

EDITORIAL

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

Editor: James Weinstein
 Managing Editor: Sheryl Larson
 Senior Editors: Patricia Aufderheide, John B. Judis, David Moberg, Salim Muwakkil
 Assistant Managing Editors: Glenora Croucher, Kira Jones
 Culture Editor: Jeff Reid
 European Editor: Diana Johnstone
 New York Editor: Daniel Lazare
 In Person Editor: Joel Bleifuss
 In Short Editor: Glenora Croucher
 Etc. Editor: Kira Jones
 Contributing Editor: Peter Karman
 Copy Editor: Mary Nick-Bisgaard
 Researchers: David Andrews, Jim McNeill
 Intern: Carina Chocano

Art Director: Miles DeCoster
 Associate Art Director: Peter Hannan
 Assistant Art Director: Lisa Weinstein
 Production Assistant: Terry LaBan
 Typesetter: Jim Rinnert

Publisher: James Weinstein
 Associate Publisher: Bill Finley
 Co-Business Managers: Louis Hirsch, Finance
 Kevin O'Donnell, Data Processing/Accounting
 Advertising Director: Bruce Embrey
 Office Manager: Theresa Nutall

Circulation Director: Chris D'Arpa
 Assistant Director: Greg Kilbane
 Phone Renewal Services: Vicki Broadnax

Concert Typographers: Sheryl Hybert

In These Times believes that to guarantee our life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, Americans must take greater control over our nation's basic economic and foreign policy decisions. We believe in a socialism that fulfills rather than subverts the promise of American democracy, where social needs and rationality, not corporate profit and greed, are the operative principles. Our pages are open to a wide range of views, socialist and nonsocialist, liberal and conservative. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

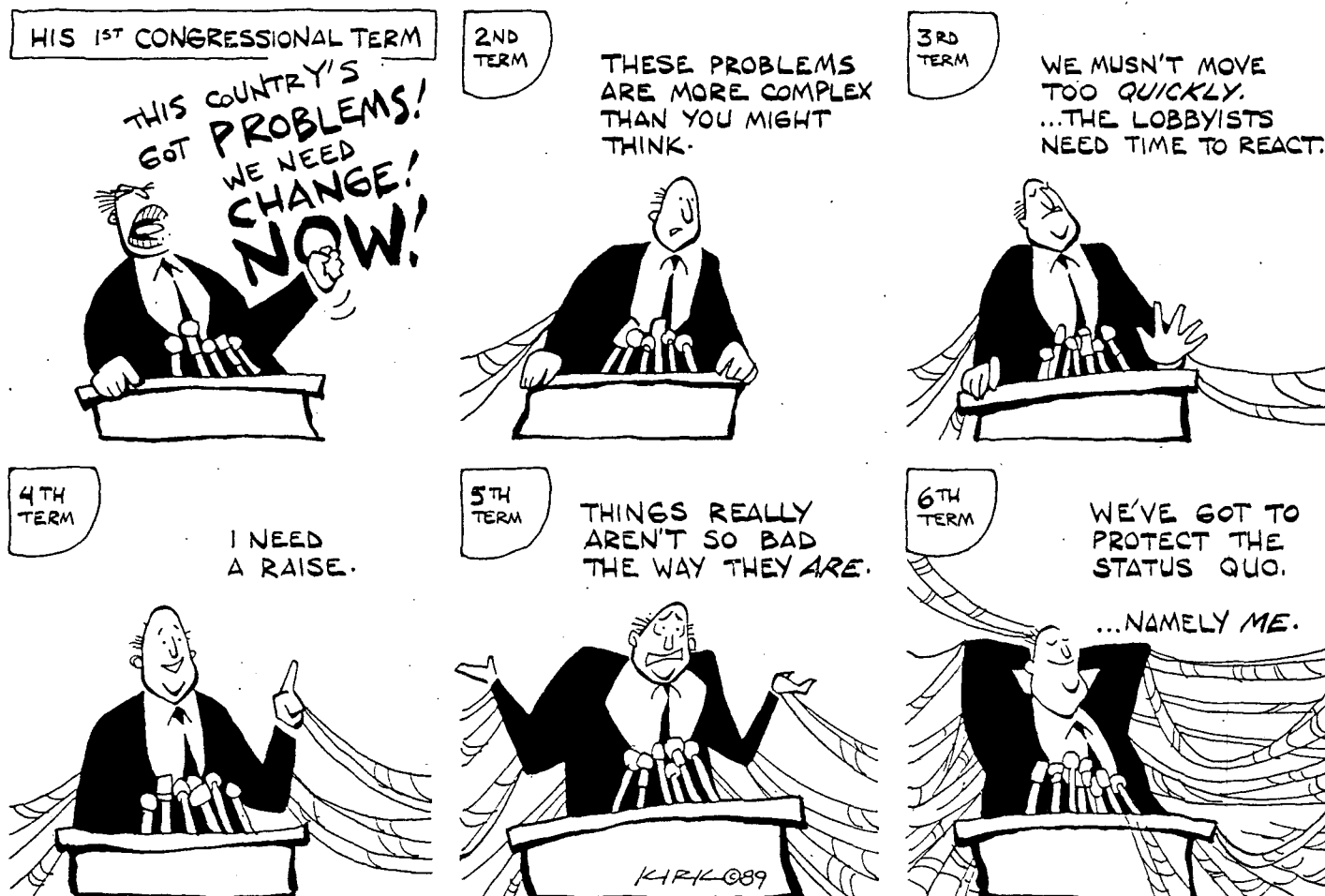
(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100

Member: Alternative Press Syndicate

The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©1990 by Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Complete issues of *In These Times* are available from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI. Selected articles are available on 4-track cassette from Freedom Ideas International, 640 Bayside, Detroit, MI 48217. All rights reserved. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index. Publisher does not assume liability for unsolicited manuscripts or material. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. All correspondence should be sent to: *In These Times*, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Subscriptions are \$34.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$47.95 outside the U.S. and its possessions). Advertising rates sent on request. Back issues \$3; specify volume and number. All letters received by *In These Times* become property of the newspaper. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

This issue (Vol. 14, No. 22) published April 25, 1990, for newsstand sales April 25-May 1, 1990.



Kirk Anderson

Politicians internalize their corruption

Our politics has always had its share of corruption. In 1908, for example, when the muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens went to Boston to write about its government, he found its corruption "so like other cities" that he had difficulty writing about it. Boston confirmed what Steffens had come to suspect: in our society, "business and politics must be one; it was natural, inevitable, and—possibly—right that business should—by bribery, corruption or somehow—get and be the government."

After seeing Boston, Steffens finally tired of exposing the bribing of public officials in the hope of ending corruption. Instead, he hoped his muckraking would simply help end all the hypocrisy. He wanted to get respectable businessmen to admit that corruption of government was their way of life. His aim was to "make it impossible for [business leaders] to be crooks and not know it" and thus to force them to examine the contradiction in their lives. Only then, he believed, could Americans confront the destruction of democracy and its replacement with the plutocracy of corporate America.

Almost no one, of course, took Steffens' advice. Instead, the more obvious ways of corrupting public life, the glaring contradictions between the ideology of democracy and the practice of American politics, were gradually phased out—even eventually in Chicago—only to be replaced by legal ways of buying public officials and a public ideology that conflates the interests of private business with those of the public.

Two bills now before Congress illustrate how thoroughly private interests have come to supplant public interests and the way in which our politicians, as well as the media, identify ideologically with those who finance their campaigns rather than with those they nominally represent.

First, the Clean Air Act has been converted from a bill to protect the environment and the health of the American people into a bill to protect corporate polluters who contribute heavily to friendly members of Congress (see pages 11 and 16). A recent headline in the *Chicago Tribune* inadvertently underlined this point: "In crafting the clean air bill, senators take care of their own."

The *Tribune* article went on to explain: "When the chairman of the Senate environment committee [Quentin Burdick (D-ND)] put the finishing touches on the clean air bill, he took extra care in dealing with the five worst-polluting power plants in his state: he exempted them from the bill." But this statement of fact was then made to conform to the newspaper's ideology as it related that several other senators were also given "fixes" for their "states" rather than their corporate sponsors. Similarly, an aide to Senate Republican leader Bob Dole (R-KS), in defending the bill's exemption of most toxic chemicals used by farmers, claimed that the senator was "going to do everything [he] can for clean air but at the same time watch out for the interests of [his] state." And so it went. Steel corporations, utilities, incinerators and others all benefited from a process described benignly by the *Tribune* as "Clean air is good for the country but home-state interests come first."

In fact, however, it was the financial backers of our senators, not the home states, that came first in what Richard Ayres of the National Clean Air Coalition called a "special-interest feeding frenzy." In North Dakota, where the five polluting power plants were exempted, home-state interests came last, just as in Florida it was its citizens whose health came last so that incinerators could be spared the expense of cleaning the air.

The second bill is of a different nature—a package of changes in the civil-rights law made necessary by a series of Supreme Court decisions undermining congressional intent. In one ruling, the Court held that the 1866 civil-rights law governing the right to make contracts did not create a right to be free from on-the-job harassment. Four other rulings limited the scope of the two key laws barring employment discrimination: the 1866 law and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Trade groups oppose this bill because a strong civil-rights law would lead to expensive lawsuits and damage awards for discrimination. They also want to avoid discrimination suits that they see as a challenge to management's prerogatives in hiring and firing. And, of course, President Bush has taken their side and threatens to veto the bill, while Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) argues that the country doesn't need "to overhaul the legal system to insure equality."

What this means, however, is that insuring equality of employees' rights is clearly less important to our public servants than protecting employers' power. Or, as in the case of the Clean Air Act, the needs of corporate enterprise come first and those of the people take the hindmost.

LETTERS

Chronic seizure

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT YOU EDITORIALIZED about Lithuania as superficially as the *Miami Herald*.

If the Baltic States were "seized illegally" in 1940 by the Soviets, the same Baltic States were "stolen illegally" from Russia following World War I. Lithuania had been part of the Russian empire since 1772. The whole area had been occupied by the Germans during World War I. Following the German defeat and the civil war going on in Russia, the Allies thought it was a good time to break up Russia. They did their invasion in Siberia and left it to the hostile Baltic States to grab off all they could. As most of them sided with Hitler in World War II, you can't blame the Soviets for trying to get back what they could.

The tragedy is that the Baltic revolts are only a small part of the worldwide strife of hundreds of groups that differ from the parent country in ethnic, religious or language elements. These are fast becoming the wars of the '90s. Just pull out any foreign map and you can find the most bitter, malicious and killing wars over all continents. Currently the United States is the rare exception, but with Hispanic enclaves building up all over our country we could join the strife.

In the meantime, let's hope Mikhail Gorbachov's troubles aren't multiplied by Bush's meddling. It would be sad to start the Cold War all over again just so some "ethnic" wins what he thinks is freedom. That is, freedom to kill or be killed for what?

William M. Wilkerson
Florida City, Fla.

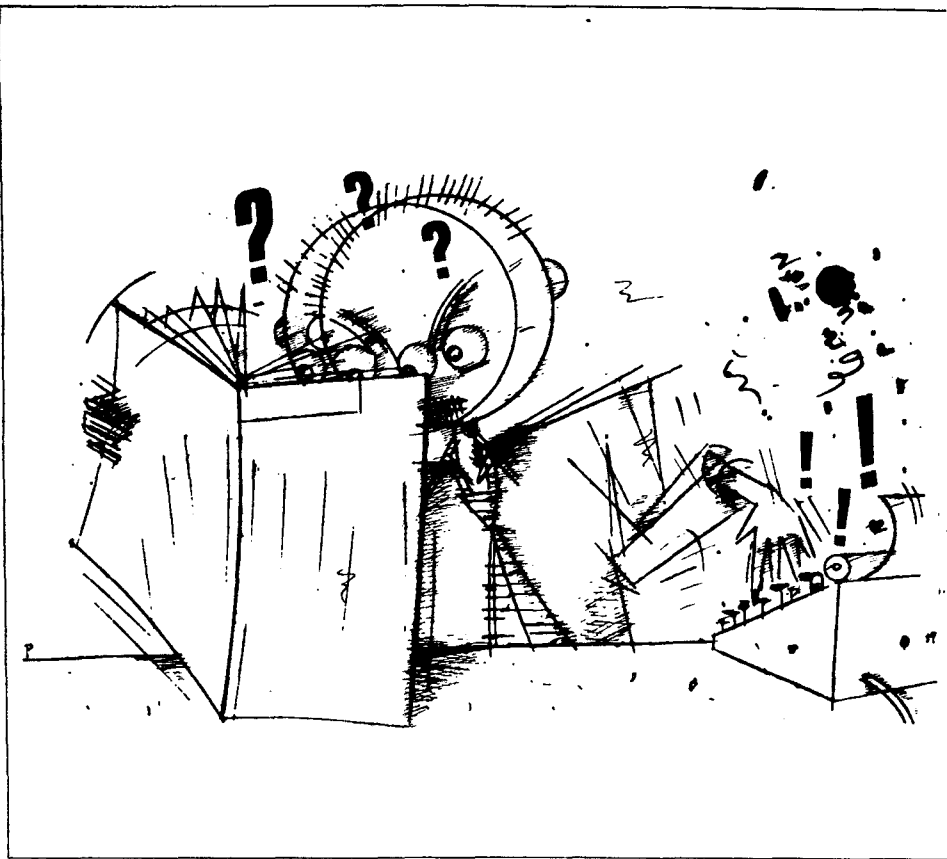
Socially irresponsible

I AM WRITING TO EXPRESS MY DISAPPOINTMENT over Jeff Balch's pitch for *Shopping for a Better World* (JTT, March 14). As Balch acknowledges, *Shopping for a Better World* "severely simplifies" complex environmental and community issues.

What Balch doesn't mention is that the realm of labor relations is virtually ignored. What if a company has a woman on its board of directors while simultaneously acting to prevent its largely female workforce from unionizing? *Shopping for a Better World* would rate such a company high on women's advancement, but would you?

This is not a hypothetical example. Consider a company like Sara Lee. *Shopping for a Better World* gives the company high ratings in every category of corporate citizenship except one (doing business in South Africa). *Shopping for a Better World* would have you believe that, at least in this country, Sara Lee is a good corporate citizen. But the booklet doesn't tell us that Sara Lee's Hanes subsidiary waged a long and bitter struggle against the unionization efforts of its low-wage workforce. On top of that, workers in both the Hanes division and in the Sara Lee bakery division suffer from high rates of carpal-tunnel syndrome and other repetitive-trauma disorders.

Moreover, while *Shopping for a Better World* rates Sara Lee high on community outreach, how does that square with their apparent decision to close a Deerfield, Ill., plant, throwing hundreds out of work, or the company's recent actions to force a strike in New Hampton, Iowa, where they are the dominant employer in town?



There is something dangerous about this "quick and easy" guide to socially responsible shopping. The only thing worse than ignorance is thinking that you know something you don't know. Most corporations are not socially responsible. The entire notion of a guide that helps you pick and choose among oil companies borders on the absurd. The real way to shop for a better world is to cut down on our consumption of fossil fuels, not to drive home from the gas station feeling satisfied because the company you bought gas from is "socially responsible."

Andrew Strom
Hyannis, Mass.

Uninduced

SALIM MUWAKKIL'S ARTICLE (JTT, APRIL 11) WAS principally devoted to persuading readers that Rep. Gus Savage (D-IL) did not in fact make public anti-Semitic remarks. Since Savage's remarks were unambiguously anti-Semitic, Muwakkil's arguments would have been unavailing were he to quote the remarks. So he didn't. And the editors didn't either.

Muwakkil's unscholarly arguments are, unfortunately, too typical of your publication to induce me to resubscribe.

Barry Blyveis
Columbia, Md.

Some milk is good milk

IN AN ARTICLE I WROTE FOR *IN THESE TIMES*, "Farmers and activists unite to keep cows drug-free" (Feb. 28), you chose an unfortunate and inaccurate subhead for one section. I refer to the heading above the article's concluding paragraphs—"No milk is good milk." Nothing in the article substantiated such a false and alarming phrase, and I certainly would never have used it. In fact, the subhead appears unrelated to anything that follows.

Please consider that, as noted at the end of the article, I wrote as communications coordinator for the National Family Farm Coalition and was attempting especially to convey family dairy farmers' point of view regarding what they see as an unneeded and potentially destructive additive product. The last thing I or they could have hoped for in this attempt is that a negative message about milk in general would be delivered. As the article's authoritative sources pointed out, milk is highly tested and regulated in this country and remains safe and wholesome.

Farmers more than anyone want to keep it that way. That's why we're working with environmental, consumer and animal-protection advocates to defeat synthetic BGH, which is as yet unapproved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Drink milk. It's good for you.

Brian Ahlberg
Washington, D.C.

The far side

IN LATE NOVEMBER 1989, CONGRESS APPROVED and President Bush signed a new foreign-aid appropriations bill calling for transferring to foreign governments \$14.6 billion during the current fiscal year.

This huge giveaway comes at a time when the federal government continues to operate at enormous deficits. While we are being taxed to provide billions for the governments of other nations, our leaders are deceitfully covering up the true size of the deficit. Both former Congressional Budget Director Alice Rivlin and current Comptroller General Charles Bowsher insist that the deficit is exceeding \$200 billion per year—twice what the administration is telling us.

This single foreign-aid appropriation is only one part of all the money we give away. I have been a local leader of the John Birch Society for many years and would like to point out that none of these transfers of money is authorized by the Constitution. They should all be terminated. We fund the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and lots of other international funds. We even pay for the defense of Germany, Japan and South Korea, which is a form of foreign aid. These nations can and should take care of themselves.

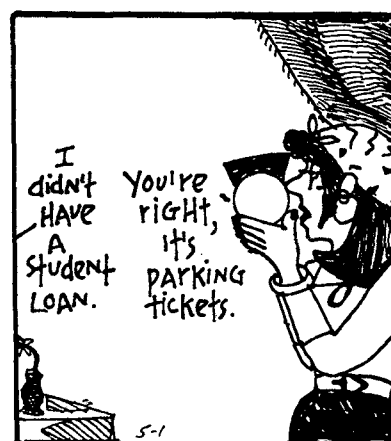
What has foreign aid bought for America? It's almost a total disaster. Besides speeding our nation toward bankruptcy, foreign aid has led to America being despised by the peoples of most of the nations of the world. They know that our dollars have been used to keep tyrants in power (Gorbachov in the USSR, Jaruzelski in Poland), destroy good leaders (the shah in Iran, Somoza in Nicaragua) and force some wasteful and ill-conceived programs (agrarian reform in South Vietnam and now in El Salvador). We have also built bureaucracies nearly everywhere, lined the pockets of thieves (Noriega, Ortega, Ceausescu), and even fueled the war-making capabilities of both sides in several regional conflicts (Arab-Israeli, Southeast Asia).

The sooner that we, the American people, demand an end to all foreign aid, the better off we'll be and the respect that our nation once enjoyed all over the the Earth will begin to return.

Bruce Taber
Kansas, Ill.

Editor's note: Please keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander