

mon areas, including the right to exclude criminals.

Whyte, however, has a rather negative opinion of property rights, as evidenced by his comments on developer-owned private plazas. In his view, these areas should be true public spaces open to all, including "undesirables" such as winos. He has a point in chiding overzealous private-plaza security guards, but it is a small price to pay when compared to the crime-ridden character of genuine public spaces such as New York's Central Park. What shopping mall, private street, or plaza could compete with such a poor record of crime control? Again, Whyte offers little but his poor-design refrain. Not surprisingly, he seems at a loss to explain the high crime rates of cities he regards as the most visually pleasing, such as New York City (a city, incidentally, not well known for its respect of property rights).

Despite these criticisms, there is much

to learn from *City*. The discussion of the positive (and largely unsung) role of street entertainers and peddlers is fascinating. There are valuable chapters on the virtues of gentrification and the increasingly prevalent, and largely private, sale of sun easements. Although Whyte's overall theme is hostile to the prerogatives of private ownership, the examples he cites often illustrate innovative property-rights solutions. In New York City, for example, some store merchants are beginning to compromise with peddlers by charging a rental fee for use of their sidewalk space. Unlike most scholarly tomes, *City* is written in an engaging, easy-to-read, and provocative style. In this age of dull-as-dishwater academic literature, these are no small virtues.

David Beito, who teaches urban history at the University of Nevada, is currently editing a book, The Voluntary City.

Sales Tales and Satire

BY PAUL HORNAK

It Only Hurts When I Laugh, by Stan Freberg
New York: Times Books, 273 pages, \$19.95

A conversation between the reviewer's left-brain and right-brain personalities, inspired by the unlikely interior dialogue that wraps up Stan Freberg's otherwise unpretentious memoir. The more severe, left-brain persona is asking the questions.

Q: Isn't Freberg responsible for "Eight great tomatoes in that little bitty can"? I'm not sure I can stand 200 pages from a mentality like that.

A: Lighten up! It made millions for Contadina. Remember his TV spot for Chun King? "Nine out of ten doctors recommend," with all but one of the doctors Chinese? How's that for a slap at reverse discrimination, circa 1958?

Q: So he's a clever pitchman. Can't we get sales tales from *Advertising Age* and move on to something, well, intellectual?

A: *Take an Indian to lunch this week*
Show him we're a regular bunch



Stan Freberg: satire broad as the battleship *Missouri*, subtle as a banana pratfall.

this week.

That's Freberg, and it wears very well 30 years on. The man's no slouch. He was lampooning "Heartbreak Hotel" before

anybody thought Elvis was funny. His corporation's "great seal" is a picture of a seal wearing sunglasses, over the motto "Art for Money's Sake." And besides, he's for limited government.

Q: A salesman who thinks he's a satirist—what kind of schizoid is he? It says he charges \$50,000 up front and won't let the client change a word. With an adman like that, who needs product sabotage? Nope, I'm going to pan this book.

A: You sound like an ad executive from central casting. Sourpusses like you have been trying to torpedo the Freberg-style commercial since the '50s. He walks in bursting with ideas for some scripts about Clark Smathers, a salesman who can't convince grocers to put Kaiser aluminum foil on their shelves. One spot has Smathers crinkling foil to make shoes for his kid. It ends: "There are many uses for Kaiser foil." What happens? A Young & Rubicam meathead pins Freberg to the wall and threatens him. But in a few months that campaign puts Kaiser foil into 43,000 new outlets. Now that's the power of laughter.

Q: I'm more interested in this satire business. Are his targets politically correct?

A: He was going to slam the H-bomb on his radio show, but CBS made him cut it. In "Green Chri\$tma\$" he lays into overcommercialization:

Deck the hall with advertising

What's the use of compromising

Stuff like that. Capitol tried to suppress it.

Q: Of course he cried censorship?

A: Of course. But he's a happy-go-lucky guy. He picks himself up, dusts himself off, and starts all over again. Your basic capitalist.

Q: But we're talking left-leaning ideas here.

A: Right. He's your basic *American* capitalist, the kind that gives a quarter million to American Enterprise Institute and the same amount to Brookings, just to spread the wealth.

Q: This is the free marketplace of ideas, tax-deductible of course. Well, at least Freberg seems to home in on generalized idiocy: hypocrisy, greed. That's acceptable. It says he's the son of a Baptist minister. Is there much Carteresque preaching?

THEBOOKCASE

A: None. He once did a commercial for the Presbyterians that ran: "The blessings you lose may be your own." But he leaves it out of the book.

Q: Religious censorship. I suspected a satirist-adman would have problems being consistent.

A: He also was a great puppeteer. There are hilarious stories of him and Daws Butler writing *Time for Beany* in parked cars and condemned buildings. We're talking prehistoric TV, back when Cecil the Seasick Sea Serpent was an old sweat shirt sewn together by a script-writer's wife. The show wasn't just for kids; there was clever wordplay, adult situations....Albert Einstein was a fan. How's that for intellectual appeal?

Q: I'm still worried that a voice of the Goofy Gophers ranks himself with Robert Benchley, Alexander Woolcott, and Dorothy Parker. Ernie Kovacs called him "a multiple incarnation of Fred Allen, Don Quixote, and Donald Duck." So far, I've heard a lot about his Donald Duck side. But where's the beef?

A: Look, he may not be Jonathan Swift, but Stan Freberg is quintessential American satire, broad as the battleship

Missouri and subtle as a banana pratfall. Millions love him. After he boosted sales for Chun King, the owner, Jeno Paulucci, pulled him down La Cienega Boulevard in a rickshaw.

Q: The thought of a serious satirist riding a rickshaw down La Cienega makes me fear for the health of American culture. Because of Freberg, all commercials are now "funny" commercials. Because of him, the line between humor that criticizes and humor that sells has been hopelessly blurred. If it had been Freberg instead of Swift, we could have gone to our neighborhood supermarket and bought microwaveable Irish children.

A: In disposable containers. You have no sense of humor, but American culture has. We can laugh as we buy. We can be true-blue and also self-critical. And as long as we keep cultivating the ability to hold conflicting ideas simultaneously, there'll be a living for guys like Freberg.

Q: I guess I'll have to praise the book.

A: You sound like it gives you pain.

Q: Read the man's title.

Paul Hornak, a free-lance writer, frequently reviews books for REASON.

Bitter Fruit

BY RONALD BAILEY

The Poverty of Communism, by Nick Eberstadt
New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 317 pages, \$24.95

"We will bury you," promised Khrushchev during his visit to the United States in 1959. He had in mind not just the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal, but also the supposed productive power that central planning would unleash. Thirty years later, the Soviets have managed to more than hold their own in the arms race, but they have decisively lost the prosperity race. Their economy is barely half the size of the U.S. economy; GNP per capita is 45 percent that of the United States, and economic growth has stalled for most of this decade. Soviet life expectancy has dropped, and infant mortality rates remain at Third World levels.

Things were not supposed to turn out this way. For more than a century, communists the world over have promised that application of their "science" could eliminate social injustice, inequality, and poverty—all evils supposedly peculiar to exploitative capitalist societies. All that communists demand to achieve utopia is that people relinquish their liberty in exchange for economic security.

In this century, a third of the world's people have been forced to take this bargain. Communists have ruled in the Soviet Union for 70 years, in China and Eastern Europe for 40 years, and in Cuba, 30 years. Enough time has passed for

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