales of wandering New York garbage (see *In These Times*, April 29). Zack Nauth of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* sends this update: The high-profile, high-potency load from Islip, New York—containing such commercial wastes as discarded, potentially infectious medical supplies—cannot find a final resting place in locales that have long been home to many a toxic waste, deadly pesticide or banned pharmaceutical. Belize, like Mexico, sent its defense forces to repel the invasion by the unarmed, uncovered, fly-infested garbage scow. Earlier last month four Mexican navy boats, a helicopter, two planes and about 200 Mexican troops patrolled the coast near Campeche and Veracruz states to ward off the oncoming barge. Turned away by Mexico, the garbage dealers had negotiated with a group of Belize investors who wanted to build a methane plant there. A government official said the investors forgot to mention, however, that accepting the garbage was part of the plan. "The idea of us buying the garbage is laughable," said Manuel Romero, Belize's chief government information officer. A second offer then came from Louisiana where a sympathetic incinerator owner volunteered to burn the garbage—bed pans and all—as a public service at 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit. Gov. Edwin W. Edwards, facing a

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?



It may not be very long before these headlines land on your breakfast table. Our

• Opposition parties hold 36% of the seats in Nicaragua's national assembly —

Adverts for the movement: The Central American Education Project (CAEP) is taking on the Reagan administration with Madison Avenue advertising techniques. Gleen Ruga, a graphic artist and one of CAEP's founders, explains the rationale behind the volunteer ad agency this way: "People are used to seeing not very professionally produced literature on Central America. But if people were to see professionally produced ads in the media they would take the issue much more seriously. It would give the issues more credibility in the public's eye, especially a public that is used to getting so much of its information through the media and through advertising." CAEP has recently produced one TV, two radio and three newspaper ads. If you or your organization is interested in CAEP's project, write for a free brochure or send \$5—for a sample ad packet that includes a price list/order form and media guide—to CAEP, 47 East Street, Hadley, MA 01035.

Contras kill freedom fighter

I plan to keep working in progressive Third World countries a while longer, like many more years. Even though I often want to throw in the towel, overwhelmed with the problems of work and life, it's not often that one can say one is doing the right thing. I know I am. Somehow I will overcome the problems and pressures.

—Benjamin Linder
(1959-1987)

Last week in northern Nicaragua the U.S.-backed contras claimed Benjamin Linder as their first North American victim. Linder, a 27-year-old Oregon native, was killed by contra grenades on April 28 as he was planning a hydroelectric dam in rural Jinotega province. The contras also killed two Nicaraguans, Paulo Rosales and Sergio Hernandez. Linder, a mechanical engineer, had been working since 1983 with a group called the Nicaragua Appropriate Technology Project (NICAT) to help bring electricity to rural Nicaragua.

Friends described Linder as deeply committed to helping people. One associate, Peter Stricher, recalled that Linder juggled and rode a unicycle to entertain Nicaraguan children. Stricher told *In These Times* that Linder knew he was in danger from the contras, but believed that "if he was to be intimidated by them, they would have won the battle."

In 1986 Linder had been a plaintiff in a lawsuit brought against the U.S. government by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) that argued that by supporting the contras, the government was putting Linder and other U.S. citizens working in Nicaragua in imminent danger. The suit was dismissed last February on the grounds that it was a political question not appropriate for the courts. CCR is appealing the decision.

The contras have been stepping up their attacks recently, apparently in an effort to convince Congress they are an effective fighting force. And reportedly they have been working under closer supervision by the CIA, which has directed them to attack specific electric installations as well as other economic targets.

Six development workers from Western Europe were killed last year in contra attacks. The contras have said that they consider development workers military targets. Reed Brody, a lawyer for CCR, told *In These Times*, "In the spring of 1986 the contras made a tactical decision that it was worth the one or two days of negative publicity in order to stem the flow of foreign workers into Nicaragua."

In March, an electrical project that Linder had worked on was attacked by contras, but was successfully defended by militia members, said Tom Voorhees, who worked with Linder in NICAT. "They failed to get Ben's project, so they got

Ben," he said.

The U.S. State Department tried to shift the blame by noting that a "travel advisory" was in effect for Nicaragua. And, a spokesman for the contra group UNO told *In These Times*, "It's a fact that Sandinista special forces sometimes dress up as resistance fighters and commit atrocities."

Linder had reportedly heard that his project was a contra target. In November 1985, in a letter to his friend and associate, Peter Stricher, Linder wrote, "Last month the 16-year-old sister of one of the workers was kidnapped by the contras... After 16 days she escaped and came back with the message to her brother and the other workers on the project...that they are in the contras' sights." Linder noted that he had not been mentioned and said this was "a little comforting."

According to Witness For Peace, however, a group that monitors contra attacks, less than two weeks before his death Linder expressed fear that he was a specific target of the contras.

NICAT's Tom Voorhees said he believed Linder's murder to be part of an effort to intimidate development workers, an effort Voorhees linked to recent FBI harassment of TECNICA volunteers (see *In These Times*, April 22). But, he said, Linder's death would not stop NICAT's work in Nicaragua. "We've already had several people volunteer to take his place."

—Jim Naureckas

Israel tops list of South African arms embargo violators

The State Department submitted a report to Congress last month detailing violations of the U.S. embargo on arms to South Africa. The classified report, mandated by the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, identifies several nations that face a potential termination of U.S. aid for having provided South Africa with arms and military technology. According to press reports, Israel tops the list that also includes NATO members France, Britain, West Germany and Italy.

But Israel's arms relationship with South Africa is qualitatively different from those of the NATO countries, according to Jane Hunter, editor of the small monthly *Israeli Foreign Affairs*. The European countries have avoided direct arms treaties with South Africa but have allowed private companies to contract for military-related services. Israel, on the other hand, has direct government-to-government provisions, Hunter said.

In its arms agreement, Israel over the past year has provided South Africa with 50 Gazelle helicopters, upgraded the capacity of that country's "Cheetah" fighter-bomber and provided at least two Boeing 707s that serve as both electronic warfare platforms and refueling craft, giving South Africa an airborne



strike capacity throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.

But the ties between Israel and South Africa go deeper than simply supplying weapons systems and military equipment, said Hunter.

"It involves a very symbiotic set-up whereby South Africa plies money—of which it had a great abundance until recently—into the Israeli research-and-development phase of weapons production. The Israelis then share with the South Africans whatever the technological achievement of that match has been.

"Bowing to U.S. pressure, the Israeli government finally announced this year that it would not make any new arms agreements with South Africa and [that it would let its existing contracts lapse]. But that announcement turned out to be a red herring that will allow Israel to continue supplying arms to the apartheid government well into the next century while placating congress-

sional critics today," said Hunter.

The Israelis, according to Hunter, began to backtrack on their offer almost immediately by arguing that allowing their current contracts to lapse would thrust them into many very expensive lawsuits and throw thousands of Israelis out of work.

"In late January," Hunter said, "Israeli Defense Minister [Yitzhak] Rabin went to South Africa. It was first portrayed as a visit to tell the South Africans to keep a low profile, and that this was going to be used as a gesture to Congress to show that Israel was winding down its affairs with South Africa."

Then on March 20 the Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported that Rabin had signed military contracts with South Africa that would last into the 21st century. Consequently, said Hunter, Israel is now free to say it is going to let its existing contracts lapse and not sign any new ones.

—Robert Knight
Dennis Bernstein & Howard Levine

Simpson-Rodino's disappearing immigrant trick: out of sight, out of mind

GUATEMALA CITY—Seated in a one-room house in one of Guatemala City's poor working-class neighborhoods, Olga De Valenzuela, a 34-year-old mother of three, nurses her 10-month-old infant girl.

"My husband was desperate because he supports the family on a \$2-a-day salary he earned here as a bus driver," says Olga, "so he went to live with my brother in Santa Ana, Calif., last year to find work."

"Now he sends \$100 a month and even that's barely enough for us to get by. God only knows what we'll do if they deport him."

Olga and her children represent just one of the thousands of Guatemalan families whose relatives face deportation from the U.S. under the new Simpson-Rodino Immigration Law.

The law, which took effect May 5, will crack down on U.S. businesses employing illegal aliens. It could lead to the deportation of millions of undocumented foreigners.

While the prospect of massive deportations of Guatemalans raises panic here among families who live

off their relatives' earnings, Guatemalan officials, like their counterparts in other Latin American governments, fear potential economic and social havoc.

Feeding these fears is the economic crisis that grips Guatemala. Industry is running at half of its installed capacity and agricultural production is at 1970 levels. One out of every two Guatemalans is either unemployed or without full-time work. The annual 25 percent inflation rate since 1984 has cut workers' buying power almost in half. Consequently, in recent years thousands of Guatemalans migrated to the U.S. in search of work.

"It's shocking how many Guatemalans reside there," says Guatemalan Congressman Oliverio Garcia Rodas, who recently visited the U.S. to evaluate the effects of the Simpson-Rodino law.

He says that at least 600,000 Guatemalans live in the U.S., at least half of them illegally. He conservatively estimates that some 100,000 will be deported.

Indeed, in Olga De Valenzuela's neighborhood, the imminent deportation of relatives is the talk of the block. "Everybody here has a relative or a friend in the U.S.," says one woman. "In a few months this place will be crawling with deported people."

"When some 70,000 or more people suddenly return to the country,

it will be a negative blow to the economy," says Deputy Economic Minister Eduardo Estrada. The director of the central bank's foreign exchange department, Carlos Najera, estimates the country could lose an estimated \$36 million a year in foreign exchange money that those deported would have sent to their families.

Minister of Labor Catalina Sobe-ranis admits the government is financially unable to confront immediate, massive deportations, and says Guatemala has been seeking the support of the other Central American nations to jointly request a temporary postponement of the Simpson-Rodino law to allow those countries preparation time.

Sobe-ranis estimates that 1.5 million Central Americans face deportation from the U.S. "The effect on all of the Central American countries of the U.S.' sovereign but unilateral decision must be considered by the Reagan administration," says Sobe-ranis.

President Vinicio Cerezo will formally request a moratorium of the law in a meeting with President Reagan in Washington next week. The Guatemalan government may also seek economic aid through the Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative Fund and from other countries.

—Kevin Robinson

tough re-election campaign this year and having barely survived a bitter controversy over dumping gypsum into the Mississippi River, has taken a strong stand against the smelly barge in favor of low-profile hazardous wastes that are transported regularly but more quietly into the state for incineration. But it turns out that there's no place like home. As *In These Times* went to press the down-in-the-dumps barge was ending its nine-week Caribbean vacation and heading back to New York.

Dumping on our southern neighbors

Business representatives of U.S. waste disposal firms are touring Latin America looking for countries to rent them land for industrial and municipal waste dumps, reports Manuel Torres Calderon in the *Excelsior* of Mexico City. One of these companies, Applied Resources Technology (ART) of Los Angeles, tried to strike a \$30-million deal with Honduras that would turn that country's southern coastal swamplands (the poorest area of Honduras) into a 900,000-acre dump. ART proposed to pay Honduras \$8 a ton for the right to dump unmarked containers of hazardous waste at the rate of 10,000 tons a day. Apparently the waste shipments would be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency but that responsibility would stop as soon as the waste left U.S. territory. Minister of the Presidency Celso Arias, supporting the deal, said, "With this money we will be able to irrigate the whole southern area of the country." Others called for rejection of ART's proposal. President of the United Federation of Workers Hector Hernandez said, "We have enough garbage with the contras, we don't need any more thrown on top of us." Although ART's proposal was officially rejected by Honduras, government sources claim that the decision was merely postponed.

EPA respects Mexican sovereignty

The U.S. and Mexico signed an agreement last November to allow American companies to ship hazardous waste to Mexico for processing and disposal, according to a recent report by Fred Bonavita and Rob Meckel in the *Houston Post*. Although this previously unnoticed agreement may solve the waste disposal problems for American corporations and consequently save them lots of money, it offers no protection to the environment. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials admit all of the following: that the EPA has no knowledge of the quality of Mexico's waste disposal or treatment sites; that the EPA has not tried to inspect those sites because it does not have the right to do so; that the EPA has no authority over or interest in what happens when the wastes cross the border; that the EPA relies on the company shipping the waste to provide information on what wastes are being exported. The U.S. Customs Service, out of concern for safety, has told agents not to check the contents of hazardous and potentially deadly waste containers against the bills of shipment.

Do legitimate waste disposal sites exist in Mexico? Manuel Fernandez of the Mexican Conservation Federation in Mexico City said that he knows of no facilities in his country able to handle hazardous wastes properly. "We don't want our country to be a receiver of toxic wastes... Even if it is brought here legally, nobody knows what to do with it," Nick Kamp, an environmentalist in southern Arizona, said he has heard "lots and lots of stories" about illegal waste dumping in northern Mexico. EPA's Wendy Grieder said she too has heard "lots of rumors" but has seen "no concrete evidence." And if Mexico's waste-processing facilities are a sham? "There is nothing we can do about it," said Grieder. "It's really none of our business; it's a sovereignty issue."

Texans react in style

Texas lawmakers have concerns about this new hazardous waste agreement. One at least was noble: "I'm really concerned for Mexico," said State Sen. Hector Uribe. "The whole country is in a financial disadvantage, but I really question the wisdom of permitting one's country to become a dumping ground for the country that generates more hazardous wastes than any other country in the world." Others are concerned about the dangers of hosting the Mexican-bound hazardous waste while it is in transit across the state. State Sen. Tati Santiesteban wants Texas officials to be notified about the hazardous waste shipments. "I believe that it would be ideal if Mexico would take our wastes, but I think we should be informed on the transportation."