



## To intervene or not to intervene

WE ARE TROUBLED BY three aspects of the editorial by Roy Childs and Milton Mueller, "Afghanistan—The War Threat" (March, 1980).

1.) We do not understand why *LR* connects its call for a non-interventionist foreign policy with its opposition to the draft, but never with the Libertarian Party's opposition to taxation. It is the power to tax, even *more* than the power to draft, which enables the government to conduct foreign interventions and wars, and to plunge the Earth into nuclear holocaust over the "vital interests" of a few individuals. Moreover, by missing the tax-connection, we think *LR* is missing a big opportunity to teach many non-libertarians who already oppose war, why it's not "selfish" to oppose taxation.

2.) We disagree with *LR* that "... the major wars of this century have not resulted from any conscious decision to go to war, but are the inevitable consequences of a series of mistakes, misinterpretations, and blunders." We think the evidence (including *LR*'s own July-

August 1979 issue) contradicts *LR*'s present assertion. The U.S. government's policy of fighting for middle east oil is a clear and deliberate *policy*, not a blunder or mistake. The government knows exactly what it is doing.

There is another reason to challenge the call to "remember above all" that wars begin by blunder and mistake. That claim obscures a powerful argument in favor of libertarianism, namely: Governments which make war do *not* do it by accident or mistake. They do it intentionally *even though* war violates individual human rights. If governments have power, then human rights get violated. If non-violation of human rights is desired, then we must "roll back the state" everywhere.

3.) Ultimately, the issue is not whether the U.S. has an interventionist or non-interventionist foreign policy, but whether the government has any *right* to do anything to anyone anywhere, abroad or at home. We urge *LR* always to put foreign policy in its larger context, in order to be comprehensible to non-libertarians.

Even when we are discussing the existing American government, which has the

power (although not the right) to have a foreign policy, we keep balking inwardly at *LR*'s implication (by omission) that only two choices exist: either (a) continuing to intervene on the side of various foreign tyrants who are serving certain economic interests in this country, or (b) not intervening at all.

We ask, why is the alternative of intervening on the side of liberty treated by libertarians as if it did not exist? Strict non-interventionism effectively says, "To hell with the rights of the Afghanis," which seems to disqualify the libertarian movement as a movement for human rights.

Moreover, strict non-interventionism is an inadequate concept to resolve a serious, unlibertarian conflict of rights among *American* citizens. Those who believe "Better Dead Than Red" have (with the nuclear arms race) succeeded in imposing the high risk of nuclear holocaust on the pacifists who do not consent; and those who think "Better Red Than Dead" would (if they could win unilateral disarmament) impose the high risk of enslavement on those who believe in defending their freedom. This pro-

found violation of rights *inside* Fortress America must exist as long as a nuclear bully exists anywhere on Earth.

The fact that even *we* can't have our rights until *every-one* has liberty, makes strict non-interventionism into a policy which needs further exploration.

EGAN O'CONNOR  
JOHN W. GOFMAN  
San Francisco, CA

### Childs replies:

THERE IS ONE GOOD point made in the Gofman-O'Connor letter, and one confused point. Let me acknowledge the former and clear up the latter.

I agree with Gofman and O'Connor that the libertarian call for a non-interventionist foreign policy should be connected with the libertarian opposition to taxation. In our special issue on "Energy and American Foreign Policy," as well as in articles and editorials from time to time, we have noted the dependence of our interventionist foreign policy on high taxes. Perhaps we have taken it too much for granted that our readers already understood the libertarian position that involuntary taxation (perhaps a redundancy) is theft.

If there is a conscious decision to go to war in the Middle East in order to secure American (or Western) access to oil, then *that* war will be the result of a conscious decision, a decision formulated in part because of confusions, mistakes and blunders in the area of energy policy. But I think a war is more likely to come as a result of Russian and American misinterpretations of events and motives, and to be ignited by some relatively minor incident. In which case, conscious decisions and blunders will work together to launch us on the road to war. But *most* wars—World War I in particular and perhaps World War II as

well—*have* resulted from "a series of mistakes, misinterpretations and blunders." On the other hand, does it really matter? The result is the same. My point was to underscore that "mistakes, misinterpretations and blunders" *can* in fact launch a war, which is why we should carefully scrutinize foreign policy moves.

I disagree completely with Gofman and O'Connor in their claim that "ultimately, the issue is not whether the U.S. has an interventionist or non-interventionist foreign policy, but whether the government has any right to do anything to anyone anywhere, abroad or at home." Mostly, I think this is a confusion, or a distinction without a difference. A non-interventionist foreign policy is a policy of *limits* placed on what the government is permitted to do in foreign policy. Its full implementation would mean that government would not have the right to enter into entangling alliances or mutual defense treaties, to provide economic or military aid, or to send troops into other countries.

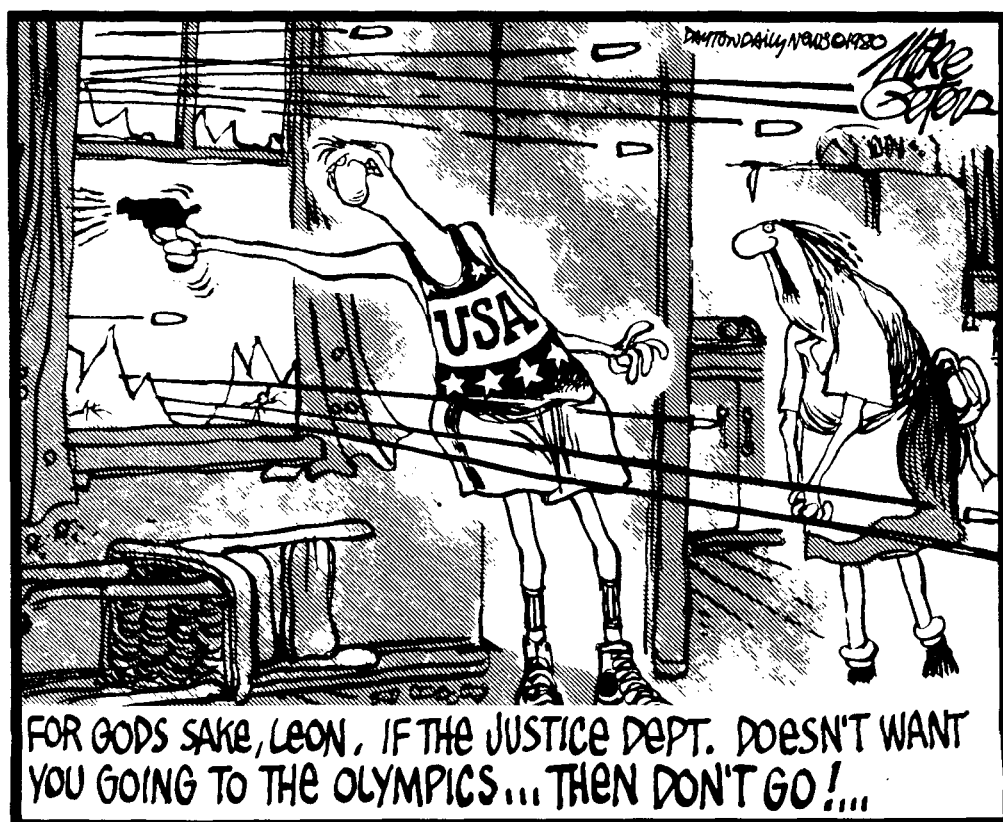
Most of all, it would mean that government would have no right to enter into any military conflict unless the U.S. were directly attacked. Claiming that the U.S. should follow a non-interventionist foreign policy is akin to saying that it should not interfere with freedom of speech, or that it shouldn't tax people without their individual consent. Advocating a non-interventionist foreign policy is advocating that government action in a certain sphere be carefully and rigorously *limited*.

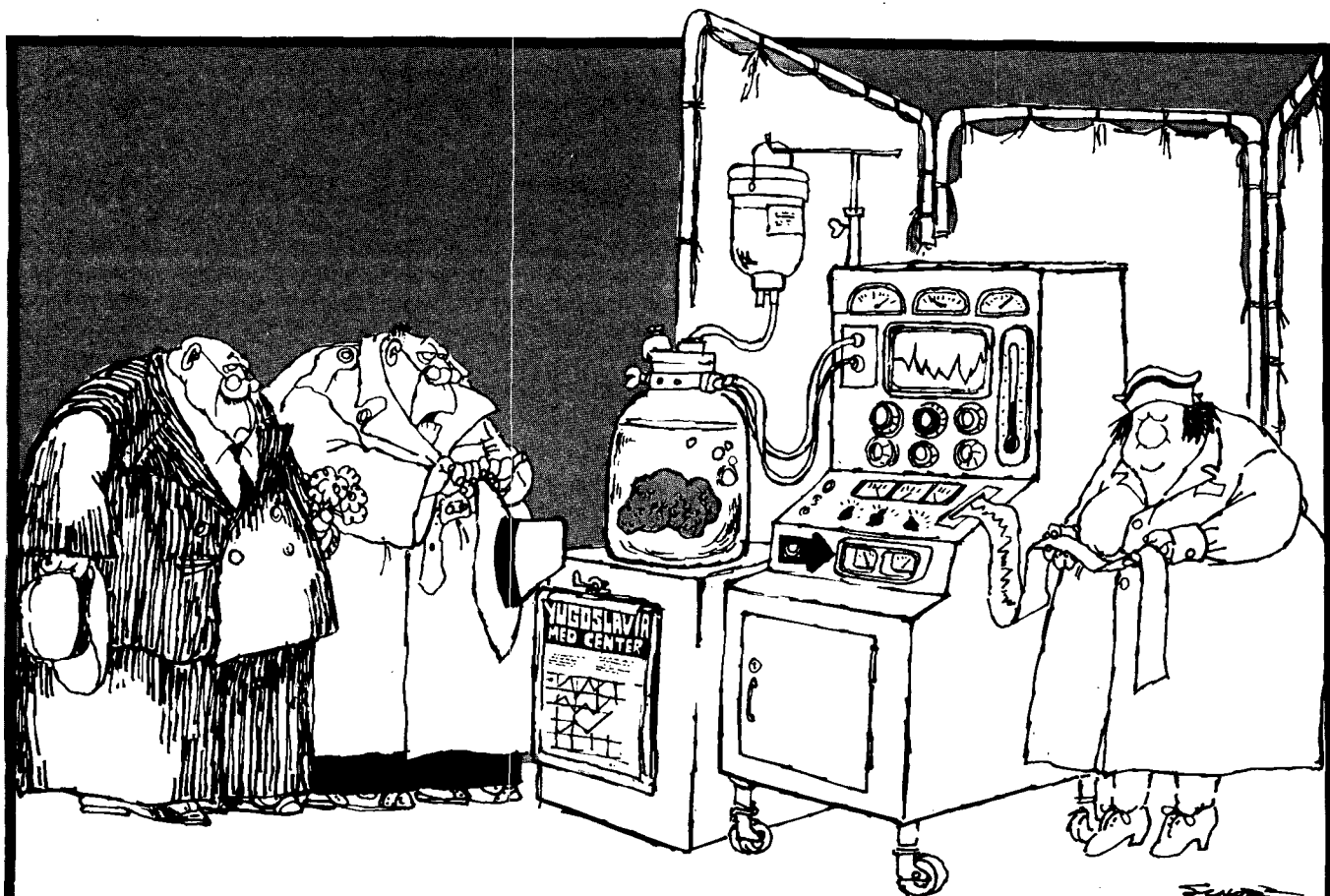
The issue of benevolent intervention is easier to dispose of: there is no such thing. One of the reasons most libertarians are non-interventionists is that interventionism cannot realistically be carried out without coercion, both of Americans at home and of citizens of other countries abroad.

The Afghanistan situation is even easier to dispose of. Personally, I wish the Afghans well in their struggle against the oppression, domination and murder of the Soviet Union. But I don't have any illusions about

their being "freedom fighters," as the ever-wise Ronald Reagan has called them. They *are* fighting for freedom from Soviet domination, but there is more to freedom than that: China is not dominated by the Soviet Union, but it is hardly "free" on that account. If the Afghans succeed in pushing the Soviet butchers out of their country, what will they do then? The likelihood is that they will impose the same sort of system in Afghanistan as Khomeini and the Revolutionary Council have in Iran: an oppressive, reactionary state apparatus dedicated to anti-libertarian "Islamic law." If we intervened to help the Afghans throw off the yoke of Soviet imperialism, then we would *ipso facto* be partly responsible for the crimes committed after their success.

That is the paradox of intervention: whenever we intervene to "help" some other people in conflict, we strengthen and usually arm human beings who are anything but committed to protecting human rights. Our arming of the anti-Commun-





"...EXCUSE US, MARSHAL TITO ... BUT WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU'D GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO A SUCCESSOR ...."

ist Shah of Iran was a case in point. Paternalism is as harmful in foreign affairs as it is in domestic affairs. It always has consequences other than those intended.

Far from saying "to hell with the rights of the Afghans," we support the rights of the Afghans to be free of both Soviet domination and of the domination of religious fanatics. As individuals, I believe we have the right to aid them in whatever way we choose; as political animals (or anti-political animals), we should advocate that our state keep out of other people's conflicts. It isn't always possible for us to do much to protect someone else's rights. Instead of benevolent intervention, what we really need is an international revolutionary libertarian movement dedicated to overthrowing tyranny and achieving liberty everywhere.

But the U.S. government should do one thing and one

thing only: keep its hands off other countries, to prevent the widening of conflicts and wars, and to avoid confrontation and possibly a nuclear war. That is the real precondition of the triumph of liberty anywhere, at home or abroad.

## "The National Letters"

WELL, YOU DID IT. I PUT everything else aside and read the latest *Libertarian Review* [March] cover to cover, non-stop. When my usual punk rock station didn't come in due to an "atmospheric disturbance" we were having down here in the middle of Riggenschbach's article on aesthetics, I actually tuned in classical background music. It just seemed to fit so well.

SAMUEL EDWARD KONKIN III  
Long Beach, CA

RIGGENBACH'S ARTICLE on the current state of American letters [March] was fascinating, and might I say, long over-due. There is indeed too little appreciation of much of our fiction, both as an art-form and as a platform of social and philosophical thought.

There is a developing open forum for a blend of both our works, especially as judged by newly arising themes in SF and by the Prometheus Award Committee's interest in the genre. I sincerely hope that this state of affairs will continue, to both our benefits.

PETER D. PAUTZ  
Executive Secretary  
Science Fiction Writers  
of America, Inc.  
Hackettstown, NJ

I WAS EXTRAORDINARILY impressed by Jeff Riggenschbach's "The National Letters" in the March issue. Although I am not well read, I have dabbled in literature

here and there; Riggenschbach's theses strike me as true, and have rekindled old urges to read more literature.

And in general, *LR* is excellent. *LR* is the only magazine that I read regularly—actions speak louder than words.

JIM STEIN  
Woodside, CA

I ENJOYED JEFF RIGGENBACH's remarks on "The National Letters," though I have some minor carps. Fowles may be British, but he is still a giant. And Gardner is a schizophrenic. The Gardner who wrote *October Light* is not the same Gardner who wrote *Jason and Medea*. They are worlds apart.

FREDERIC REYNOLDS  
Fort Lauderdale, FL

## Riggenschbach replies:

I HAD THREE MAJOR purposes in writing "The National Letters." I wanted



to argue that the fundamental, defining characteristic of American literature is its broadly libertarian spirit. I wanted to decry the snobbish tradition of valuing only those American works which slavishly imitate European (and especially English) models. And I wanted to suggest that there is a clear connection among three current cultural trends which might seem at first glance to be unrelated: the widely noted trend toward libertarian sympathies among voters and taxpayers; the widely noted trend toward general popularity and even, in some quarters (mainly academic), a kind of literary proto-respectability, for science fiction; and the widely noted trend toward a kind of fossilized-while-yet-living cultural irrelevance for the literary establishment. In the course of winding my way toward realization of these purposes, I quite inescapably invested a good deal of space in the business of what may frankly be called "boosting" American literature. In the process I seem to have given a few readers, of whom Mr. Reynolds may be taken as fairly representative, the impression that I see no value in English and other European literature. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I regard English literature (and Irish literature and Russian literature and German literature and French literature, for that matter, but let us stick with one case in point) as one of the great, enduring monuments of human civilization. I am not prepared to argue that American literature is in any meaningful sense *better* than this—only that it is *different*, and in its own way also an enduring monument.

Similarly, I never meant to give the impression that I regard all the members of our current literary establishment as talentless—only that I regard the good books they write (and they do,

undeniably, write them from time to time) as good Colonial works rather than as good American works.

## Urban renewal and the rights of the poor

WHEN I SAW DOUG BANDOW's article on the housing crisis, I quickly skimmed over it, hoping to see some mention of the Community Redevelopment Agency's activities in Los Angeles or elsewhere. I was disappointed when he stated that urban renewal has been discontinued. This is absolutely untrue. Last year, for example, an apartment building in the Pico Union area of Los Angeles was taken by eminent domain so that "Pep Boys" could build a headquarters there. There are redevelopment projects going on all over Los Angeles, and the C.R.A. of the City of Los Angeles is empowered to take land, clear it, and sell it to private developers.

The people being dis-

placed continue to be the poor and politically powerless. The "anti-regulation," "anti-government" builders work closely with the City Council and the C.R.A. to violate the property rights of the poor.

But I guess I shouldn't feel too worried because, my Councilman, Joel Wachs, said, "There is no way I would support massive, wholesale taking of homes here. You could count on two hands the most I would approve, and those only if the overwhelming majority of the people recognize it's for the public good."

ROBERT COLBURN  
North Hollywood, CA

## Bandow replies:

I APPRECIATE MR. COLBURN's writing to bring attention to the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency. Space limitations prevented me from discussing it as I would have liked. The particular Federal urban renewal program to which I referred has been discontinued; others, unfortunately, remain, and are no

less destructive or immoral.

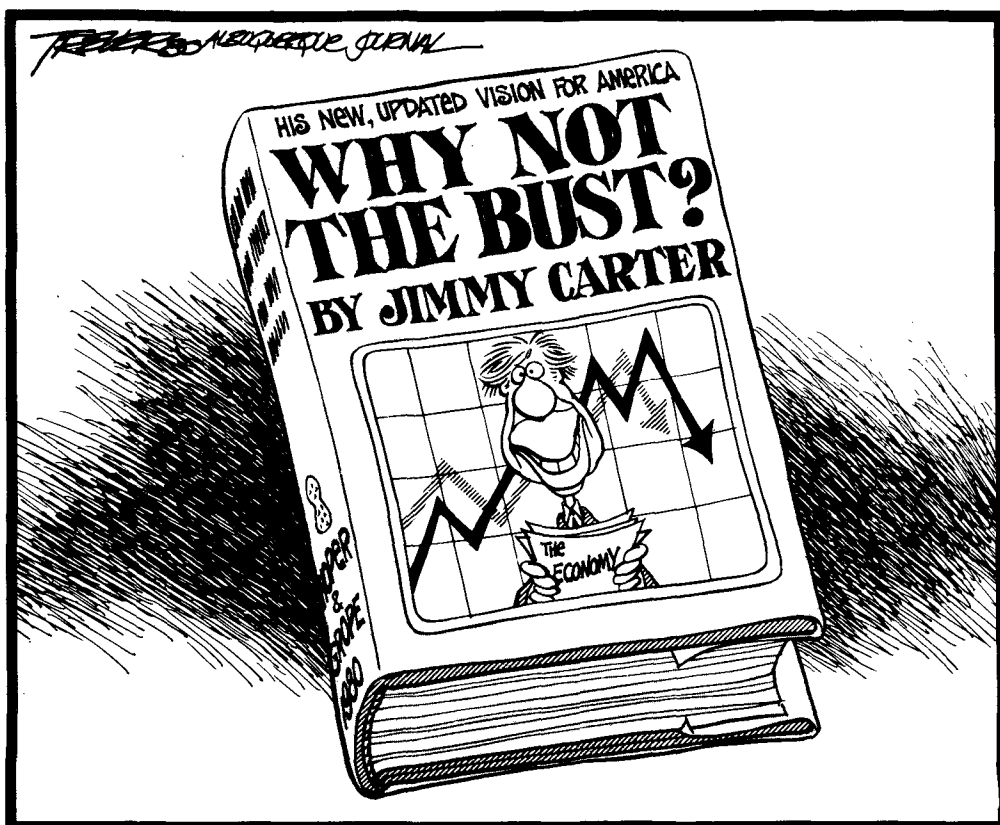
## Our apologies

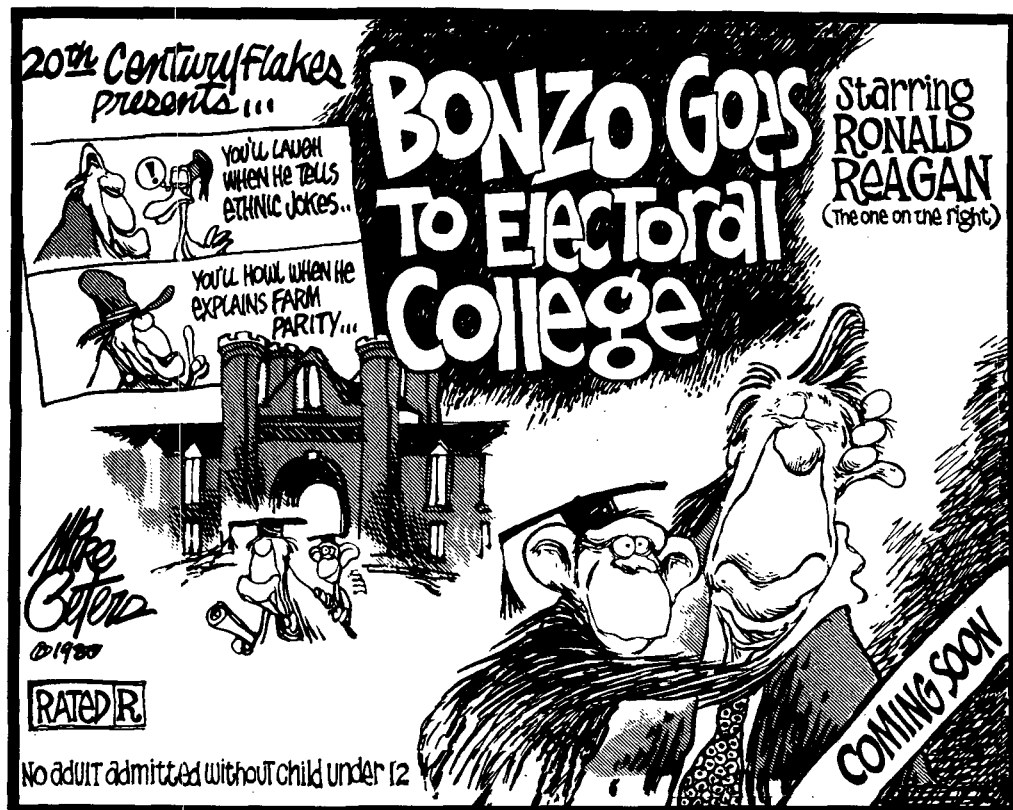
IN THE INTEREST OF accuracy, we wish to point out the error in David Brudnoy's review of "The Amityville Horror" as it appeared in the April 1980 issue of *The Libertarian Review* when he wrote: "Nor did 'The Amityville Horror' succeed as a money-making movie."

We do not know where or how Mr. Brudnoy reached this conclusion, but for the record it can be stated that this film has grossed over \$60 million worldwide and its phenomenal boxoffice success has resulted in its re-release this spring.

PETE LATSIS  
Field Publicity  
Filmways Pictures, Inc.  
Beverly Hills, CA

*LR welcomes letters from readers. Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, and addressed to: Letters to the Editors, The Libertarian Review, 1620 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, California 94111.* □





## The battle for Reagan's mind

BRUCE BARTLETT

IN MARCH IT BECAME clear that Ronald Reagan would almost certainly be the presidential candidate of the Republican Party this fall. As this reality became apparent it also became apparent that a battle was taking place within the Reagan campaign between what could be called the "libertarian" and "conservative" factions. The outcome of this struggle could tell us a great deal about what Ronald Reagan will be like as president of the United States—something which appears quite likely given the present course of political, diplomatic and economic events.

On the "libertarian" side of Reagan's advisors are Congressman Jack Kemp of New York; Jude Wanniski, a former editorial writer for the *Wall Street Journal*; and Professor Arthur Laffer of the University of Southern California. These men are

urging Reagan to take a strong position in favor of across-the-board tax rate reduction and a return to the gold standard to stop inflation. They are generally referred to as "wild men" within the Reagan camp, although Reagan *has* officially endorsed the Kemp-Roth tax bill to cut individual income tax rates by a third.

On the "conservative" side are basically the old line Republican economic advisors: Arthur Burns, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board; Herb Stein, former chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors; George Shultz, former Treasury Secretary; and others. They oppose the "radical" views of the Kemp-Wanniski-Laffer group and are urging Reagan to adopt a more conventionally conservative economic program: a balanced federal budget, a tight money policy, and floating exchange rates. In other words, they want Reagan to do exactly what President Carter is doing—pursuing a program which has made the Republican Party what it is today, a minority party.

The "libertarian" camp,

which threw in with Reagan early while the more conventional Republicans were advising Baker, Bush and Connolly, definitely feels threatened by the "conservatives." And in an effort to maintain their position the "libertarians" have taken to the media—Wanniski in particular. For months, Wanniski has been filling his newspaper columns with stories about the ongoing battle for Reagan's mind. Unfortunately, in early April he went too far in a long personal interview in the *Village Voice* (April 7, 1980). In this interview, Wanniski seemed to take credit for inventing the Laffer Curve, inventing the Kemp-Roth Bill, and taking Jack Kemp, an obscure Buffalo congressman, and making him a major national spokesman for tax reduction. He also made some rather amazing claims for what an across-the-board tax reduction would accomplish, saying it would reduce prostitution, pornography, drug use, and even abortion.

The "conservatives," of course, seized upon the Wanniski interview (later