

◆ **The Selective Service system never seems to give up in its quest to punish men who don't want to kill others. Last year, it tried to convince the state of California not to award high school diplomas to young men who hadn't registered for the draft. That move failed. Now it wants the state to deny them their driver's licenses.**

◆ **In New York City, students who arrive late for school are being taken into custody by the police. Mayor Rudy "Arrest 'Em All And Let The Courts Sort 'Em Out" Giuliani says the cops are just enforcing truancy laws. But it isn't clear that kids who are going to school, albeit late, are truant.**

◆ **North Carolina's Piedmont High School had a cake left over from an ROTC booster club event, so a teacher let students have it. One student helpfully pulled out his pocket knife and cut the cake. He was then suspended for five days for having a weapon.**

◆ **In Malaysia, the government wants to include religion on national identity cards that everyone must carry. That way, it can stop Muslims from avoiding fasting during Ramadan by pretending to be non-Muslim.**

—Charles Oliver

support in November. Along with provisions for new narcocops and stiffer sentences for meth cooks and distributors, the bill would make it illegal "to teach or demonstrate the manufacture of a controlled substance, or to distribute by any means information pertaining to, in whole or in part, the manufacture or use of a controlled substance."

This provision would only apply to information that a prosecutor could prove figured in a crime. Even so, the potential effects are chilling—who knows how a reader might use one's wares?—and a number of Web and book publishers have expressed deep concern over the bill's potential effects on free speech. As Mike Hoy, head of the radical publishing house Loompanics Unlimited, told *The Village Voice*, "If it passes, we would probably pull all of our drug books, since I am unwilling to spend several hundred thousand dollars that I don't have."

Rep. Chris Cannon (R-Utah), sponsor of the House bill, is optimistic about its chances of passing this year. The ACLU, however, plans to mount a challenge the first time anyone is prosecuted for disseminating drug-related information.

U.N. Trade Barrier

By Jesse Walker

This August marks the 10th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, an incursion followed quickly by an international embargo against the invader. One war (and several mini-wars) later, the United Nations' sanctions are still

in effect. Despite that, Saddam Hussein shows no sign of opening his country to full-fledged weapons inspection, and the Iraqi people show no signs of rising en masse against his dictatorship.

This does not, however, mean that the sanctions have had no effect. According to a UNICEF study released last year, Iraq's infant mortality rate, once among the world's lowest, has more than doubled since 1990. Hunger and disease are rampant. UNICEF reports that the embargo has killed about half a million Iraqi children under the age of 5.

Food and medicine are supposedly exempt from the embargo, but, as *The Economist* notes, "without export earnings, Iraq could not pay for imports, so the gesture was meaningless." An oil-for-food program, instituted to fix this problem, has been rendered next to useless by its cumbersome bureaucracy. As a result, Iraq's water is dirty, its electrical system is crippled, and its economy has effectively collapsed; crime is high, and jobs are scarce.

A series of officials have resigned from the UN's humanitarian assistance program in Iraq, arguing that the sanctions are killing innocent civilians and the "assistance"

is doing little to help them. Such protests have not prompted any changes. In other words, Iraqi civilians are dying for the crimes of their government, while the United States continues to push for the harshest policies possible.

Unaccepted Masons

By Charles Paul Freund

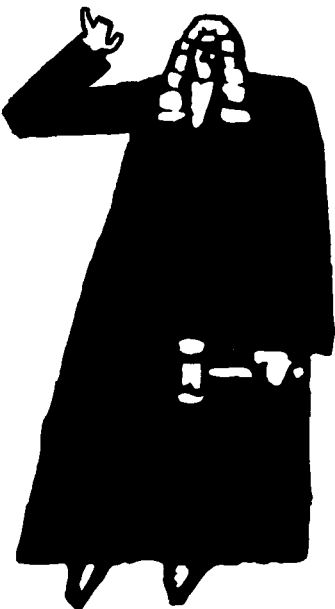
Of all the daft ideas promoted by Tony Blair's Labour government in Britain, its recent pursuit of Masons among the police and in the nation's judiciary may be the most bizarre. Labour believes that Masonry may be corrupting justice: It fears that during judicial proceedings, judges, solicitors, and police are exchanging secret signals identifying themselves as lodge members. Because Masons take an oath to help one another, the theory goes, justice is trumped by furtive Brotherhood.

Although Britain's Masons deny that their activities are anything more than charitable fellowship, and although there are no known cases of Masonic judicial corruption, Labour is intent on its purge. It has set up a registry whereby policemen and others may voluntarily (for now) identify their lodge affiliation. That registry was supposed to become public in April. But at the last minute, the government decided to block public access to it.

Why? Ministers suddenly realized they had created an assumption of impropriety. Lord Millett, Britain's most senior Masonic judge, complained that defendants



were now demanding to know if the police or judges in their cases were Masons. A government official agreed that "It will not help if police are deterred from being open about their [Masonic] membership because they think it would be raised in trials."



The origin of this strange controversy lies in a pair of sensational "exposé" books published in the 1980s. *The Brotherhood* (1985), by Stephen Knight, portrayed Britain's Masons as pursuing a common—if never identified—secret agenda. Knight is otherwise best known for *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution* (1976), which "revealed" the famous Victorian murder spree as—yes—a plot hatched by Masons.

Knight died shortly after *The Brotherhood* was published (hmm...). The sequel, *Inside the Brotherhood* (1989), was written by Martin Short. Both books address the judiciary, suggesting that Masons help each other with their careers. Because the authors also run through the 200-year-old charges that Freemasonry may be a religion hostile to Christianity, they suggest that such lodge-

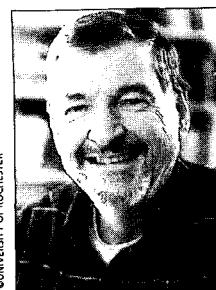
SOUNDBITE

Image Problems

By Nick Gillespie

Everyone knows that legendary impresario P.T. Barnum coined the saying, "There's a sucker born every minute." Well, not exactly. In *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton University Press), John Mueller points out not only that Barnum never uttered such a phrase, but that it would have been seriously out of character if he had. Despite a few high-profile "humbugs" early in Barnum's career, notes Mueller, a political scientist at the University of Rochester, the showman actually made his fortune "by providing a good, honest show that people appreciated and were quite happy to patronize year after year."

Mueller's revisionist view of Barnum exemplifies the considerable appeal of *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery*, which explores the peculiar "image problems" of democracy and free-market capitalism. "Capitalism," writes Mueller "is much better than its image, while democracy has turned out to be much worse than its image." Often witty and always interesting, Mueller's recent book is a captivating inquiry into the "significant, and often detrimental, consequences" of such fundamental misperceptions. Editor-in-Chief Nick Gillespie recently spoke with Mueller via phone.



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Q: Capitalism—market-based exchange—has generally increased standards of living. So why do people dislike it so much?

A: There's been several millennia of hostility directed toward capitalism—by intellectuals, the church, and others. It's almost a built-in assumption that capitalism is filled with lying and deceiving and fraud. And some capitalists have actually lived that way. It can also be a fairly grubby sort of existence, very methodical and mundane. As such, it goes against many of the more classical virtues of martial heroism and the like. From an intellectual standpoint, what businesspeople do isn't very theoretically exciting or enlightening. The idea of sitting around coffeehouses thinking of Great Ideas is much more appealing.

Q: Why does democracy get such a good rap?

A: I'm not sure it does. Rather, people continue to expect too much of it. They really expect something that has basically never happened in history. Large numbers of people have never participated in politics, and it's never really been the case that most people know what's going on. It's a contest among special interests that is never really resolved. I'm all for encouraging more people to vote, but the book argues that democracy will never be something in which everyone will participate and in which everyone will have equal influence. That's simply impossible.

Q: Do you think people are waking up to the idea that the images of democracy and capitalism are off-base?

A: I don't know if the images are changing all that much. I do think the idea of getting rich is generally being accepted as an important thing, which is good; if people are concerned with their material well-being, they're less likely to start wars, for instance. As for democracy, all you hear about are the evils of special interests, how we have to restrict them, and how not enough people participate. But I don't hear anyone saying that special interests are us—that special interests are what democracy is all about.

related career networking is worrisome. Short's book is heavy on the religious angle, and sometimes reads as if it were written by the determinedly anti-Masonic Pope Leo XIII.

As Short admits, the importance of career networks is not otherwise unknown. In Britain, it takes the form of school, religious, class, and other ties that benefit Labourites as well as Tories.

Meanwhile, a government spokesman promises that Blair's government is "not backing away from the need to establish just how widespread Masonic activity is within" the police.