

Joel Bleifuss

## Op-ed therapy

Are you a Congress member who is worried about the potential for a Gulf war? A recent grad now in government service who balks at shifting to the Capitol mode? A journalist having trouble taking the pragmatic world view? The *Washington Post's* "Outlook" is at your service. The paper's op-ed section recently prescribed a heavy dose of geo-psychotherapy for timid empire-builders—*"Death and the Dark Side of Command,"* an essay by Vietnam vet Fred Downs. He begins his story: "Your job is to kill the enemy and take ground! After you finish four years here I want you to realize all of your training comes down to that bottom line.... I made that statement during a lecture on 'leadership' I gave to military students in the spring of 1986. I had looked out over the young faces of the men and women cadets and it suddenly struck me that these innocent, naive, almost-officers could soon be in charge of an infantry platoon, preparing to fight the enemy. I mused how woefully unprepared they were for the reality of what they would be facing.... Needless to say, I got their attention. I also got the attention of someone else in the audience, a high-ranking officer.... Afterward I was admonished: 'We do not call it 'killing.' We call it 'serving the target.' This struck me as absurd.... That attitude illustrates a lack of mental preparedness for war within the U.S. military that ought to bother all of us—especially at a time like this when our armed forces could be drawn into combat in the Persian Gulf or Central America.... Kill- ing is the army's major function during war. Yet it is the least understood, most ignored and least discussed aspect of a young officer's training as a platoon leader.... An officer must understand that in his platoon there will be men who will not be able to kill, and who will do anything to get out of combat. Most of these men should have been weeded out before they get into a combat unit.... Many of the rest who don't want to kill but can be forced to do so will need constant reassurances that they are doing the right thing.... They will look first to their immediate officer for their approval and then to the platoon leader.... The platoon leader must realize that the losses among his men will already have been factored into strategic planning.... To increase his chances of success on the battlefield, the young officer must understand that he will lose men, and other aspects of the dark side of combat, before the shooting starts." Next week: "Nuclear War and the Dilemma of Leadership."

## Contragate honor code

"Admiral John Ponder and I graduated together on June 4, 1958 from the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis," writes J.G. Brewer in the *Mill Valley Advocate*. He describes how an Annapolis education molded the minds of Ponder, Bill McFarlane (class of '59) and Lt. Col. Oliver North (class of '68). Examining the school's honor code, Brewer says, "It was actually a rather loose set of mostly unwritten concepts intended to make sure that our superiors would be able to properly believe us when we answered their questions or demands. Basically our code at Annapolis informed us it was prohibited any lying or cheating in Navy life.... But the main distinction of the Annapolis honor code, as opposed to those of other military schools like West Point, was that it forbade reporting of classmates. We may not have respected a classmate who lied or cheated, but we didn't turn him in. We were to float down through our service careers and our years as a gradually diminishing foot of boys, holding each other up 'til death.' And after discussing intellectual rigor-mortis at Annapolis, Brewer concludes: "The academy turns out fighters and leaders for the front lines, not talkers and thinkers. A tight little mutual support group, brought up to feel uncomfortable and to mistrust outsiders, is not likely to delay action while discussing things among themselves, much less with Congress. A group of old boys who grew up on a compartmentalized honor system apparently had little difficulty drawing boxes around the problem at hand to conveniently separate it from such relatively unimportant concerns as the law, the Constitution, or the press and public. John Ponder, and to some extent North and McFarlane, too, have maintained honor within their peer group. The rest of us really don't matter."



Kathleen Gallagher in drag as Sen. Alan Dixon (D-IL) solicits support against contra funding on the streets of Chicago.

## Chlordane sales suspended, but use continues

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has finally banned further sales of chlordane—a carcinogenic pesticide commonly used by exterminators to rid houses of termites. However the agreement reached with the poison's manufacturer, Velsicol Chemical Company, does not stop chlordane's use.

According to EPA press officer Albert Heier, the weekend before the August 11 announcement Velsicol and EPA reached a settlement. Although Velsicol will stop selling chlordane in the U.S., the EPA agreed to allow exterminators to continue to inject their remaining stocks of the chemical under houses. A Velsicol study submitted to the EPA shows carcinogenic fumes from chlordane can seep into living areas for at least a year after application.

Furthermore, Velsicol will continue to manufacture and market chlordane overseas. Spokeswoman Donna Jennings said the company has "significant" sales of the chemical in Australia, Latin America and Europe.

Prior to the announcement efforts to ban chlordane had intensified. Trying to force EPA action, the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP) filed a lawsuit June 29 to force the agency to use its emergency powers to end all chlordane use immediately.

The suit, filed in Washington fed-

eral District Court, also seeks an immediate ban on heptachlor, aldrin and dieldrin. These compounds, along with chlordane, are cyclodienes, a class of chlorinated hydrocarbons noted for their ability to persist in the environment.

That persistence makes them economical and, critics say, deadly hazards. Pest control operators describe cyclodienes as having a "good kill." Environmentalists cite studies that show the chemicals can cause cancer, birth defects, nerve damage and other maladies. Furthermore, cyclodienes accumulate, and remain, in mammals' fat tissue.

On April 22 *In These Times* reported the EPA's promise to rule on the cyclodienes "soon," but the decision took four months. By postponing that announcement three times, the EPA guaranteed Velsicol one last lucrative season. An estimated 500,000 homes will be treated with chlordane this year, most of them in the summer, the peak season for both insects and pest-control companies.

Steve House, a former termite specialist for a major pest control firm, gave an affidavit for the NCAMP suit. House worked with chlordane and aldrin for only four and a half years. He has severe liver damage, chronic headaches and skin rashes and has suffered a nervous breakdown—all symptoms of cyclodiene poisoning. The pesticide levels in his blood are high. This summer, a doctor told him to stop working around the chemicals. House said he hasn't been near the pesticide in almost two years.

"I almost feel as if I got a death sentence passed on me and I'm just waiting for Mother Nature to throw the switch," House said. The misuse of the chemicals by exterminators is common, he said, recalling instructions to pump chlordane near wells and underground water supplies.

The problem with termite control is more than the choice of chemicals. It's the structure of the pest control industry. The more chemicals the exterminators pump, the more they earn. "The whole system is based on production quotas," House said.

NCAMP hopes the federal courts will agree the EPA's failure to immediately ban the cyclodienes is endangering the public health. Orkin, a major pest control firm, has already voluntarily stopped using chlordane. But if court hearings drag on until corporate cyclodiene inventories are depleted, more homes will be permanently contaminated.

"I'd like to give one of these guys in the EPA an ultimatum," House said. "Let me come out and inject [chlordane] around your house. You tell me that you're comfortable sitting on top of it. That it's harmless, it can't hurt your family."

At the press conference announcing the EPA's deal with Velsicol, a reporter asked EPA administrator Jack Moore if he would allow his house to be treated with chlordane. Moore said no. But his agency's actions on chlordane have put corporate convenience ahead of public protection.

William K. Burke



## Domestic violence: a crime, not a civil infraction

The debate over how the criminal justice system should best deal with domestic violence got a public airing in Chicago recently when Alderman Lawrence Bloom proposed to cut the city budget by having civilian counsellors, instead of police, handle domestic disputes. The resulting controversy not only killed his proposal, it also highlighted some common misconceptions about domestic violence.

Jerry Gladden, a former Chicago police officer and now chief investigator of the Chicago Crime Commission, a privately-funded watchdog of the city's criminal justice system, shares a fear of many that civilian counsellors, unarmed and without power of arrest, could, he says, find themselves with "nothing they could do except get thrown down the stairs." Gladden based his opposition to the proposal on the belief that disproportionate numbers of police are hurt and killed in domestic cases.

But a recent National Institute of Justice study, "Danger to Police in Domestic Disturbances—A New Look," disputes this claim. The study examines data from several sources in several cities, and concludes: "These incidents are proportionately less likely to result in an officer death, given the frequency

with which such assignments occur." Furthermore, preliminary data from the FBI reveals that of the 66 officers murdered in 1986, only one was killed on a domestic call.

That study, issued by the Department of Justice's research branch, explains that for many years the FBI lumped domestic disturbance calls with other kinds of disturbances when compiling annual crime statistics. Though many police and others interested in law enforcement believe that domestic calls make up the largest part of this category, it mainly encompasses incidents such as bar fights, gang calls and general disturbances.

But although the plan to use civilian counsellors may be safe, it may also be costly. Edwin Bishop, deputy superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, says Bloom's plan may have merit, but that its implementation would not save tax dollars. Bishop points to the criminal justice system's failure to curb domestic violence, and explained that "adequately trained" civilians specializing in domestic intervention "could pull together all of the agencies and professionals who have the expertise to solve the problem." But such a program would require as many as 72 additional employees without any reduction in the number of police officers, says Bishop.

And Kathleen Quinn, executive director of the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Violence, says

the proposal's approach is simply out of step with national law-enforcement trends. "[The proposal] flies in the face of everything we know and everything we've learned about domestic violence," she says. Quinn cites Justice Department studies that conclude that the most effective deterrent to spouse abuse is arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators. And since one-third of all females murdered are killed by domestic violence, she says, "to treat it as trivial is inappropriate."

According to the Washington, D.C.-based Crime Control Institute, 46 percent of U.S. cities with populations of 100,000 or more have policies that make arrest the preferred course of action in domestic violence cases. These policies encourage and sometimes require police to arrest an abuser when there is probable cause, even if the victim declines to sign a complaint. Proponents say such required arrests are needed because of the reluctance of many wives to prosecute their husbands.

Bloom himself is rethinking his position. He now says that when he proposed the program, he was discussing "innovative ways of providing services" for city residents while saving tax dollars. He believes that his proposal "obviously requires much more thought and research" and that he "shouldn't have thrown it out" without a more thorough knowledge of the issue.

Lynn Travers

zation officials make their last scheduled inspection in early September.

Since construction began in 1969 at an estimated cost of \$128 million, the plant has been hit with construction setbacks and cost overruns that reportedly have increased the price tag to more than \$3.5 billion. The plant will operate with two of the problem-plagued General Electric BWR/5 Mark II reactors (see *In These Times*, July 8) sold to Mexico in 1972.

Recently a growing number of people have rallied behind a vocal anti-Laguna Verde coalition that claims the plant is poorly constructed and lies on an earthquake fault. The controversy's most recent twist was an August 12 announcement by a Federal Electricity Commission official that in addition to Laguna Verde, Mexico plans to build three other nuclear plants by the year 2000.

Late last year the seven Veracruz bishops issued a joint pastoral letter that cited the "imminent risk of lethal contamination" from radiation leaks and the "genetic consequences for all species of life." The bishops called on the government to avoid these risks by "converting the plant to use nearby natural resources, such as natural gas." They confirmed their position in a Lenten pastoral letter.

Nevertheless, Mexico City's Cardinal Corripio heaped praise on the

plant's safety system during his July 30 visit. According to *El Dictamen of Veracruz*, Corripio said that the plant design included "the most scrupulous safety measures which will avoid any problem of contamination.... There is no risk to human life, nor to plants, nor animals. I am very impressed by the safety measures."

The cardinal was reportedly flown to Veracruz in a private jet belonging to the government-backed national electricians' union, which is contracted to provide the labor for construction and operation of the nuclear facility. An August 12 press release by the cardinal's Mexico City office did not deny this. According to the statement, Corripio went to Veracruz to "celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Parish of Our Lady of Light" and while there "took advantage of an invitation [to visit the plant]."

The press release denied that the Cardinal had actually blessed the nuclear plant, as was reported in the Mexican press.

In keeping with church protocol, the bishop of the local diocese, Bishop Padilla y Lozano, accompanied the visiting cardinal on his tour of the facility. But he later told reporters that neither he nor the other Veracruz bishops had altered their position on the dangers of the nuclear plant.

Mike Tangeman

## Refuse on the rebound

In June former Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) director William Ruckelshaus joined the board of Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI), the country's second largest toxic waste dumper. According to the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes of Arlington, Va., the company is having legal problems. The Justice Department has filed a suit on behalf of the EPA and the state of Louisiana against BFI for massive violations at its Livingston, La., toxic landfill. The resulting fines could top Waste Management's—the number-one toxic dumper—record of \$15 million. BFI is also in court, or the object of grand jury investigations, in Michigan, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Arizona, Ohio, California, Vermont and Georgia. Some of these cases involve allegations that BFI and Waste Management conspired to rig contracts, fix prices and carve up the trash market. On a related note, the National Wildlife Federation has named Dean L. Buntrock, head of Waste Management, to its board of directors.

## Boycott baloney

The boycott against Coors is not over, only the AFL-CIO's support for the boycott. Several weeks ago the labor federation reached an agreement with Coors guaranteeing that the building trades unions would do all future construction for the company. Coors also agreed not to interfere in AFL-CIO attempts to organize its brewery workers. In making this deal, the AFL-CIO preempted attempts by the Teamsters, who are also trying to organize the plant. A source who has worked on the boycott but who asked not to be identified, said of the AFL-CIO settlement: "You read about the victory and what the fuck is it? Some construction jobs. That's fine for the building trades who put virtually nothing into the boycott. But we didn't carry on the boycott for 10 years just for that." This person suspected that AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland agreed to the Coors settlement as a favor to the construction unions that are his power base. He also said that the AFL-CIO employees who had directed the boycott were not included in the negotiations with Coors and only found out about the agreement the night before it was announced. The source said the boycott will continue without AFL-CIO support. "Coors plays a very sinister role in American life. We have no reason to drink Coors when some of the profits from every bottle go to the ultra-right."

## Hispanics say no

"Not all Hispanics are abusing drugs," said Beatrice Rouse, statistician for the National Institute on Drug Abuse. She gave this good news to a group of Mexican and U.S. health-care workers who were attending a human services symposium in Mexico City, reports Rachel Sternberg. "Sometimes I think we need to be reassured that not all Hispanics are abusing drugs," Rouse told the jaw-dropped audience. "Having been to Texas, I know that there are Hispanic leaders who may well be national leaders, that there are Hispanics out there who are not drug users, or who used it and gave it up, who will go on to make important progress for the U.S. and for their community."

## A nut, a dolt and a bad screw

It's not common knowledge that former Secretary of the Interior James Watt now sits on the board of Jerry Falwell's PTL Ministries, helping that friendly fascist resurrect Jim and Tammy's fallen empire.

## What does God know, and when did he know it?

Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the Nicaraguan prelate who has received U.S. dollars for unknown indulgences, refuses to blame the *contras* for the July 3 death of a Franciscan monk. Tomas Zavaleta of El Salvador was killed in Matagalpa province when the truck he was driving hit a land mine. A priest who had been travelling with the Franciscan has blamed the *contras*, saying that they planted the mine in the expectation that Zavaleta's truck would be returning along the same road it had covered two hours earlier. In what was interpreted as an oblique hint that the Nicaraguan government had set the mine, Obando said, "Only God knows who did it." To which President Daniel Ortega replied, "Only God knows how much money Obando has received from the CIA."

## Mexico's nuclear power controversy: one cardinal vs. seven bishops

MEXICO CITY—The Mexican Catholic Church hierarchy has entered the fray on both sides of the controversy over Mexico's first nuclear plant, scheduled to come on-line this fall in the Gulf Coast state of Veracruz.

In an unusual move, Cardinal Ernesto Corripio, archbishop of Mexico City, visited the Laguna Verde nuclear plant July 30 and blessed a nearby church under construction. He told a local newspaper that he "was impressed by the [plant's] safety measures that ensure there is no risk to human life."

In visiting the plant, Corripio—Mexico's only active cardinal—disregarded an unwritten rule that each bishop is responsible for matters within his own diocese. He also contradicted seven local bishops in the state of Veracruz—including the president of the 90-member Mexican Bishops Conference—who had called for a halt to the plant's construction.

The Laguna Verde facility, located about 280 miles east of Mexico City and 900 miles due south of Houston, is set to go on-line after International Atomic Energy Organi-