

BRICKBATS

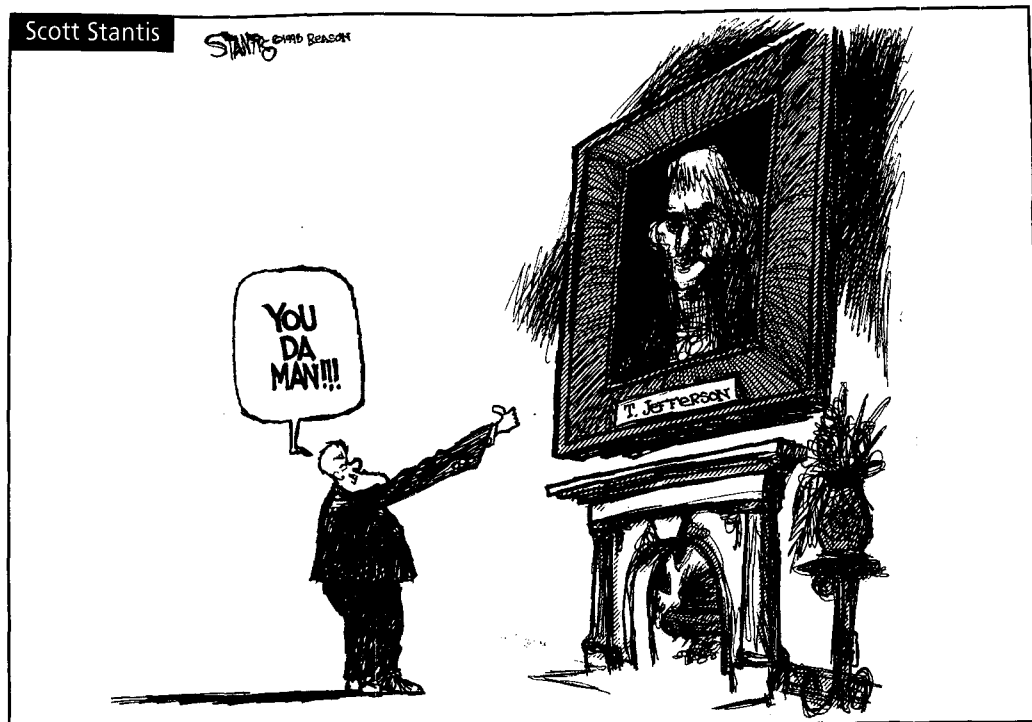
♦ **Charlene McCormack** has filed a lawsuit against the automotive plant that once employed her. The Tennessee woman is a Pentecostal Christian who thinks that God doesn't want her to wear pants. The problem is that the automotive plant says dresses are a safety hazard, since they can get caught in machinery. When McCormack refused to stop wearing them, she lost her job. She says her firing violates the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

♦ **Is the Drug Enforcement Administration** winning the war on drugs? The DEA's own books don't help its case. An independent audit found the agency can't "accurately and completely account" for the property it owns, the money it has seized from alleged drug traffickers, or the seized drugs it possesses. The hazards of this poor bookkeeping were highlighted in recent months by the arrests of two DEA workers accused of embezzling millions from the agency.

♦ **Hou-Lin Li and Luying Deng** were angry when they found their 8-year-old daughter had forged their signatures on a teacher's note and that she had lied to cover it up. They were also miffed when she admitted that she'd lied about losing a ring. So they slapped her once on the face and several times on the arms and legs. A policeman saw the crying girl, asked what had happened, and arrested the parents for domestic battery. Over the objection of child welfare advocates, Chicago authorities decided to prosecute the couple.

Scott Stantis

STANTIS CARICATURE



emissions.

He's right. The findings may well breathe fresh air into global warming debates in the Senate, which has yet to ratify the treaty.



Leak Proof

By Mariel Garza

Thanks to a new over-the-counter test kit, the war on drugs can now be waged in the privacy of one's home.

In October, the Food and Drug Administration cleared the way for U.S. sales of QuickScreen, the first test for illegal drugs available to consumers. Created by Phamatech, a company that develops a variety of clinical home test kits, QuickScreen costs about \$30 and comes in two models. One looks for evi-

dence of cocaine, marijuana, opiates, amphetamine, and phencyclidine (PCP) use. The other detects cocaine, marijuana, opiates, amphetamine, and methamphetamine. QuickScreen works similarly to home pregnancy tests: A test strip inserted in a urine sample can tell within 10 minutes whether traces of any drugs are present.

Parents or educators who suspect their children or students are under the influence are expected to make up the bulk of QuickScreen consumers, says a company spokeswoman. But results indicating drug use need to be sent to a designated lab for confirmation and analysis. Because some foods and legal medicines will cause positive drug test results, worried parents may not know right away whether their kids are snorting coke, taking the occasional puff of marijuana, or merely fond of poppy seed bagels. And the FDA warns that people can test positive for marijuana if they have been around heavy marijuana

smoke—even if, like our president, they never inhaled.

Limo Limits

By Michael W. Lynch

You might think that starting a limousine service would be a sure bet in Las Vegas, a city that boasts a 24-hour gambling strip, 120,000 hotel rooms, and millions of tourists a year.

But established interests and a pliant state legislature have stacked the deck against entrepreneurs looking to make money by driving people around town in style.

In 1997, Nevada toughened its limousine licensing law and created the Transportation Service Authority, which has the power to impound limos lacking a certificate of "public convenience and necessity."

The TSA regularly runs stings to ferret out gypsy operators. Penalties can include up to \$10,000 in impound fees, \$10,000 in civil fines, and \$2,000 in criminal fines.



Bill? (Gasp!) Monica? (Sigh!)

Pictured here is the latest work of fiction inspired by the Clinton presidency. *Monica's Story* is the comic-book version of the Starr report; unlike the prosecutorial original, the 32-page graphic version sees not impeachable offenses but true love.

According to the publisher, Alternative Comics, the narrative "takes the reader from Bill and Monica's first stolen glances to the turmoil, tumult and tears of their breakup." The artwork "depicts the rather explicit subject matter in a tasteful R-rated fashion and lends the characters an unexpected innocence." The result is "something dramatic and rather touching."

Monica's Story is thus the first work of Clinton fiction that likes him. *Primary Colors*, the best-known work, presents him as, at best, a disappointment. *Treason in the White House*, an early novel, hangs him on the Mall. *Premises of the Heart* is alleged mistress Dolly Kyle Browning's revenge. *Blood Trail* tries to connect him to Canada's tainted-blood scandal. *Wag the Dog* has become a metaphor for his foreign policy.

Clinton is inspiring foreign artists too. Indian painter Mohsin Shaikh has recently completed a set of canvases based on Clinton's sex life. Shaikh says he's "piqued that a pervert and a liar like Clinton should question the propriety of India conducting nuclear tests," and has answered with art. "My paintings are not aimed at titillation," he told an Indian paper, "but at presenting the truth from an artistic perspective."

—Charles Paul Freund

The typical sting costs an unlicensed limo owner about \$5,000, says Rich Lowre, president of the Independent Limousine Operators Association, a 45-member group that opposes the TSA.

Beyond fining clandestine limo services, the TSA has also made it tough for the outlaws to go straight. Getting a license isn't just a matter of purchasing insurance, hiring qualified drivers, and passing a safety inspection, as in neighboring California. Operators must also provide extensive financial information and prove to the TSA that they won't "adversely affect other carriers." And

those "other carriers"—er, competitors—have a right under the law to challenge each applicant.

Hence, when John West applied for a certificate in 1997, Las Vegas' largest carriers, Bell Trans and Presidential Limousine, claimed West would "create detrimental competition" and "disrupt economical and efficient service to the traveling public." After a year of paperwork, the three TSA commissioners dismissed West's application nine days before he was scheduled to defend it in a public hearing. One commissioner felt West's application had become "too compli-

cated."

As a result of such actions, West, Lowre, and another operator whose limo was impounded are suing the TSA in state court. Represented by the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Justice, they are claiming that the regulations violate their constitutional right to earn an honest living. Says Lowre: "I've never been one to go out and fight. But this is an injustice I can't handle." The lawsuit is expected to go to trial by spring.

Joe Blow

By Jacob Sullum

Tobacco's opponents can't resist beating a dead camel. In October the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the rate at which teenagers

became daily smokers rose by 50 percent between 1988 and 1996. Though the CDC did not mention Joe Camel in its report, it clearly had him in mind: 1988 was the first full year, and 1996 the last, of the ad campaign featuring the droll dromedary.

The press drew the intended inference, running stories with headlines such as "Joe Camel Advent Part of Teen Smoking Rise, U.S. Says" (*Los Angeles Times*), "Teen Smoking Linked to Joe Camel" (*Bergen County Record*), "Ads May Have ▶

