

Two proposals may have some chance of passage. One is repeal of the so-called "Delaney Clause," which mandates the banning of any substance found to cause cancer in any animals. The other is Steve Symms' Medical Freedom of Choice Bill (H.R. 54) which would delete the "effectiveness" provisions of the 1962 Amendments to the FDA Act, requiring only that new drugs and substances be shown to be safe and leaving the decision about effectiveness up to doctors and consumers. This bill has over 100 House co-sponsors and could probably use some support in the form of letters from home.

## Opposition to Compulsory Service

Preliminary organization is underway in Washington for a coalition to oppose

compulsory national service, whether for military or social service purposes. Those expressing interest include libertarians, some conservatives, some Ripon-type Republicans and representatives of conscientious objector groups. For more information, you may write to Libertarian Advocate (P.O. Box 3117, Falls Church, VA 22043). A devastating critique of the advocates of a new draft is to be found in the June, 1977 issue of *The Reporter*, published by the National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (550 Washington, Bldg., 15th St. & New York Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20005).

## Gold Clause Amendment Likely

Sen. Jesse Helms, who came close to

getting legislation passed last year which would have allowed Americans to write commercial and personal contracts specifying payment in gold, will try again this year. His staff is now seeking a bill on which to tack the proposal as an amendment from the Senate floor (Senate amendments are not required to be germane to the legislation under consideration). The prognosis, once a vehicle is selected, appears hopeful.

Success of this amendment may depend on the perception of most Senators that this is a minor reform which only follows logically from the recent legalization of gold ownership rather than a revolutionary undermining of the paper money system. You might keep that in mind when writing to Senators and Representatives in support of this legislation.

Alan Bock

# spotlight

## Changing the Media

When historians look back at the history of network television news, they may someday note the remarkable outpouring of critical analysis of its performance that appeared in the 1970s. Numerous university studies, independent research projects, and watchdog groups have arisen in this decade to monitor news programs for distortion and bias.

The woman who pioneered the field is Edith Efron, a New Yorker whose articles and books raised consciousness about the techniques used to load programming with a mainstream liberal viewpoint. Since the publication of *The News Twisters* in 1971—the first study to document the short shrift given to free enterprise and non-liberal points of view in general—Efron has become an increasingly visible spokeswoman for freedom in the pages of major intellectual and popular journals.

From the beginning of her career, Efron showed evidence of a keen intellect and a command of communications. She graduated from Barnard College in 1942, finding work with some small town newspapers. On the basis of her writing skill, she was one of a handful of women chosen to enter the Columbia Journalism School, the most highly regarded journalism school in the country.

After gaining her Master's degree there in 1944, Efron became the first woman writer for the New York Times Sunday Magazine. She moved on to work

for eight years for *Time* and *Life* magazines in Central America, then as a special editor for *Look* magazine, and finally as an interviewer for Mike Wallace at ABC.

It was as a result of the Wallace job that Efron first became aware of an intellectually respectable alternative to the liberal beliefs with which she had been



Edith Efron

bred. "I began as an absolutely standard New York liberal product of Columbia University," she says. Her stint in Central America began to corrode her "liberal truths," as she understood for the first time that production had to precede consumption for societies to prosper. But not until 1958, when she interviewed Ayn Rand for Mike Wallace,

did a consistent political alternative become clear.

Efron was intrigued by what she heard. "Ayn Rand introduced me to Alan Greenspan," she recalls. "And in one evening, Alan changed my politics. I then read Hazlitt and von Mises. For the first time, I understood economics—it did confirm my experience." For the next three or four years, Efron became close to the Ayn Rand circle, drifting apart afterwards because of what she perceived to be unhealthy personal relations among members of the group.

"I was very torn because I valued Ayn Rand for many things," Efron says of the period. "A year before Ayn Rand's break with [Nathaniel] Branden, she came to understand how profoundly I did not like her. She is a tragic figure, who had had crucial things to tell people, things the world had to know." Rand's confusions in the realm of morality and psychology led Efron to conclude, as have many other past associates, that Rand has been destructive to her own cause.

Efron nonetheless remained convinced of the merits of capitalism and minimal government. When she took a staff position with *TV Guide*, the most widely read weekly magazine in the country, she began writing articles on such subjects as FCC regulation of the airwaves.

Her major impact on the industry came as a result of research starting in 1968. Efron had noted with unease the use of virtually propagandistic techniques in network coverage of controversial subjects. Concentrating on news treatments by television of the 1968 presidential election issues, she found overwhelming evidence that the air time given to spokesmen for the "liberal" side outweighed those for the opposition by a staggering amount.

Three years of research and documentation preceded release of *The News Twisters* in 1971. The book quickly went into several printings, eventually selling 30,000 copies in hardback. It created an uproar in the broadcast industry; NBC assigned individuals to tape her numerous lectures around the country, hoping to reveal her as a clear and present threat to the First Amendment. CBS assembled a biting, but inaccurate, rebuttal, which Efron used as a springboard for her subsequent book, *How CBS Tried To Kill a Book*.

Efron's struggle against the counterattacks of the networks was a trying one. None of her sympathizers in the industry stepped forward publicly to defend her. "For a couple of years, I was defending my work and my professional existence," she remembers. Ultimately, after monitoring her public statements, network officials realized that Efron did not advocate coercively controlling the media. Academic institutions—and even the networks themselves—began content analyses and bias studies of programming on their own.

In response to the deluge of analyses triggered by *The News Twisters*, and the prevailing uncertainty of liberals today on positions they once held without question, Efron notes that network news has become considerably more balanced. "There has come to be a more conscious awareness of the problems of journalism," she says—the outstanding exception being treatment of consumer and environmental issues.

Of greatest concern to Efron now are increasing curbs on business production, and the assault on science and technology. "It has been doing incredible damage," Efron says. She has just finished assisting former Secretary of the Treasury, William Simon, in a book on politics and the economy (to be released in 1978 by Readers Digest/Crowell Press). Besides regularly contributing to the News Watch column of *TV Guide*, she has recently written for publications ranging from *Commentary* and *Reason* to *Barron's*.

In the future, Efron intends to keep writing—and then "sleeping off"—books on such subjects as governmental

stifling of jobs and productivity, the assault on reason, and the degeneration of culture. She hopes in the meantime to see libertarians become less "culturally rudderless," by gaining an appreciation for values of civilization beyond the merely political ones. Because libertarians often lack a broad world outlook, Efron is concerned that they are falling by default into the hands of the New Left. "No responsible person will take them seriously," she says, if libertarians continue to associate with persons such as Timothy Leary.

Efron also deplors the failure of conservatives to provide an influential intellectual defense of capitalism, despite their concern with the quality of civilization as a whole. "Many of the conservatives are on the level of Anita Bryant, which damages their capacity to provide intellectual leadership," she says. "Thus the two sources of capitalist thinking are desperately weak." If communicating libertarian values is to succeed, it will owe much to the efforts of Efron and others who argue articulately and effectively for the values of a free society. □

# books

## Triton

by Samuel R. Delany  
New York: Bantam Books. 1976. 369 pp.  
\$1.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Jeff Rigenbach

"They're always telling on the news about all those hundreds of political parties you have on each satellite, out where you guys are from."

"There're not hundreds," Sam said, sipping his broth. "Only about thirty to thirty-seven, depending on which satellite you're on."

"And when you have an election, none of them ever wins?"

Bron watched Sam decide to laugh. "No. They all win. You're governed for the term by the governor of whichever party you vote for. They all serve office simultaneously. And you get the various benefits of the platform your party has been running on. It makes for competition between the parties, which, in our sort of system, is both individualizing and stabilizing."

This exchange is from Samuel R. Delany's *Triton*, and if it isn't sufficient

to indicate the explicitly libertarian thrust of the novel, consider this:

Charo turned her chin on her fist: "Well, we were brought up to think of taxes as simply a matter of extortion by the biggest crooks who happen to live nearest to you. Even if they turn around and say, all right, we'll spend the money on things you can use, like an army or roads, that just turns it into glorified protection money, as far as we're concerned."

And this:

At the corner, he turned toward the unlicensed sector.

At founding, each Outer Satellite city had set aside a city sector where no law officially held—since, as the Mars sociologist who first advocated it had pointed out, most cities develop, of necessity, such neighborhoods anyway. These sectors fulfilled a complex range of functions in the cities' psychological, political, and economic ecology. Problems a few conservative, Earth-bound thinkers feared must come, didn't: the interface between official law and official lawlessness produced some remarkably stable unofficial laws throughout the no-law sector. Minor criminals were not likely to retreat there: enforcement agents could enter the u-1 sector as could anyone else; and

in the u-1 there were no legal curbs on apprehension methods, use of weapons, or technological battery. Those major criminals whose crimes—through the contractual freedom of the place—existed mainly on paper, found it convenient, while there, to keep life on the streets fairly safe and minor crimes at a minimum.

Actually, finding libertarian ideas in Delany's fiction should come as little surprise. His 1975 novel, *Dhalgren*, though principally concerned with the transformative nature of human consciousness—the symbols and myths we live by—depicts a kind of functioning anarchistic society and explores with considerable subtlety the social glue that holds it together. But it is unlikely that many libertarians have read *Dhalgren*: Delany is, after all, associated in the popular mind with the so-called New Wave in science fiction; and libertarians, most of them, have yet to discover that New Wave writing is, in its essence, more individualistic and more sympathetic to the ideal of freedom than is traditional science fiction.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Delany's approach to fictive social philosophy is unusual and therefore easy to overlook. He doesn't stick to the obvious formula of Human Beings against the State and simply flesh it out