

Letters

Misplaced Missiles

Michelle Cottle's "May the Force Be With You" (September) pronounced a fact that may either be an error or a revelation. Ms. Cottle stated: "The footage of U.S. Patriot interceptors exploding in the night sky over Baghdad. . . ." I saw Patriot missiles exploding over Riyadh, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other places; however, if they exploded over Baghdad, then Saddam Hussein must have purchased a few Patriot missiles. Perhaps American arms merchants were true to their creed as described by Undershaft, George Bernard Shaw's protagonist in *Major Barbara*: "To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them."

KIM BRUNO
via CompuServe

Michelle Cottle responds: *My humblest apologies to any readers who lost sleep over the thought of Saddam Hussein amassing his own stockpile of Patriots. To this publication's knowledge, neither the Pentagon nor Raytheon has broken into the Iraqi market. And despite the chaotic state of affairs in the Persian Gulf, I have been assured that at no time has the United States ever defended Baghdad with Patriot missiles. (The explosions that television audiences saw over Baghdad were from Iraqi antiaircraft fire.)*

Snakes of a Different Color

Charles Bailey's article in the September issue titled "Snakes in the Grass" describes the manufacturing of a virtual grass-roots movement by "slick corporate lobbyists," but omits the earnest nonprofit interest groups that are easier to love.

In 1990, Planned Parenthood of Suffolk County (New York) launched a defensive letter-to-the-editor campaign in which a Planned Parenthood "staff member writes a timely response to a letter-to-the-editor and sends it to you for signing." This was to counter a large number of letters from people

who expressed antichoice views.

It is so difficult to resist the notion that being right will justify any behavior that will spread the word. Something we learned in Sunday school, I suppose.

TED M. HOPES
Glendale, AZ

Clinton's Dilemma

Charles Peters writes in his September piece about Bill Clinton ("Why I'll Vote for Bill Clinton—and Why I Still Worry About Him") that he is concerned with Clinton's apparent disinterest in the activities of the people he has chosen to run his administration.

Though I am as far as possible from being a Clinton fan, I find Peters unreasonable in blaming him for a situation centuries of lawmakers have wished on the presidency by the profligate passage of laws—more for their own advantage than in the national interest—that the administration is bound to execute.

I do not believe the framers of the Constitution intended it to deal with more than the union between the separate states and their common defense against foreign powers; if the Congress had so limited its lawmaking—ceding to the states and their people as much self-government as the Tenth Amendment implies—the president and administration would not be smothered in trivia the states could very well handle for themselves.

But politicians create issues to get themselves elected, and legislators make laws to keep themselves in office.

ERNEST F. SMALL
Orange Park, FL

Circumstantial Evidence

Shame on you for implying that because G. David Schine married and had six children he was not gay ("Tilting at Windmills," September). I belong to an all-gay men's service organization. Approximately half of our members who are aged 40 and above have been married, and most of them have children. While some younger gay men and lesbians have

children, marry, or both, this is clearly no longer the norm. Nevertheless, those who reached adulthood in the 1950s and 1960s (and I suppose earlier) did marry. Your "inconvenient facts" tell me nothing about Mr. Schine's sexual preference.

WILLIAM TAYLOR
Atlanta, GA

Layoffs and Tradeoffs

In his review of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Good Society* (September), Paul Krugman writes that "it has been a long time since any substantial number of economists believed in a significant long-run trade-off between unemployment and inflation." Oh? As a non-economist whose training in these matters comes from media pundits and financial advice columns, I hear this trade-off cited daily as if it were a law of nature. As a middle-class professional with a retirement portfolio, I am advised constantly that unemployment below 5 percent is bad news for me. I'm asked to support welfare "reform" on the premise that everybody should work; while on another page of the paper I'm told I should be pleased that, as a matter of policy, 5 percent of the labor force will not be allowed to.

STEVEN HELMLING
Newark, DE

No Place Like Home

Amanda Ripley's well-written and compelling piece in the September issue ("Stay at Home, Moms") provides a perfect example for the argument that post-1960s, ultra-liberalism is doomed. She leaves out the possibility (some would say "the fact") that teenage girls in unpleasant family surroundings, realizing that the state will provide them with an apartment of their own and enough money to scrape by if they become pregnant and deliver a child, may well violate certain age-old taboos against premarital sex and childbearing out of wedlock. I am not saying teenagers become mothers by calculation, *because* of the government-provided goodies available to them; it is rather that the generous nature of the safety net available

to them, especially when their home life is unpleasant, may well attenuate any inborn or cultural restraints on their sexual behavior.

Ripley writes: "Last year, Massachusetts implemented the live-at-home requirement as part of Governor William Weld's welfare overhaul. Since implementation, the number of teens receiving welfare in Massachusetts has dropped significantly. For now, the state has no idea why." "The state" may have no idea why, but anyone who was ever a screwed-up teenager has a pretty damned good idea why.

This "live-at-home requirement" seems like a miracle, a truly good idea stumbled upon by politicians. With this thing in place, young women might have an incentive to resort to more traditional means of escape from a bad scene: get an education, get a job, or get married.

PETER D. JOHNSON JR.

Through Rain, Sleet, And Red Tape

An item in your September issue was certainly misleading at best ("Tilting at Windmills"). First of all, both unionized and non-union employees

are governed by the national agreement between the unions and the Postal Service. Wages, conditions of employment, hours of work, vacations, pensions and other matters are determined by the agreement (contract). Only when the matter for a grievance violates the contract can one be filed.

As to the mail not being delivered on time, I do not believe that happens often. I have contact with many people in many states who certainly do not find that to be true, nor do I.

THELMA E. WRIGHT
Salina, KS

One Strike, You're Out

You've got to be kidding! "Fines, confiscation of property ... community service" for those who are guilty of nonviolent crimes? ("Tilting at Windmills," July/Aug.) Does that include those bums who bilk old people out of their life's savings in confidence games? As Barney Frank once said, those are the last people on earth we want out in the community. Why not try breaking their legs and throwing them in overcrowded prisons?

SIDNEY GENDIN
Ypsilanti, MI

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

*A New Soulmate • The Cali Cartel as a Buy • More on Mrs. Astor •
A Comeback for Ferries • A Kind Word for Dick Morris*

THERE WAS A MOMENT IN LATE September when Bill Clinton seemed to be becoming too involved in answering Dole's charges—e.g., that he is a liberal—and Dick Morris complained to a *Washington Post* reporter that Clinton was forgetting to be presidential as he got “absorbed in the daily give and take of campaign rhetoric.” It reminded me that, much as we all like to make fun of Morris, much of his advice was sound. One of Clinton's greatest weaknesses is his tendency to become defensive, a tendency that unfortunately is shared by his wife. There is no question in my mind, that after Morris became his guru, Clinton showed less of this defensiveness than he had in his first two years in the White House and that he was more presidential, more a man the American people could begin to be proud of.

AFTER THE GUN BATTLE BETWEEN Israeli troops and Palestinian police in September, Jimmy Carter found a gentle way of expressing my opinion of Benjamin Netanyahu: “He has not followed up in any sort of enthusiastic, accommodating, or generous way in building on what Rabin and Peres have left for him.”

Rabin was tough, but finally he wanted peace more than he wanted to be tough. Netanyahu seems just to want to be tough.

WE HAVE CRITICIZED THE INCREASING conservatism of *The Washington Post's* Business section and of its leading columnist, James K. Glassman. But even we weren't prepared for Glassman's glowing endorsement of Philip Morris in the *Post's* Septem-

ber 29 edition.

“Would I buy Philip Morris if I owned individual stocks? Yes, but my fascination transcends a mere lust for money. The attraction of Philip Morris is intellectual and emotional. It's a stock that has everything: huge profits, sin, death, politics, fierce legal battles and superb management.”

Glassman praised the company for averaging a 25.6 annual return since 1981 “despite lawsuits and the heavy hand of government.”

Jesus, Jim, that “heavy hand” has been trying to protect its citizens from lung cancer and heart disease. Those lawsuits are by people who are dying because they used the products of that wonderful company. Thank goodness the Cali cartel isn't listed on The New York Stock Exchange, for you would surely put it on your “buy” list.

As a mutual fund investor, you could be forgiven for inadvertently acquiring shares in a fund that owned shares in a tobacco company, but to recommend the conscious purchase of stock in a company that deals in death is beyond the pale. The owners and editors of the *Post* should be embarrassed to publish such advice. But of course they run cigarette ads, don't they?

SHOOTING THE GOOD GUYS SEEMS to have become a habit. In addition to Rabin, another recent example comes from Burundi, where the Roman Catholic Archbishop Joachim Ruhuna stood up to the murderers on both sides, the Hutu as well as his fellow Tutsi: “Let me warn the killers and those who sent them: your crimes are the shame of humanity.”

On a Monday afternoon in late September Ruhuna's car was attacked

and burned. His body hasn't been found, but according to a report by a correspondent of *Time* magazine, “The killers almost surely threw the archbishop's body into the nearby Mubarazi river, the way they have disposed of countless other victims.”

IF YOU'RE A FAN OF FERRIES, AS I AM, you'll be delighted to know they're making a big comeback around New York City. Commuters are discovering that ferries are more appealing than the crowded trains and buses, and traffic-clogged highways, bridges, and tunnels. According to *The New York Times*, one passenger said of the ferry ride, “It puts you in a state of tranquility, and you need peace of mind when going to work.”

IF YOU THINK PUBLIC EMPLOYEES are underpaid, take a look at Prince George's County, Md., where at least 10 employees make over \$96,000. Or consider Fairfax County, Va., where 24 employees make more than \$100,000 each.

But at least, you assume, these well-paid executives are willing to work long hours to serve the public. No, not at all. If they work overtime in Fairfax County, they're entitled to “comp time,” compensatory leave equal to their overtime.

But they're all paupers compared to the Federal Reserve Board in Washington, where 72 employees make more than \$125,000. The chief maintenance officer, who in an era of less exalted titles might have been called the head janitor, is paid \$163,800.

MY FELLOW LIBERALS, MOST ESPECIALLY those who are members of, or enjoy the electoral support of, pub-