

decade and a half helping two dictatorships target them. Wagner was recruited out of the German Air Force into the U.S. Army's security police in Occupied Germany, and in 1955 emigrated to the United States. In 1966, he went to Vietnam as senior public safety adviser under the Office of Public Safety (OPS) of the State Department's Agency for International Development (AID), a front for CIA operations. The OPS trained the Vietnamese national police, who participated in U.S.-sponsored operations that summarily arrested, tortured, "disappeared" and murdered tens of thousands of Vietnamese civilians. Wagner moved on to Managua, Nicaragua, in 1971 as senior public safety adviser to the Somoza dictatorship, staying on as a consultant when President Carter abolished the OPS in 1977.

In the aftermath of Wagner's trip to Haiti, the screen-in rate dropped below 10 percent for the first two weeks in April. But Wagner's reports met increasing skepticism from INS officials, according to several sources. The rate had recovered to 30 to 40 percent before Bush stopped the screening process entirely by ordering summary repatriations.

Assistant Secretary of State Bernard Aronson, a Bush appointee, will continue to run the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs for the foreseeable future, because right-wing Cuban-Americans shot down Clinton's proposed nominee as too soft on Fidel Castro. And in the wake of Zoë Baird's failed nomination as attorney general, the INS, which is part of the Justice Department, probably won't have a new commissioner for some time, either. If Clinton wants accurate information about Haiti, he might want to read reports from Americas Watch, Amnesty International and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights instead of relying on biased information from his own bureaucracy.

—John Canham-Clyne

THE WRONG MEDICINE

Managed care won't cure what ails the health system

When President Clinton's health reform task force was first set up, it was supposed to come up with a final plan that Clinton could propose immediately after taking office. But the best the task force was able to do was present the pres-

ident with a series of policy options. The problem was cost. Given Clinton's preference for a system of managed competition—which would leave the private insurance industry largely intact—his task force couldn't come up with a way of significantly reducing total health care costs.

Robert Reischauer, director of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), recently cast further doubt upon managed competition's ability to reduce costs. Testifying before a House subcommittee, Reischauer—whose agency supplies lawmakers with budget data and analysis—warned that the current House proposal for managed competition, sponsored by Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN), would not produce any savings. "After initially rising above baseline levels for a few years, this proposal would leave national health care expenditures at approximately the same level that they would have reached otherwise," Reischauer said.

By contrast, Reischauer thought that costs could be more easily controlled in a single-payer system such as Canada's. Reischauer estimated that a single-payer system could have saved \$30 to \$35 billion in administrative costs during 1991. The CBO director's positive assessment of the single-payer system

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

And I'm Eliot Ness

Now that *The Untouchables* has become a TV series, its production company Paramount is busy convincing worrywarts that the show's aggression level is high-quality. The racial slurs, for instance, will be authentic. "You'll hear people referring to people in the shows as 'micks' and 'dagos,' which was just common language," said Kerry McCluggage, chairman of Paramount Television Group to *Broadcasting* magazine. And exposing Chicago's history of "lawlessness," says McCluggage, may let people see "the relevance of what happened there to what's going on in some of our cities today."

Junk-food Journalism

Can you remember which word Dan Quayle couldn't spell? Do you think you should? Can you recall which child Woody Allen is alleged to have abused—and wish you didn't? Did you follow Johnny Carson's retirement, whether you wanted to or not? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you are a victim of junk-food news, according to the Organization of News Ombudsmen and Carl Jensen, a professor at Sonoma State University. (Jensen also originated the Project Censored awards, for most underreported stories.) Other "winners":

Madonna and Sex; Fergie and Diana; the Elvis Stamp. Jensen notes that media time spent on Dan Quayle and his ilk could have gone toward election-season substance.

Hell-raiser radio

For everybody who's sick and tired of Rush Limbaugh talk radio, here comes Jim Hightower. The former agricultural commissioner of Texas and outspoken populist has developed a commercial radio program (with advertisers like Ben & Jerry's and Working Assets) modeled on the format Paul Harvey perfected. Hightower ridicules the North American Free Trade Agreement ("going from Tweedledumb to Tweedle-dumber"), celebrates citizen activism ("after all, an agitator's the center-post in the washing machine that gets the dirt out") and bemoans "trichotillomania," or the uncontrollable desire to tear your hair out at corporate greed. Enthusiasts should encourage the local station to carry *Hightower Radio* (212-245-0510).

Quote of the week

In *Electronic Media* magazine, retired talk show host Merv Griffin explains why he doesn't want to host one today: "Andy Warhol once said on my show that everybody would be famous for 15 minutes, but he didn't say they would have to cry."

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echoes that of the General Accounting Office—the investigative arm of Congress—which estimated that, even including universal coverage, a Canadian system could immediately save the U.S. \$3 billion in annual costs.

—John B. Judis

APPLYING PRESSURE

Health care coalition plans actions nationwide

Supporters of a Canadian-style health care system are planning a demonstration outside the White House this month to pressure the Clinton administration for a single-payer program. The February 24 rally in Washington is one of

dozens of actions around the country being organized by the United Health Care Action Network (UHCAN), a nationwide coalition of health care advocates.

UHCAN delegates from 13 states met in Cleveland in late January to plan activities for the next three months. Anticipating that the Clinton administration will not have a health reform proposal to present to Congress before May, UHCAN leaders decided to concentrate on education and lobbying in support of the Conyers-McDermott-Wellstone single-payer bill, now before the House and Senate.

After the Washington demonstration—organized by the White Lung Association, the Gray Panthers and Physicians for a National Health Plan—UHCAN plans a series of local "day of reckoning" meetings during the congressional recess of March 19-22. Lawmakers will be confronted by constituents in their own districts and asked to support a single-payer plan.

In addition, California-based Neighbor-to-Neighbor, a UHCAN affiliate, is conducting a study of how insurance industry PAC money affects lawmakers' stands on health care reform. And, finally, after Clinton's plan is presented to Congress, UHCAN plans to organize a phone-in campaign to Capitol Hill in support of the Conyers-McDermott-Wellstone bill.

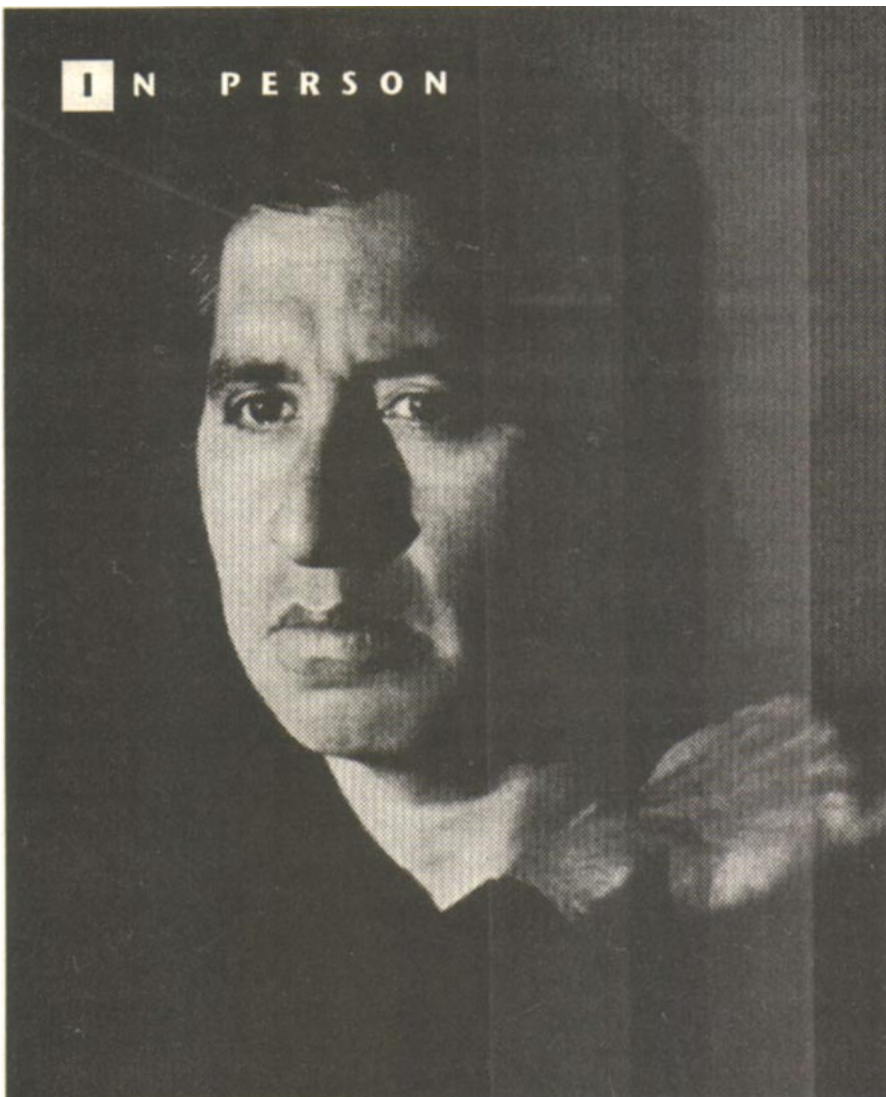
Some lawmakers are already starting to feel the pressure. In Chicago last month, some 400 angry constituents—more than double the expected number—showed up for a scheduled meeting with Democratic Rep. William Lipinski. Due to redistricting, Lipinski was pitted against longtime single-payer advocate Rep. Marty Russo in the 1992 primary. To offset Russo's strong record on the issue, Lipinski had claimed to be a leading congressional proponent of a Canadian-style system. After defeating Russo, however, Lipinski quickly waffled, joining Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN) as co-sponsor of a managed competition bill.

Managed competition "would be a disaster for millions of middle-class Americans," noted Joe Ramski, chair of the Chicago Senior Senate and the St. Bruno Parish Senior Club. This sentiment was echoed by dozens of speakers during the two-hour meeting, organized by the Illinois State Council of Senior Citizens with the help of Illinois Public Action. But Lipinski was not there to hear it. He had bowed out of the event at the last minute, citing an "emergency" meeting in Washington. Nonetheless, his aides got the message. They promised their boss would drop his support of the Cooper bill.

For information on these activities, call UHCAN in Cleveland at (216) 566-8100, or Georgians for a Commonsense Health Care in Atlanta at (404) 292-1219.

—James Weinstein

I N P E R S O N



Brian Thuston

ALONE BUT NOT ALOOF

Richard Rodriguez' assimilation

Service in San Francisco, believes bilingual education is wrong simply because it encourages minorities, primarily Hispanics, to remain loyal to their native tongue. What they need, he argues, is an entrance to the melting pot, not an attachment to the past. English is the only door.

I am tempted to compare him to James Baldwin. The two have a lot in common: their homosexuality, a deeply felt voyage from the periphery of culture to center stage, a strong religiosity and a sense of sacredness. Their political stands, however, are remarkably different. Born in a white neighborhood in Sacramento in 1947, Rodriguez published at age 35 his first book, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. Already a minor classic, it is an explosive autobiography detailing his humble beginnings and how he was raised with expectations that led to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley and a dissertation on John Milton researched at the British Museum.

As a child, Rodriguez was sent to Catholic school where rigid Irish nuns over-

Richard Rodriguez, arguably the most visible and controversial Chicano intellectual, has become an ideological lightning rod. This highly stylized essayist, a regular on public television and an editor of *Pacific News*

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Read the fine print

The Health Insurance Association of America is running an ad that claims what Americans really want, deep down inside, is for the insurance industry to go on running the health care business. The ad cites an industry-sponsored poll that found 92 percent of Americans agree with the statement, "Health insurance companies should play a key role in controlling health care cost." Yeah, but who could disagree? Of course the industry *should* contain costs. So should the doctors. So should the hospitals. The trouble is that they *don't*.

Lady luck?

Women beware: you're being taken for a ride. In an upcoming book, consumer guru Ralph Nader demonstrates how you are being ripped off solely on the basis of your gender—and in ways you may not suspect. If you purchased a new car in Chicago recently, you most likely paid at least \$140 more than a white man purchasing the same car; if you are a black female, you might have paid up to triple the markup paid by a white man. And if you live in New York City, chances are that your local dry cleaner is charging you at least 50 cents more than a man to launder a white cotton shirt. *Why Women Pay More* not only gives you the jaw-clenching facts, but also offers practical tips on how to avoid such scenarios. To order,