

LETTERS

Letters to the editor should be addressed to INQUIRY Magazine, 747 Front St., San Francisco, California 94111. The editors reserve the right to edit letters for length when necessary.

Moving targets and sitting ducks

WHY IN THE WORLD SHOULD the mushy-headed "planners" in the Pentagon believe that the USSR would engage in target practice on a moving—and sometimes concealed—target in the desert wastes of Utah and Nevada, when the great cities of the United States lie open and available to their atomic warheads?

The atomic destruction of New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Denver, and a few other such cities would reduce to nil the ability of this nation to make war. Likewise, the destruction of ten of their cities would render the Soviets *hors de combat*.

To anyone living in a city whose services have been disturbed by a garbage strike, an electrical failure, a flood, or a water or sewer failure, the thought of engaging in an atomic war with any nation is childish. Destruction of such cities would unleash a swarm of human refugees onto the surrounding regions to duplicate the work of a locust infestation. No life could survive.

Certainly the warmongers and militarists who plan such destruction for others had better look to their own safety. For whatever caves or underground tunnels or castles they dig for themselves to survive the atomic holocaust, the remaining mutants, or whatever we shall be, will find the spades and shovels to dig them out for a future War Crimes Trial Internationale.

It costs less to talk peace, and it makes much more sense.

HARRY E. CHRISMAN
Denver, Colo.

The editors agree. See Anne Nelson's article on civil defense on page 8.

Abuse of power

IN REVEALING THE ILLOGIC of Women Against Pornography [May 5, 1980], John Gordon has revealed feminism to have suffered the

self-defeating fate of so many movements and organizations: from champions of underdogs its leaders have risen to a power or influence they proceed to abuse (ignoring earlier assertions of democratic idealism) either for profit or for the satisfaction of psychological idiosyncrasies.

DAVID C. MORROW
Arlington, Tex.

Sticks and stones

IREALLY ENJOYED JOHN Gordon's article on Women Against Pornography. These women seem to base their censorship of pornography on



mysticism—the belief that the real and the symbolic are, in some way, identical. A picture of a woman being abused is *not* a woman being abused. It is only a piece of paper with ink on it. While we should defend a woman who is (involuntarily) abused, to punish people for putting ink on paper is just plain silly.

RICHARD D. FUERLE
Monroeville, Pa.

Sensible controls

IAM COMPELLED TO DISAGREE with both the conclusions and factual basis of Thomas W. Hazlett's article "The New York Disease Heads West" [May 26, 1980] about rent control in New York. While I cannot comment on Hazlett's analysis of the situation in California, I do have some knowledge of rent control in New York. To understand and evaluate thirty-seven years of continuous and complex rent regulations, set against an atypical urban economy, requires more than the apparently cursory analysis given by Hazlett.

Just last month, the New York State Temporary Commission on Rental Housing, which was composed of four landlord representatives, four tenant representatives, and three neutrals, recommended unanimously the continuation of rent controls. Furthermore, the investigation by the commission found

that the rents in areas where housing abandonment is prevalent were usually lower than the maximum permitted under the rent control laws, and that the shelter component of local public assistance payments . . . had not been increased since 1974. The commission determined that more than half, and often as much as 80 percent, of the rents in high abandonment areas were paid through public assistance grants. It recommended an increase in the housing component of public assistance grants, which had not been adjusted for inflation since 1974, as one solution to the abandonment problem.

Since abandonment forms the corner-

stone of Mr. Hazlett's hypothesis, at the very least we must question his conclusions.

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New York, N.Y.

Mr. Gallet is a coauthor of the book Rent Stabilization and Control Laws of New York and was a member of the New York State Temporary Commission on Rental Housing from its creation in 1977 until the presentation of its final report in 1980.

THOMAS HAZLETT replies: Let us go one further than Mr. Gallet and introduce the evidence that in cities entirely without control apartment buildings are being abandoned in record numbers. The article alludes to this very fact. The key is that in addition to further contributing to the abandonment of some units, rent controls preclude the construction of thousands of new ones. If only 2,000 apartments are built to replace the 30,000 lost in New York each year, raising the former figure will be just as important as lowering the latter—by the laws of arithmetic. As for "evidence" that a political board including even landlords now says "yea" to rent controls, such a claim indicates a Washington-like belief in the veracity of political press releases. That landlords will gladly posture as friends of rent control in an effort to gain political leverage certainly needs no more obvious—or awkward—a demonstration than what occurred during California's transparent and unsuccessful campaign for Proposition 10, the "fair rent initiative." □

CHARLES A. KIMBALL

Travels with Ramsey

THE PARTICIPATION OF Ramsey Clark and nine other Americans, including myself, in the recent conference on U.S. intervention in Iran provoked a storm of controversy throughout the nation. For weeks, editorial and op-ed pages across the country have both praised and attacked the "American dissidents" (to use President Carter's term). Clark and the others were called everything from "courageous patriots representing the best in the American tradition" to "moral-mental defectives."

Politicians, notably Republicans in the Senate, seized the opportunity to don the costume of "superpatriot" and take the offensive. Robert Dole (R-Kans.) called the trip "a flagrant breach of loyalty" and introduced a resolution calling for the prosecution of the "Tehran Ten." Not to be outdone, John Tower (R-Tex.) labeled the action "seditious." Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) offered these eloquent words about the former attorney general, "He did a dumb thing . . . he ought to be persecuted [*sic*]." Barry Goldwater, Strom Thurmond, Henry Kissinger, Gerald Ford, and others have joined in.

Apparently reacting to pressure from the right, President Carter, in Nebraska, declared that he was inclined "to go ahead and prosecute Ramsey Clark and the others" for traveling to Iran. Not completely oblivious to the niceties of the U.S. legal system, Carter graciously left some work for the Justice Department: "We will let the Attorney General make the ultimate decision on *how* to prosecute the people who violated the order—whether it should be a civil or criminal prosecution."

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The "order," of course, refers to the ban on travel to Iran (except for journalists) that the President announced last April. In Nebraska, he reiterated his view of the rule of law in the United States: "It is clear that when my order is issued, legally, it should be followed by those who are cautioned." These are unsettling words to those of us who are under the impression that the Constitution, not a presidential order, is the supreme law of the land.

Incidentally, the Supreme Court has consistently ruled that the right to travel is part of the "liberty" protected by the Fifth Amendment. Most recently, in 1967, the Justice Department—at that time, ironically, headed by Ramsey Clark—charged some New Yorkers with a criminal offense for arranging a trip to Cuba. The Supreme Court ruled unani-

Department, including David Newsom, the undersecretary of state for political affairs; Harold Saunders, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs; and Henry Precht, head of the Iran working group.

Precht and Saunders made several calls, primarily to probe for information about the trip. The conversations centered on questions like, Who is going? What are the intentions of the group? Would the group consider going a week later? and, What would the group do if permission to go were not granted? The last question is particularly striking since the group was not interested in asking for permission to travel.

Although I did not have personal contact with the State Department, I have talked with each of the four people involved in those conversations. They all

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mously that Congress had not passed any statute imposing penalties on people who disregard travel bans, recalling that the legislative, not the executive branch of government is responsible for making laws.

Carter's extraordinary outburst came only two days after Secretary of State Edmund Muskie had articulated a radically different position. Appearing on NBC's "Meet the Press," Muskie indicated that the administration would not prosecute Clark, a man who had worked closely with the State Department in the early stages of the hostage crisis. According to the secretary of state, "The policy of prohibiting travel to Iran was established principally because we are concerned about the safety of Americans traveling in a country where there is anti-American hostility." Muskie went on to explain, "The purpose of the policy is not to punish people who violate it, but to prevent people from going."

THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST time the White House and the State Department had disagreed on the participation of U.S. citizens in the International Conference on U.S. Intervention in Iran. In the weeks prior to the conference, four of the people invited to participate had conversations with high-ranking officials in the State

Department was neutral if not somewhat affirmative about the trip. Precht and the other officials were cautious about the possibility that the Americans might be used in a "propaganda circus," but they also cited positive reasons for going.

The mood in the State Department was expressed by Newsom. In an interview with Robert Shaplen of the *New Yorker* Newsom said, "Bani-Sadr is planning to summon a conference of liberal world representatives in early June. . . . If the conference takes place and is attended by a number of Americans whom he indicated he wanted to invite . . . it might furnish another opening for a way out of the crisis."

Meanwhile, officials at the White House were adamantly opposed to the trip. For several weeks prior to the conference, State Department and White House officials debated the matter. On the day before our departure it became clear which point of view had prevailed.

Doug Dworkin, a State Department official, phoned Ramsey Clark on the morning of May 30. Dworkin informed Clark that "the trip is disapproved." He said the State Department and the Department of Justice were planning to release a statement later that afternoon. Dworkin then read a draft of the statement over the phone: "I want anyone