

LOOKOUT!

March 1988

Number 30



HEY STUPID!
Were You Born Like That Or
Did You Learn It In School?
Educating Our Children...

And Ourselves...

Jesse Jackson For President

Throughout the winter the American presidential race trod a delicate course between farce and tragedy, with the re-entry of Gary Hoppants and rumored re-entry of Joe ("I resemble that") Biden threatening to push it entirely into the realm of the former.

But as the spring primaries wear on and the awful truth begins to become evident, that yes, they really are serious, one of these geeks is actually going to be president, the tragic element starts to predominate. The American Empire is will be lucky to survive the disastrous reign of President Bonzo; the best we can probably hope for is a gentle crash landing.

Installing yet another moral degenerate into the office of the presidency is not likely to improve our chances, yet it appears that the steadily diminishing segment of the electorate that still bothers to vote may be about to do just that. George Bush as president? He is a badly trained chimpanzee, and one of the few encouraging things about him is that he is so thoroughly corrupt and so devoid of redeeming qualities that even rabid right wing nincompoops will have to hold their noses to vote for him. And there's always a chance that Bush's sordid record of cocaine dealing and arms smuggling in Central America could have him on his way to the slammer before the November election rolls around.

Bush wouldn't stand a chance of being elected, of course, if there were a palatable alternative. But America is more than ever becoming a one-party state, and the hacks who control the Democratic Party would rather see another Republican administration than allow their party to nominate someone who deviates very far from the rigidly established norm. Venal gasbags like House Speaker Jim Wright will bend their rhetoric enough to the left so as to be distinguishable from the all-out Reagan nazis, but they're always ready to cut a deal on things like "humanitarian" aid to the president's pet terrorists, and they've unhesitatingly greased the wheels for Reagan's atavistic political and social agenda.

No one seriously thinks a computer-programmed nonentity like Richard Gephardt or a meaty-mouthed fraud like Albert Gore could ever be elected, but even if by some fluke they were, it wouldn't make any difference because their ever-so-slightly-liberal views are easily negated by their complete lack of principles. The Democratic establishment is willing to go so far, albeit unwillingly, to let a high-tech neoliberal like Michael Dukakis to be the sacrificial lamb this year, but Dukakis, while he like the right things on many issues, is a business-oriented technocrat who inspires little confidence in either his ability or his integrity.

Then there's the black boogiemer, who the Democrats have alternately tried to ignore, patronize, belittle, or simply wish would go away. But Jesse Jackson, with all his obvious faults, is the only candidate in either party to betray a shred of humanity or independent thought, and the only one capable of inspiring the electorate with anything more than a weary resignation. I've never been a big Jesse Jackson fan, though I voted for him in 1984 and probably will this year, too. I seriously disagree with him on some issues (particularly on his proposal to militarize the obviously futile war on drugs), and am less than convinced of his complete honesty, but Jesse has begun to make a believer out of me.

No other candidate is giving even lip service to such self-evident necessities as stopping the insane military buildup of the past decade and using the money saved to rebuild this country's social structure. No one else is talking about turning the United States into a country that strives for greatness through the degree of compassion and freedom it offers to the people of the world

rather than through the constant flexing of its armed might and the waging of vicious neocolonial wars.

I personally am deeply ashamed of my country, and have become increasingly more so throughout the tragic Reagan years. I would prefer to see even more radical change than what Jesse Jackson offers; just for starters, I would withdraw all American troops from foreign countries and reduce the military to a minimal civil defense force. I would guarantee food, shelter, housing, education, and medical care to all Americans (dozens of countries, both capitalist and communist, already do it), and would work with the other industrialized countries to ultimately extend these essential human rights to every person on this earth.

Such views of course brand me as some sort of crackpot in the eyes of the establishment media, whose very existence is bound up in the perpetuation of the brutal status quo. They have attempted to deal with the Jesse Jackson problem in the same way; hardly a mainstream newspaper or magazine appears these days without at least two or three commentators chanting the mantra of "America's not ready for a black president, and besides, he's much too far to the left to be electable."

The fact that so much ink is being dispensed to reiterate what they profess to be a self-evident truth must mean that some people are getting nervous. This could have something to do with the fact that Jesse Jackson, electable or not, has been winning elections left and right, and could very possibly go into the Democratic convention as the undisputed frontrunner. If the old-line pols then proceed to pull off one of their backroom deals and hand the nomination to a right wing geek like Al Gore, it would probably spell the well-deserved demise of the Democratic Party. If Dukakis gets it, figure on at least four more years of Republican rule. The only other Democrat capable of appealing to a significant segment of Jackson's following is Marlo Cuomo, and he might have a fair chance of beating Bush.

But though Jackson would have an uphill battle, I think he could beat Bush in a fair fight. Can you picture, for example, Bush trying to best Jesse in a one-on-one debate? Even people who like Bush (has anyone ever met one?) must have a hard time tolerating his nasal preppie drone, and the look on his face when Jesse hit him with a question like, "So George, how's the Central American cocaine biz going? Too bad about how your old buddy Noriega ripped you off, isn't it?" would be priceless.

As for all the clowns who come off with this barely veiled racist crap like "America isn't ready for a black president," I say it's more than ready. If America is ever supposed to stand for something besides clichés about liberty and justice for all, what a great way to start. And while we're at it, it's time for a woman to have a chance of running things around here, too. *Newsweek* in its latest anti-Jackson hit piece reported that if Jesse were by some miracle to win the nomination, he might pick Colorado's Pat Schroeder as his running mate. All the better!

Yes, I think Jackson can win, though it wouldn't be easy with the racist and red-baiting campaign that would undoubtedly be waged against him. Despite the revolting actions of their government, I'm not ready to believe that the majority of Americans are reactionary bigots, and no one but a reactionary bigot would choose a criminal like George Bush over Jesse Jackson. And remember, over half the American people didn't even bother to vote in the last election. I don't think it was because they found both Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale too liberal for their liking.

LOOKOUT! I'M BACK!

Yes, I know some of you must have thought I was gone for good, and I forgive those misguided souls who actually might have taken some pleasure in that thought. And to those of you who missed my semi-monthly ravings, well, I'm touched and I apologize for letting you down. Want to know what I've been up to? Well, I'll tell you anyway.

One of the main things keeping me busy has been that I, along with a friend, have started up an independent record company which has been busy this past winter putting out records by five different northern California bands, all of which have been doing really well. I was going to run an ad for them somewhere in this issue, but I doubt there will be room. Anyway, if you're interested in punk rock, you probably already know about them, and if not, you probably don't want to. Write to me if you want more information.

Speaking of writing, I have managed to accumulate approximately two shopping bags full of unanswered mail, and if you have written to me during the past four or five months, there is a pretty fair chance that your letter is among them. In most cases, I was putting off answering until I had the new issue done, something I was expecting to accomplish by January. If you are reading this and still have not received a response for me, you should be able to expect one soon or else I have lost, I mean misplaced your letter. Please be patient. I won't forget you.

Now, to the business at hand, namely *LOOKOUT* #30. In addition

to being its usual ugly self, devoid of graphics (I was unable to hook up with Marty Maceda, who contributed most of the great art that brightened up issue #29, and besides, I had trouble enough finding room for all the words) and any attempt at an eye-pleasing layout, there is one other difference you will notice about this issue. I have taken a specific theme, in this case education, and tried to develop it in greater depth than the usual scattershot *LOOKOUT* approach. This is something I expect to continue doing in the future. *LOOKOUT* #31 will focus on the issue of food and the providing of nourishment. If you've got ideas and/or graphics on the subject, why not get them in right away; it might encourage me to get to work faster on the next issue. As always, thanks for all your feedback and understanding and your help in making the *LOOKOUT* one of the most rewarding projects I have ever undertaken. Till next time.... Lawrence

LOOKOUT

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Reagan's Central American Anschluss: A Call To Action

I'd seen it all before, and it left my eyes burning and my stomach churning. The summer I was 16 the president came on TV and lied to us, said we were under attack in some faraway land that half of us had never even heard of. Our American way of life, our precious freedom that our forefathers had fought and died for, blah blah blah... And the planes flew and the bands played and long lines of baby-faced soldier boys went marching off into jungle hell while flag-waving goons mugged for the television cameras and told us how proud they were of the good old USA.

Before it was all over, something like a quarter million people were dead, 55,000 of them young men of my own generation. But they hadn't died in vain; the CIA used the body bags their corpses were shipped home in to smuggle tons of heroin into the land of the free. Vietnam still hasn't recovered from what we did to it — we dropped more bombs on that tiny country than were used in all of World War II, and used deadly chemicals to turn thousands of square miles of lush jungle land into toxic desert — and neither has America.

It wasn't just the dead and wounded and insane, though that was bad enough. The Vietnam War wrecked our economy, tore the generations apart, and made a total mockery out of the ideals our country was supposedly founded on. If any good came out of it, it was that a lot of us learned that we didn't have to go along with the program, that if enough of us went out into the streets and put our own bodies on the line, we could bring this bloody system to a grinding halt. For the first time in our country's history, a war had to stop not because one side or the other won, but because the people wouldn't let it go on anymore.

As a 16 year-old would-be tough guy, I thought invading Vietnam was just great. If I'd been old enough, I probably would have joined up right away and I probably wouldn't be writing these words today. My father argued with me; he'd seen a couple of wars come and go, and been forced to fight in one of them. As far as he was concerned, all wars were stupid. I was full of government propaganda and youthful bravado, and couldn't believe what a wimp he was being. Luckily I came to my senses before I was able to do anything too stupid, and a couple years later I was one of the hundreds of thousands protesting the madness. If my grandkids ever ask me, "What did you do in the war?" I'll be proud to be able to tell them: "I helped stop it."

Now it's starting all over again, and a whole new generation of young people is being told to go kill and die. This time it's Central America instead of Southeast Asia. Now the CIA is running cocaine instead of heroin. And at least for now, it's a volunteer army, not a drafted one, being sent into battle. But it's the same murderous scam, and I'm not having any of it. I'm sick to my guts of what this country is doing, and I'm sick to my guts of any American who stands by and lets it happen. This government has lost all legitimacy; it has no more right to exist than any other tinpot dictatorship. The people don't want war; their elected representatives have voted against war, and the psychopathic scumbag in the White House says "Drop dead" and sends the troops in.

OK, I've had enough of this crap. I've had enough of a system that poisons the minds and bodies of its people and that litters the planet with broken bodies and shattered dreams. I don't care if I'm old enough that I don't have to worry about getting sent off to war, that I can afford to sit on the sidelines and shrug my shoulders while the younger people sort it out for themselves. I'm going back out into the streets, and I'm going to do whatever has to be done. No peasants are going to be machine-gunned, no villages napalmed in my name. If the whole god damned United States of America has brought to its knees to stop the killing, then so be it.

Yeah, I'm just one person, and not a particularly brave or strong one at that. I'm getting to the age where I'd rather sit up in the mountains and raise babies and vegetables, watch the seasons come gliding gently over the horizon, and peacefully and gracefully grow old. But my heart won't let me do that, not while millions of others all over the globe are being denied that right.

As I write these words I feel my emotions running wild; at one end of the spectrum there is horror and at the other great hope. I'm ashamed in a way that it has taken so long to get me this roused up; Nicaraguans and El Salvadorans and Guatemalans have been being tortured and killed for decades at the hands of our government, and like so many Americans, I didn't get upset enough to do something about it until it our own soldiers got into it. But I see a lot to be hopeful about, too; the American invasion of Vietnam went on for years before any substantial anti-war movement emerged; this time there were people demonstrating all over the country within hours after Reagan sent in the troops.

So what are we going to do? March up and down the street chanting slogans? Blockade the doors of government buildings and get hauled off to jail by the thousands? Of course we will, but that's not enough. We've got to, in every way we can, withdraw our support and cooperation from the system that thrives on war. We've got to take mobs of people into the halls of the financial institutions that profit from war and shut them down. We've got to make it impossible for business and government to function until the killing stops.

If you're of draft age, it's goes without saying that you don't register, and if you're called, you don't answer. If you've got a friend, a lover, a son, a big brother of that age, you'll repeat that message to them, support them, hide them if necessary when the FBI comes looking. If there's any way you can get away with it, you don't pay taxes. Exist as much as possible outside the system, and sabotage it wherever possible.

One of the most powerful memories in my life dates back to October of 1967, when about 50,000 of us laid siege to the Pentagon. I got tear-gassed for the first of what was to be many times, and just before dusk a wall of troops charged into the crowd with fixed bayonets. But at midnight we were still there, people's faces eerily lit by the bonfires that were burning every hundred yards or so, and the air was filled with talk of revolution.

It all seemed so simple then. It would be a matter of a couple years, maybe even a couple months, before people would rise up and smash the state. And for a while it seemed that it might really be happening. Urban ghettos and college campuses were going up in flames. In Berkeley the Bank of America got its windows smashed so many times that they finally had to brick them up, and in Santa Barbara the students went one better and burned the bank to the ground. Americans were being shot at and in some cases killed by their own country's soldiers.

But the revolution did not come, at least not in the traditional sense. The government was not overthrown, and today it is even more corrupt and reactionary than it was then. But in a more important sense, there was a real revolution in those days, and it was victorious. Despite all the talk about how the 60s generation sold out and copped out and bumed out, a lot of people had their view of not only politics and culture, but of reality itself turned inside out. They got a taste of their own power, the awesome and unstoppable power that comes from looking deep into your own heart, finding the truth that beats within, and living your life by it.

We've had our heads filled with lies, we've had our senses assaulted with pointless distractions and destructive pleasures, but even in the midst of this glossy and delusional miasma called "civilization," we can still find our way home. As native peoples all over the planet instinctively know, we are, despite our pretensions and artifice, merely children of the earth, and bound by its immutable laws. When we learn to live in harmony with its ways, we can do anything.

So we really have two wars to stop, one without and one within. We need a powerful and righteous anger to stop the one without, and a compassionate love and understanding to stop the one within. We need to choose life in all its beauty and passion, and we need to stand together with our brothers and sisters, with all living creatures, and say no to hate and greed and murder.

Yes, I know that long before true peace finally comes about, my body will probably have long since been recycled into the earth it came from. But while I don't believe in a heaven or hell or reincarnation or any of that stuff, I do expect that some tiny part of me will live on forever, in the form of whatever infinitesimal contribution I can make to the raising of human consciousness. I wouldn't be writing these words or thinking these thoughts if it weren't for the millions of men and women who went before me and dared to imagine how much more life could be. When I marched down Market Street yesterday and all around me saw the faces of people half my age who already understood what's taken me a lifetime to grasp, it made me happy and proud. I knew more than ever, though I never really doubted it, that I hadn't been wasting my time. And I realized once more that no matter how strong the forces of ignorance and fear might appear to be, in the long run they haven't got a chance.

SAN FRANCISCO SAYS "NO WAY!"

I ran into a friend near Dolores Park. He looked up and down the street at the thousands of people who stretched out in either direction. There were banners and signs, there were drums beating out dozens of different rhythms. Although the reason for our being there was a serious one, he let a broad smile cross his face momentarily.

"This is really beautiful to see, Lawrence," he said, "I was beginning to think the whole world was dead."

It was beautiful, and though things turned a little ugly later on that night, let me talk about the good parts first. It was only a few hours after I finished writing the article above, and I'd gone down to the Mission to join in an impromptu march to the Federal Building. From a few hundred, the crowd quickly swelled to at least 5000, and this was no parade of Sunday liberals. These people were mad as hell, and with good reason. At first the cops tried to head them off, but it soon became obvious that that was impossible. By the time we hit Market and Castro the entire street was filled from sidewalk to sidewalk, and when you looked back, you couldn't see where the line of it was the Vietnam era all over again, with one big difference. It took several years and many thousands of deaths before crowds that militant took to the

streets. Now it's happening at the mere prospect of American troops being involved. Maybe people can learn from history. Maybe someday they'll even learn enough that they won't let their government wage mercenary wars by proxy, either.

When we got to the Federal Building, the requisite flags were burned, debris strewn around, and slogans spray painted. Then a rather stupid confrontation developed between some people who wanted to burn trash cans in the middle of Market Street and some motorcycle cops who wanted to stop them. Both sides were being pretty dumb. I have to admit, I don't enjoy the sight of people, even if they're wearing cop uniforms, getting hit with flying bottles. It's especially dumb since I'd be willing to bet that half the SFPD is no more in favor of invading Nicaragua than I am. When the cops and the people can stand together and tell the federal government to go to hell, then we can really start getting somewhere.

For those who are ready to break things and risk beatings and arrests, there's a whole financial district downtown filled with businesses that profit from war. Let them get the picture, as the government must also be beginning to see, that this time they're not going to get away with it.

(Ed. Note: The following article might be highly offensive to some people of Jewish ancestry. Too bad. I'm finding it highly offensive to hear so many Jewish people trying to rationalize the racist and ultimately nazi-esque policies of the state of Israel.)

BUILDING THE MASTER RACE: ISRAEL SEARCHES FOR A FINAL SOLUTION TO THE ARAB PROBLEM

"They are dogs. They have no business in our country. Let them get out or take the consequences."

"They breed like animals. If we do not remove them from our borders now, they will overwhelm our culture and our values by their sheer numbers."

"They are not to be trusted. As long as they are present among us, they will pollute all our efforts to build a nation and a people."

These are sentiments being voiced by many good and decent Jews who are concerned that their efforts to build a homeland for God's chosen people are being thwarted by the presence of an inferior race.

"Israel needs *Lebensraum* (room to live)," they say, echoing the words of a German leader of the past. "We must solve this Arab problem so that Israel can fulfil its great destiny."

Despite Israel's sincere efforts to bring the blessings of civilization to them, the Arabs have persisted in their diabolical religious practices that reportedly include drinking the blood of newborn Jewish babies and plotting with international bankers to undermine the Israeli economy. Worse than that, they have refused to submit to voluntary sterilization and continue to have obscene numbers of babies which they can not possibly care for, and therefore obviously plan to use to drain the resources of already overburdened Israeli taxpayers.

The Jewish people have always been known, and with good reason, as a humanitarian race, but there are limits even to our benevolence. We are forced to confront some plain facts, one of which is that Arabs, while superficially appearing to resemble us, are not possessed of the same degree of human worth as we, the chosen people, are. If, therefore, we perceive them as a cancer in our midst, we must not be hindered by false sentimentality in our efforts to root them out.

We are not heartless people, and any such cleansing of our land should take place as humanely as possible. But it should also be as efficient as possible. The current practice of daily beating and shooting a few Arabs at random is lacking on both accounts, and what's more creates a bad impression in the media. Our public image has begun to diminish so badly that some Jew-hating radicals in our parent-country, the United States, are even proposing that Congress make some reductions in the measly eight million dollars a day that the tight-fisted Americans begrudgingly spare us.

We propose, therefore, a "final solution" to this nagging Arab problem. The mechanics of such a solution are already in place; much of our Arab population currently lives in the camps that we have generously provided for them, and other Arab areas can be easily cordoned off into walled ghettos. Arabs who presently live outside such areas should be required to wear some sort of identifying mark, an armband for example; it would also be wise to require that they be tattooed with a registration number so that they can be kept track of until such time as they also can be resettled.

Eventually we must face the somewhat unpleasant reality that there is simply not enough room in our "camps" to house all of our Arab population, especially if they continue to breed in such excessive numbers. Forced sterilization of women of childbearing age is obviously required, but beyond that, some population reduction measures must be undertaken. Granted, the use of refugee camps by the Israeli air force for bombing practice has been of some help, but the number of casualties produced is clearly not justified by the costs, both in terms of public relations and the necessity of repairing damage to the camps' physical facilities.

The best method would be a neat and relatively painless system of mass extermination, large-scale gas chambers, for example. This might be politically difficult to implement, of course, due to objections raised by various bleeding hearts who recall that in the not too distant past Jews themselves were the victims of such a program. More palatable alternatives might include using large numbers of Arabs to work (without protective garments) in our nuclear weapons industry, or in using them in much-needed medical research (in conjunction with which, our biological warfare experts could conceivably develop an AIDS-like virus that attacks only Arabs).

Admittedly such subjects are not pleasant, but they must be dealt with. Israel is a divinely ordained state, and its people are a divinely ordained master race. We have a responsibility to ourselves, to future generations, and to God Himself to insure that our great Fatherland flourishes in accordance with His Will. Destiny calls! Tomorrow belongs to us! *Israel Über alles!!!*



I've been spending my SF time out in Noe Valley these days, where the streets are full of white people (till about 10 at night, when it becomes strictly suburban death land), and the wind comes howling down off Twin Peaks on these ersatz summer afternoons (when the hell is it going to rain?).

It's kind of bland over on this side of the hill, no good burrito joints, no drunks passed out in doorways, no riots of sounds and colors and smells to spin your head around as you step down the street. There are also no beggars, no people sleeping on the sidewalk, no throbbing open sores to remind you of what urban life has become for so many people these days.

So maybe I'm out of touch with what's really going down in this town, but I have at least an inkling of a feeling that SF's cultural and political decline of the last decade or so may have finally hit bottom and that things are starting to turn around. Some hopeful signs include the huge blocks of vacant office space in the downtown skyscrapers foisted off on us by the legendarily corrupt Dianne Feinstein (loft space for artists and punk rock bands!), the rising unemployment rate among yuppie stockbrokers, and the increase in vacant apartments as landlords seem to be running out of suckers to finance their real estate speculations.

The best news of all of course is the long-awaited departure of the vile and loathsome Dianne Feinstein from City Hall, an occasion that could have only been made happier by her subsequent transfer to a much-merited jail cell, or perhaps better yet, her being forced to spend the rest of her unnatural life in the custody of the Municipal Railway or SF General Hospital or any of the other once-outstanding city services that she gutted for the sake of enriching herself and her contemptible cronies.

After ten years of prattling about how opening the city to unbridled corporate exploitation had brought growth and prosperity to San Francisco, she left the city bankrupt and 175 million bucks in the hole. The local mass media are of course blaming it on incoming Mayor Art Agnos, who's been in office a whole two months now. Agnos hasn't been a highly visible leader the way Feinstein unfortunately was, but he's already ensured that SF won't be saddled with the USS Missouri and the attendant militarization of SF Bay, made it pretty likely that we won't be invaded by hordes of moronic jocks and their corporate sponsors in the form of the 1996 Olympics, and stopped the SFPD goon, aka Tac Squad, from busting the heads of those protesting Reagan's invasion of Honduras.

Also on the subject of Mayor Agnos, somebody must have been putting strange things in the feed of *Examiner* columnist Warren Hinckle. Hinckle, who's paid something in the neighborhood of 75 grand a year to lend credibility to that crypto-fascist Hearst-run propaganda sheet, has lately been sounding more like the *Chronicle's* resident bozo, Abe Mellinkoff. In a recent column Hinckle lambasted Mayor Agnos as "Red Art" for refusing to join dour snake-oil salesman Quentin Kopp and his coalition of Chamber of Commerce types in kissing the asses of the International Olympic Committee.

Agnos had, quite rightly, sided with human rights activists who couldn't see why the city should go out of its way to cater to the bigots who had not only taken legal action to block use of the name "Gay Olympics" (while allowing hundreds of other organizations to use the term "Olympics"), but even went so far as to try and take away the home of Gay Olympics founder Tom Waddell while he was dying of AIDS (to recoup their legal costs). Hinckle and the other civic boosters with whom he's unaccountably aligned himself lately, think the community should overlook such hateful behavior because "the Olympics will bring hundreds of millions of dollars into the city."

This is the same rationale employed by Feinstein and her ilk for all the pro-business policies of the past decade. And yes, hundreds of millions of dollars have flowed into the community. Unfortunately most of them have landed in the pockets of the same handful of crooks who cook up these never-ending schemes for "growth" and "progress." Anybody you know getting rich off the downtown building boom? Me neither.

Hinkle has also been coming to the defense of the predominantly Irish thugs and gangsters known as the Residential Builders Association, an odd name for an organization most noted for bulldozing residences all over the city's Richmond District. Could it be that Mr. Hinkle's strange new political views come out a newfound "maturity," the sort that often overtakes political types when they find themselves a secure niche within the system? Or is just that Warren, who was roundly thumped in the mayoral election and immediately concluded that the whole process was hopelessly corrupt, has decided that apologizing for liars and thieves pays better than vilifying them?

Still another highly respected columnist due for a reread: the near-sacrosanct Herb Caen, who has been writing soppy paens to the Feinstein years and sniping at Mayor Agnos because "he didn't

even know where Jack's was" (Jack's is one of those old-fashioned SF restaurants run like a private men's club where Herb and buddies like Willie Brown and Wilkes Bashford gather to snarf down expensive food and liquor while sniggering at the foibles of the common people - like Agnos - who aren't "in the scene") Caen has long given lip service to anti-rise, pro-neighborhood sentiment, but as my perspicacious brother pointed out, look who he pals around with. If it's not off to Hong Kong with Feinstein, Molinari, and Dede Rosekrans, it's off to Paris for New Year's Eve with a plane-load of real estate sharks tossing around gold cards and C-notes like the last drunken dregs of the Empire's ruling class. Maybe it's time for "Mr. San Francisco" to hang it up and change his name to Mr. Palm Springs.

On the plus side, spring is here (but when is it going to rain) and the streets are alive with the rich diversity of people and mutants that make this city one of western civilization's few saving graces. Especially exciting are signs of a new counterculture blooming, both politically and culturally. I haven't seen so many weirdos around since back in the 70s before SF underwent its first disco lobotomy. It's great to see shreds of human intelligence beginning to infest this city again. Why not join the party? Set a yuppie's briefcase on fire today!

AROUND THE EMERALD TRIANGLE

Probably the biggest news to hit the Redwood Empire/ Emerald Triangle in many a year unfolded on February 3 as what seemed like half the county showed up at Eagles Hall in Fort Bragg to tell the pointy-headed bureaucrats what they thought of the feds' plan to turn the north coast into a permanent oil slick.

It was an eco-Woodstock, and an event that I will remember at least as vividly as I do the original Woodstock. Probably more so, because the culture that came of age at Fort Bragg has a good deal more foundation in reality than did that fun-loving collection of doped-up malcontents gathered on an upstate New York hillside back during the halcyon days of my misspent youth.

Readers seeking a more detailed account of the goings-on at the Fort Bragg hearings are advised to check out the story by yours truly in the February 10 issue of the *Anderson Valley Advertiser*. If you live in some benighted part of the world where the *Advertiser* is not readily available and are interested, drop me a line and I'll send you a copy of the article; space limitations prevent my reprinting it in the *LOOKOUT*.

Speaking of the Advertiser, as seems to be almost always necessary when covering the latest gossip from the Deadwood Empire, editor Bruce Anderson has run afoul of that ultimate arbiter of excellence and ethics in journalism, the sloat-brained editor of the Ukiah Daily Journal. Tom Reeves, who may have injected as much malignant ignorance into the body politic as the combined efforts of the Ukiah school system and the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, has decided that the Advertiser is not respectable enough a newspaper to be printing on the Journal's press (the only one of its type in Mendocino County). The Advertiser is of course one of the best-known (and best) weekly papers in the country, and has been featured in, among other places, the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, NBC News, Time, and a host of lesser journals like the San Francisco Chronicle. Anderson is now suing the Journal, and if he can come up with enough money to buy some justice, a commodity readily for sale in this county, one can imagine the delicious prospect of his becoming the new owner of the derelict Ukiah newspaper, lock, stock and presses. The convulsions thus induced in the likes of Marilyn Butcher, the pit bull queen of the county Board of Supes, would be of Richter scale intensity.

Tired of holding your nose and voting for the lesser of two evils, or as more and more people are doing, not voting at all and seeing mentally deranged criminals elected to office by "landslides?" Sick of mealy-mouthed compromises and liberals playing footsie with the entrenched power structure? In other words, have you had it up to your wazoo with Doug Bosco and Dan Hauser, both of whom would never have been elected to office without the votes of environmentally conscious north coast radicals, and who have spent their terms of office selling out the people who put them where they are?

Well, unless you're a terminally ideological anarchist, there's no excuse for not voting this year. Bosco and Hauser are being opposed by

two genuine human beings who have managed to make quite a bit of news lately with their efforts on behalf of the planet. Darryl Cherney and Greg King are their names, and though they're best known as Earth Firsters, they could and should be our representatives in Washington and Sacramento. Check out these samples from their platform:

TIMBER: Mandatory sustained yield, uneven aged management with no cutting of old growth. CDF composed of environmental experts.

OFFSHORE OIL: Forget it. King urges non-violent direct action to head it off if necessary.

WATER: All communities must achieve self-sufficiency without reduction of water table or damage to wildlife and environment; otherwise development must be halted or reversed at once.

TRANSPORTATION: Incentives for bicyclists and pedestrians; establishment of auto-free zones; mass transit in abundance.

MARIJUANA: It's an herb, legalize it. Rigid environmental standards must vigorously apply to hemp farmers as well.

AGRICULTURE: Petro-chemicals, synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides would be banned. Support small scale organic farms.

WASTE: Mandatory recycling of ALL waste, with accompanying processing facilities, which will also spur employment.

MILITARY: Picture of ineptitude. Immediate elimination of all nuclear weapons since they are useless anyway. Refocus on individual with soldiers working to heal the Earth rather than destroy it. Entire budget deficit eliminated by reducing military budget.

DEFICIT: (See military)

The *LOOKOUT* unhesitatingly and unreservedly recommends both King and Cherney, and especially looks forward to Cherney, "the singing candidate," taking his guitar to Washington and delivering his positions to the country via his brilliant folk songs. Darryl, as has been noted several times in this space, is the best and most intelligent musician this area has ever seen, and if you want to do both yourself and him a favor, you should send for his tape *I Had To Be Born In This Century*. It's available for seven bucks (send more if you can to help the campaign) from the Cherney for Congress Committee, Box 9, Piercy CA 95467. The phone number is (707) 247-3320 in case you want to volunteer your time and energy to the eminently good cause of sending Darryl to Congress.

More chemical sprays on Mendocino forest lands? Could be if the BLM (Hey BLM you ain't the friend of the eagle and the bear, but the corporations love you 'cause they get the lion's share — Darryl Cherney) and the US Forest Service get their way. Public lands are being run as tree farms for a handful of major corporations, and in their opinion the fastest way to maximize profits is to use

aerially applied poisons to kill everything that doesn't fit into a sawmill. The BLM has already called for more herbicide spraying, and the Forest Service is expected to do the same.

If you want to know more about herbicide use in Mendocino County, Sue Roberts and Kristy Sarconi have put together an excellent and thorough (122 pages!) report on the subject. It's available through the Toxic Substances Committee of the North Coast Greens/ Box 284/ Comptche CA 95427, and they're asking \$5 plus \$1 postage for it.

Anyone who had to drive on Highway 101 north of Laytonville last summer probably remembers sitting in long lines of steaming vehicles and overheated drivers while Caltrans crews performed whatever strange rituals they do on vast stretches of vacated roadway. It was presumed that the pavement was being resurfaced, and it gave all appearances of being so until the first rains of winter arrived. Now the stretch from Spy Rock Road to town is pockmarked with wheel and axle-busting potholes, and was compared unfavorably with some third world highways by a recently returned traveler. Curious what Caltrans crews were doing all summer with your tax dollars? Call Margie Handley down Willits way and ask her. After all, they're her boys.

The latest addition to the Laytonville Ledger is a column entitled "The Harwood News." Rumor has it that this is merely the first of several features which will eventually replace all other news coverage. Coming soon we can expect to see "The Geiger Counter," "The Bailey Blab," and "The Larson Lowdown," which should cover just about everyone and everything of importance in town. Some of our less savory citizens may complain that fairness dictates there also be a "Marijuana Roundup," though Bill Bailey

may be expected to argue that Joe Knight has been writing one for years already.

Also on the Bill Bailey beat... The chainsaw baron has introduced his own personal candidate into the crowded race for Fourth District Supervisor. According to local rumor, Bailey was at least partially motivated by the fact that his arch-nemesis Joe Knight (there are those catty enough to suggest that Joe and Bill deserve each other) is backing coast liberal Liz Henry for the position. Bailey's choice is his chief lieutenant and bottle washer Skip Newell, a well-known and popular figure in Laytonville circles, as least the mainstream variety thereof.

Newell of course has about as much chance of getting elected as I do, but may have the desirable effect of siphoning off the inland geek vote (he bears a passing resemblance to a younger version of John Cimolino, the cro-mag bagman who has been representing Georgia Pacific on the Board of Supes longer than many of us can remember) and bringing the race down to a runoff between the two liberals, social worker Henry and Woodworkers' Union VP Don Nelson.

The Laytonville Ledger, in yet another demonstration of its commitment to unbiased and balanced journalism, helped launch Newell's campaign by handing over nearly half its front page to him for a statement so rambling and vague that Jimmy Carter or Gary Hart would appear to be issues-oriented statesmen by comparison.

Oh, and how about another Bill Bailey rumor while we're at it? Could there be any truth to the allegation that Bailey, irritated that a local small engine repair shop had been awarded the chainsaw franchise that had been yanked from him, has now refused to sell parts to said repair shop, forcing the proprietor into making any number of unnecessary trips to Willits or even Ukiah? Not very community-minded, Bill...

mangling! I'm sorry, Mr. Livermore, but you drive me to such words.

Yours heatedly,
David G-String
1329 Goettingen St
San Francisco CA 94134

P.S. Mr. G-String's wardrobe courtesy of Montgomery Ward.

If you wanted a plug for your band, why didn't you just say so?

LL

Dear Lawrence,

re Marty Maceda's letter (#29):

No way José! If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I say, keep the LOOKOUT looking just the way it does now. If I wanted less print and more comics, I'd read one of the millions of form-over-content rags that choke the free racks all over town. Stop the march of "progress"!

Daniel G
San Francisco

Hiya Daddy-O

Just a short note to tell you that the grafix by Mary Maceda are great! You finally put some art in your rag. Good decision.

Don't get lost or killed,
Winston Smith
Ukiah

Hey Lawrence!

Thanks for the latest issue, which I greatly enjoyed. Yeah! I've been meaning to write to you - even have something to say (but I'll try to say it more briefly this time). Anyway, I'm all in favor of more graphic contributions. OK!

Luke McGuff
Minneapolis

LOOKOUT:

People generally are too stupid to understand that bank loans to other countries raise the cost of living here in the United States. How? In devious ways, such as — They had a frost in Brazil, which sent coffee from 80¢ a pound to \$3.00.

Tea suddenly takes a jump in price. Spices go up for no good reason. Oil goes from \$5 to \$45. Why? Because countries who have gone too deep in debt, and can't pay off their bank loans are being manipulated by agents of the banks to raise prices on produce sold in the US so the banks can get their money.

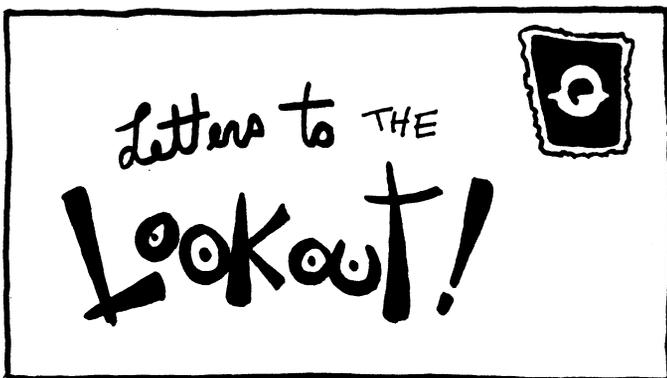
A few years back, Reagan went to Brazil with three billion dollars so that Brazil could pay off overdue interest on its loans from American banks. Did lickspittle American newspapers mention it? Did our supine Duarte-kissing lawmakers in Washington raise a protest? Now they are working on a plan to reorganize the bank loans to Mexico. Who do you suppose will finally pay off the loan? The great American Chump.

A.C. Dennis
Campbell CA

Yo, Sweets,

Been meaning to assault you verbally for some time now. Mike Donnelly gave me your phone number and encouraged me to be an asshole... Ms. Baer has been sending me LOOKOUTs for what seems like forever, and now that you are almost as hip as I am (what with a secure spot in the MRR axis), I should get around to pounding this out and making my intentions clear... My zine is finally on its way in... should be mid Jan.... To make this one short... the zine is long.. contributors that you might recognize being Freddie Baer, Bob Black, Crowbar, Hakim Bey, and more names I don't have time to drop right now. The zine is a rattlesnake..I'm surprised at how venomous it is becoming..no, I'm not.

I've always enjoyed the LOOKOUT (except your most recent mistake....



Dear Lawrence,

They're closer than you think! (Mormons infest Cloverdale, LOOKOUT #29) What appears to be a new landing zone for CAMP choppers in South Willits (Swill-its) is actually the building pad for a new Willits Mormon Tabernacle.

It's appropriately placed amidst the tacky-tacky charms of Harrah's Country Manor with nice vistas over cookie-cutter roofs to the Harrah hilltop mansionette and beyond to the future Harrah, Handley, Bashore Industrial Park. They're taking over the school board (banning books), Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce. Longvale is next, then Laytonville.

It's time to resurrect Colonel John Macauley and his Nauvoo Brigade.

Elder Cleavage
Ridgewood

Dear Mr. Livermore,

I was greatly appalled to find in issue #28 of your popular newsletter LOOKOUT! a rather cruel and heartless referral to famed clone Davy Normal as a (and I quote this from your very scribbles) " (that's a quote there) scenemaker." This shameful remark was located in the Music Can Make You Stupid section of your highly acclaimed paper, in connection with my band BOO! HISS! PHFFFT! (WHY DON'T WE THROW SOME TOMATOES AT THOSE GUYS?). You stated that Mr. Normal was going to be appearing with us at our now infamous Gilman Street Community Cultural Warehouse Benefit Show, and carelessly called him (without any prior provocation from David) a... a... scenemaker. Now look, Mr. Lawrence Livermore (and if there's one thing I can't stand, it's people who insist on using silly stage names!), I'm not usually one for using naughty language, but I'm pissed! I mean, Davy has been known to get angry and/or horribly upset, as we all are from time to time, but never in a million eons (or is it seons?) have I seen him make a scene. Mr. Normal is a very responsible and well-behaved person. Sure, like any normal (no pun intended) human being, he can be irked by someone or something which particularly bothers him and perhaps even raise his voice somewhat. But I would not, however, call that making a scene. You, on the other hand, to put it simply, would.

Fie! Fie!, Mr. Livermore! I demand - yes, demand an apology in writing from you on Davy Normal's behalf. I believe your outrageous and highly erroneous sentences have struck a searing blow to Mr. Normal's mentally positive outlook. Indeed, those few short paragraphs will never be forgotten by David. I mean, it just seems totally shocking to me that one person, in only a few short pages, can wreak such havoc and devastation on a fellow human being. why, that whole newspaper seemed geared to publicly tearing down this poor innocent man.

What more can I possibly say, except that our first audio demonstration tape is now available from the address below for a mere \$2.25 (includes postage and

branding Myke Board one of the century's best or some similar blasphemy. I gave him a lot of shit about that last time I yelled at him on the phone... I'm convinced that any of my closest buddies or I can easily blow him off the page). And, I'm obviously gearing up towards asking you something. If you can contribute to Unca Tim's personal empire of teen twat, censorship, and pseudo-Stalinism, you can certainly contribute to mine, one of expatriate punks, hiply self-effacing literary groupies, and teen twat. ('cept with me, it is legal. I turn 19 Dec. 7). Needless to rehash, but I'll do it anyway, I mark among my friends Crawford and Pushead. I'll leave that subject to die now, and say that if you don't decide to pound out some acerbic little piece for publication, I'll be more than happy to run you a nice juicy ad and would like to reprint the JonathBiafra thing and the BAD BRAINS/DRI show review. I do encourage you to go ape shit and send new trash though, maybe a well deserved retaliation against the tone of this introduction...? Whatever you decide, let me know as soon as you can, I'm pressed for time.

If they hit you
hit them back
Tad Kepley
RR#2 Box 127
Ulysses KS 67880

Dear Lawrence D. Livermore

(What kind of name is that? I think you're the only zine editor in the world who uses his/her middle initial. I dunno: your name sounds like you're 50, but you're handwriting looks like you're 17. Ooops, there I go alienating people before I even know them. Yours is probably an ancient family name, dating back to Mesopotamian times...)

Zeno is a name my high school buddies gave me, after one of the many Zenos of ancient times. The most famous Zeno invented the math law of infinity, but I'm named after one of the first (?) anarchists. Zeno taught that no one should be ruled by fear. Pretty cool, huh?!

To tell you the truth, your letter/zine really freaked the shit out of me. I had heard of the LOOKOUT before. I had seen the LOOKOUT before. I had heard your name (speaking of which) before, but I couldn't remember from where! Seriously frustratingly déjà vu. I went to my zine "library" and pulled out the LOOKOUT I had on file, #25 (#25 wasn't NEARLY as good as the two sent me, #21 and #28). I don't remember ever writing a letter to you, but you mention a letter I wrote to you. But I got LOOKOUT #25 at either Bound Together or Gilman Street when I was there in March, I forget. Too many, WAY too many drugs, I guess. In any case, I'm going to go out of my mind if I don't resolve this whole thing soon. PLEASE help me explain this! This could lead to a bad trip...

I really dug your zines you sent... way cool. I sat in silence after reading them for a half hour pondering life. Then I went and redid a page of ANTI-MEDIA I'm working on. You've inspired me.

How old are you?

I found it strangely coincidental that one LOOKOUT you sent was on LSD, the other on hippies. It's also bugging me how you knew I'd like those.

Keep LOOKOUT coming. You're on ANTI-MEDIA's list.

Think Metric
Zeno
Olympia WA

Lawrence,

Enclosed is a copy of Saliva Ranch #7. Thank you for sending copies of the LOOKOUT. I enjoyed the articles; they provided me with much food for thought.

While reading the LOOKOUT, I seemed to get the impression that you think tree spiking is a good idea. I feel you (as a group) have not thought out the consequences of your actions. I realize that I do not even come close to understanding the complete issue, but please consider the following:

1) By spiking a tree, you may not kill it, but weaken it. This means a logging company may cut the tree, but it will not be suitable for lumber, so they will cut down another, unspiked tree.

2) By spiking with metal spikes, you endanger the lives of others. Anytime you risk someone else's innocent life, you are wrong.

3) Instead of ruining someone else's machinery through sabotage, lower the demand for new wood by recycling the paper and wood products in your home and community.

I realize these suggestions may not be sufficient, but I do not know the whole story. Please understand this. I am interested in learning more. If possible, could you please send additional information, or an address I could write to?

Shawn Romano
SALIVA RANCH
PO Box 1378
Morgantown WV 26507

First of all, I am not a group, I am myself, and I have decidedly mixed feelings about tree spiking. The group that is supposedly (in)famous for tree spiking is of course Earth First! When I mentioned that to local EF'er Darryl Chorney, he smiled and remarked how strange it was that despite the wide range of legal and extralegal tactics employed by EF!, it was always tree spiking that the mass media wanted to talk about. "It's almost as if they see it in sexual terms; I guess it's something to do with the aspect of penetration," he said. According to him, Earth First! hasn't done any tree spiking locally. My own views, as I have stated before, are that tree spiking or any other form of eco-defense should not be used when there is a reasonable likelihood that people will be injured. I have no objection, however, to destroying property that is being used to inflict grievous harm on the planet from which we all derive our sustenance. The corporate criminals who run operations like Louisiana Pacific and Georgia Pacific have continuously displayed about as much regard for our forest lands as Hiler & company did for the Jews, and if they were to have all of their millions of dollars of equipment broken into worthless bits and end up penniless in some bread line, I'd say they'd be getting off pretty lightly. More conservation and recycling is such an obvious necessity that it's depressing to have to continually bring it up, but as long as the government continues to sell off our national forests at a fraction of their true value, there is almost no economic

incentive to conserve. The result is that only a relative handful of conscious individuals will make the effort. For more info, try contacting Earth First! at PO Box 5871, Tucson AZ 85703

Lawrence:

November 87 (#29) was a great issue. Probably worth the overhaul.

Did you catch the article buried in the San Francisco Chronicle of October 25? It seems the Christic Institute uncovered evidence that Ollie North's buddies (the ones bringing in cocaine to fund the Contras) and the CIA were involved in cornering the heroin and opium markets in Vietnam in the 60s. Isn't that special? They get people strung out on the shit, then put the little guys in jail (probably the ones that hom in on their business). Or to reduce it to a bumper sticker: "Support the Contras; Snort Coke."

Keep it up; here's some \$ for printing. I will pick up my free copy at Grapewine Station.

Leonard Trent
Laytonville

Conspiracy buffs and paranoids like myself have been yapping about CIA-Mafia drug running for years; it's great that the Christic Institute have finally succeeded in forcing the mass media to take at least some notice of this long-running scandal. Now, only 20 years or so late, Congress is finally getting interested, and is promising to start an investigation this February. Based on its dismal record of non-accomplishment in the Contragate hearings, though, I wouldn't expect too much out of it.

On a personal note, thanks for the contribution. If it weren't for people like you, it would be impossible to distribute the LOOKOUT free in northern California without taking paid advertising, something I have so far managed to avoid (if you see something advertised in these pages, it's because I personally believe in it). It would also be nice if people who get their LOOKOUT free at Grapewine Station or the Good Food Store (or any of our distribution points) occasionally voice their appreciation to the owners of those businesses for carrying the LOOKOUT.
LL

Dear Double L,

November's LOOKOUT (#29) was superb, quite the best I've seen since I started subscribing. You have much to be proud of; you really outdid yourself this time. This is not to say that I agree with everything, or even that much of the content. If material is truly thought-provoking, it will naturally raise the hackles of thoughtful people, a group which I am arrogant enough to number myself among. Only bland pap or stale rhetoric lends itself to being swallowed whole.

So let's down to hair-splitting. I'm a little surprised at you (and the pseudonymous Marylee Bytheriver) for succumbing to the canard the modern western "civilization" is the cultural heritage of the Graeco-Roman world. This is an intellectual boondoggle, conceived to cover up the obvious historical fact that modern Europe was not developed by the offspring of the classical era, but rather of those that smashed it, the Teutonic and Scythian hordes. Ours is the heritage of Teodoric and Attila, not Pythagoras and Marcus Aurelius. Once Goths and Vandals had accumulated sufficient wealth to begin affecting pretensions of elitism, they quickly discovered that their own roots seemed rather tawdry, and proceeded to loot Rome intellectually as they once had more carnally. Even in those aspects in which the Roman tradition has been passed down rather intact, such as civil law, this has only come to us encumbered by a millennium of barbaric Bork-like interpretation. And as for your invocations of Celtic Britons as some sort of feminist "noble savages," I have two comments: 1) that it's nothing new to look to Celtic Britain as the "good old days"—see the file marked "Arthurian myths;" and 2) I'm afraid that I find little to admire in painting oneself blue, running naked through the moors, hunting down, killing, and eating the members of rival clans. The similarities between the Celts and the Huns, socially and culturally, greatly outnumber the differences.

I did mention "justice" Bork (that's and e.g. for an oxymoron if I ever did see one), but far more interesting to me is this Ginsburg case. For a brief second, the entire New Right paradigm seemed about to implode over a couple of bones of Medellín redbud. (Good Lord, I used to smoke dope with Boston-area intellectuals in the '77-'78 period; could one of them have been Douglas Ginsburg?) There was Ronnie on national TV, telling us that we would find out what kind of people we are by our reaction to the fact that his nominee had been hitting the bong. Such tolerance, such broad-mindedness; exactly the characteristics which jump to mind in describing the Reagan years. Poor Nancy must have been beside herself. All facetiousness aside, the Ginsburg nomination came very close to reopening the great pot debate, the suppression of which has been one of the triumphs of the New Right social agenda. Particularly in a time of massive budget deficits, the legalization of marijuana, accompanied by stiff "sin-taxing" thereof, is a thoroughly logical approach to the desperately needed "revenue enhancement." The additional benefit that pot would be removed from the hands of the criminal establishment (and the concomitant separation of the pot smoker from the coke dealer) goes without saying, as well as the savings which could be realized with the elimination of wasteful abuses like your arch-nemesis, CAMP. And to hell with the Straight and Alert set! As we used to say, "Always forward, never straight!"

How could you say Mykel Bored is one of "the best writers around"? My Lord, the man's mentality and prejudices differ not a whit from those of the Rotary Club—development boosting booboisie you so justifiably roast!

On the matter of the economic future, there's one problem I always have with those left-utopians who preach of a world where "all can choose meaningful, rewarding work." That is, who cleans up? Who would choose to be a janitor, a bedpan-changer, a "smitation engineer," etc. We are as yet decades, if not centuries from developing robots with the necessary flexibility, perception, and dexterity to perform these mindless, menial, demeaning, yet utterly essential tasks. Having been a janitor for about five years, I am quite sure only human beings are suited to those tasks. My idea is to employ former stockbrokers, portfolio managers, etc., in these positions; let them trade in their moral squalor for the genuine article.

One other thing: not to be the champion of the Realty World™ babbitty, but with an expanding population, we have to have more building just to house our

increasing numbers. Nice log cabins self-constructed in the backwoods just aren't going to come close to meeting the need. In fact, on the scale of the housing crunch today, that manner of building is probably much more wasteful of natural resources than are Levittowns. It sounds more to me like a hippie "I've got mine, Jack" than anything else. And, living in a primarily low-income mill town, I don't see building codes as some sort of intrusive tyranny; quite the opposite, our problem is lack of adequate code enforcement as city officials play footsie with the slumlords. The net result of this is deteriorating sub-standard housing stock, and eventually the loss of low-income housing units, which with minor infusions of cash over time to comply with existing codes could have been saved. In the end this leaves vacant lots for yuppification and more homeless poor people.

Despite my criticisms, again I say #29 was a triumph and here's some bread to continue my subscription.

Your humble and obedient servant,
Larry Howes
Holyoke MA

European civilization, like nearly all of its predecessors, represented a marriage of the northern nomadic warrior and the luxury-loving urban dwellers of the south. The same process can be seen at work in China, where at different times semi-civilized tribes of Mongolians and Manchurians overran the established empire, only to become within a century or two, "more Chinese than the Chinese," as the historians like to put it. Even granted that Greco-Roman principles are honored more in the breach than the observance, can you cite any aspects of Teutonic culture beyond that of perpetual warmaking that have ingrained themselves in our culture (and by the same token, neither the Greeks nor the Romans could exactly be regarded as pacifists).

As for the Celts, I'm sure their modern image is heavily colored by romantic notions, but I've yet to encounter an aspect of history that isn't. And though I'm not especially enamored of the cannibalism scene, I can think of much worse ways to pass the time than painting oneself blue and running naked through the moors.

Re Mykel Board, to coin a phrase, "You're wrong." I know him personally, not well, but enough to know that he is both very intelligent and less burdened by prejudice than most of us. His writing style is deliberately provocative, and judging from the reaction I've gotten from saying one favorable thing about the guy, it works.

Housing codes were originally meant to protect people against unscrupulous builders, but in rural northern California they have been more commonly used to protect the contracting industry against owner-builders. Think: if someone is building a house for his own family to live in, doesn't he already have enough motivation to construct it safely without the law getting involved? By the same token, what's appropriate housing in Mendocino County is obviously different from what's needed in cities. After all the yuppies have been recycled, those downtown office towers, most of which are far more soundly built than typical housing projects, could go a long way toward solving the urban housing crisis.

Hello Friends!!!

Greetings from Poland to you! I've got your address from fanzine "The Laytonville Ledger" - Number 26 (Super history: "The Three Punk Rock Goats and the Big Bad Police Troll"). I don't hear your music and therefore I wrote to you. Is it possible to get records (tapes) from you for exchange or etc.? Sorry I can't send money from Poland to West countries. I hope you get me answer soon. Rely on your understanding.

Mine address: Zajac-Zkowski Jaroslaw
Warynskiego 10/73
85-320 Bydgoszcz
Poland

P.S. Approvingly you write back I send you sampler of Polish HC music.

Hello again Mr. Livermore

How's life in Laytonville? Oh yeah, I wanted to ask last time but I forgot, where is Laytonville (is it really part of the United States or is it in Communist territory)(ha ha)?(if possible enclose a map next time you write me). Well you asked pretty dang nice, so here's our demo. It's rather old and only a four track but I hope you like it anyway. At the end I added some newer rehearsal and live songs (they're not totally tight cause they were recorded the first time played). Hope to hear back from you about what you think and where Laytonville is.

Richard Gargano
NO DOGS - pope core
Pinole CA

Dear Lawrence:

I really enjoyed reading the new issue of the LOOKOUT (#29). I particularly enjoyed the articles on "Civilization" and "Wall Street." Glad to see you promoting the anti-work ethic. I've heard it all before, but I never tire of seeing/hearing it again and again. It's definitely an idea whose time has come (overdue, actually) and yet so many people - including many who openly despise their jobs - still think it's some sort of utopian/impossible crackpot pipe dream (a friend's wife almost went through the roof one night when she realized that I was seriously advocating the idea - shows where here head's at!). It can never be said enough.

Also glad to see a positive review for FRIGHTWIG! Glad somebody else sees them as more than a (bad) joke band.

In short, I read the whole thing cover to cover and found it all interesting, even the "local" stuff. Sounds like northern California is in a state of near chaos! Anyway, here's \$10, send me one copy of your record and the next five issues of the LOOKOUT.

Greg Krupey
N. Huntingdon PA

Dear dear Lawrence D. (what's the D. stand for?)

It's the eve of Friday the 13th. The latest issue (#29) is great - I've read every

issue you've ever left at Rainbow Grocery except maybe when I was on vacation.

I dig your simple personal/spiritual outlook on the dirty greed-monger-necrophiliac-addicts that pollute the world with fear toxins as a primary form of cultural disappearance and psycho-sexual terrorism.

Making community - making space for each other to release pain through creative expression - making friends and being vulnerable: this is radical action.

And now... a plug for Contraband...

We're not a music band, but we've always wanted you to come to our shows. You don't need a "comp" cuz we let everyone in who shows up until the seats are gone and most everyone pays. Cool.

So come see us - even call to reserve a space - and hang afterwards to blab or say hello.

Your cultural low down high praise streets level news is more important to me than Chron/Ex will ever be.

Keith
San Francisco

Howdy,

All in all a good little publication (#29). Good to see that Laytonville is contributing to something other than rural decadence. Marylee Bytheriver has consistently written about what is on many minds over the years and it's good to see her published in the LOOKOUT. I ain't a Libra, but a little balance goes a long way in our radical environments. Reality needs to be dealt with just as much as it needs to be escaped from.

On the minus side, Kain Kong really blew it with the Strictly Roots review. I attended that dance too (was he the honky up against the wall with two left shoes and a thumb up his ass? Oh well, never mind...). Strictly Roots has been playing for a long time and they blanket the entire coast regularly. They have many fans and detractors, and I'll let themselves defend themselves if they choose to. Everyone knows reviewers like to rave and exaggerate and be "cute" as they try to frown out copy, but... quoting, "As for their sound, it was like Bob Marley, UB40, Rootstock, etc. etc..." Holy shit! How can a paper that espouses the struggle of the third world put down Bob Marley, who outside of Paleface America, is still one of the greatest inspirations on the planet?? His music has united millions. When whites travel and mention his name, why are there smiles and instant communication, even in the ghettos? It is increasingly frustrating and downright embarrassing being white these days with folks like K. Kong around. Furthermore, Mr. Shivermore, as for reggae and the bands that play it - no two bands sound alike. The really good ones will throw in some calypso, funk, ska, zouk, hi-life, etc., to keep the stimulus-oriented, neurotically hyperactive, uptight white folks from feeling too self-conscious that they don't know how to skank (dance) to reggae, a loose, natural, healing, rhythmic experience. Heartbeat music. Kong's statement comes off like Ronald Reagan's "You've seen one redwood, you've seen them all."

The slice about those "too lazy or too stoned to comb their hair" sounds like old reactionary Ronald Reagan again with another ignorant, prejudiced (and probably jealous) statement. We're talking freedom here (free from dumb). Dreadlocks (d-r-e-a-d-l-o-c-k-s) are probably the original permanent. If you don't like someone's hair, it's your problem, not the person who wears the hair. Ah yes, life in America in the 80s. Same as it ever was... Kong is free to write his jive, but as the other Bob says: "...and don't criticize what you can't understand."

As for Rootstock, check them out when they play at Beginnings next time and you'll see plenty dancers and many smiling faces. I understand a live album of originals (reggae, ska, world beat, etc.) is in the process. They play Latentville to stay humble. UB40 is commercial - English.

Sam Screed
Ukiah

Where do you come off with this idea that sympathizing with the people of the third world (though I prefer to think in terms of one world) requires listening to and enjoying a certain kind of music? Anyway, friends who have traveled extensively in Africa tell me that Michael Jackson and Madonna are far more widely listened to than Bob Marley. Am I going to get called a racist if I say something bad about disco? I suppose that if I really wanted to go out of my way to annoy you, I could point out that reggae is just a slowed-down version of disco with occasionally more intelligent lyrics. Yeah, I know Marley had some very inspiring words, and his music was pretty catchy, too, though a bit too restful for me. But I've also heard more than enough reggae with blatantly shallow if not outright stupid lyrics. But then what do you expect out of a music closely tied to a religion centered around the worship of the thoroughly corrupt and despicable Ethiopian tyrant Haile Selassie? A religion which institutionalizes sexism on a scale that makes Jerry Falwell's bible thumpers look like charter members of the National Lesbian Alliance?

If you enjoy reggae, good for you. Have fun. But your letter strongly suggests that anyone, particularly anyone white, who doesn't share your enthusiasm is probably a closet Ku Klux Klanner who also can't dance. I've seen Kain dance, and I've played music with him for the past four years, so I know he has a sense of rhythm (though some out there, no doubt ignorant racists and jealous rednecks, might feel otherwise). I also know he hasn't got a racist bone in his body and though he chooses to wear his hair short, it takes a heavy-duty hedge cutter to keep it that way, so I doubt he's jealous of anyone else's prolific locks.

The way I see it, white folks who presume that music, art, whatever, created by people of color is somehow sacrosanct and above criticism are guilty of a racism that is more subtle but just as real as the more traditional kind. And speaking of racist statements, what is this, "UB40 is commercial - English"? English people aren't allowed to play reggae? Then how come Ukiah hippies like Rootstock are? And are Rootstock albums, Bob Marley albums, or any other reggae albums being given away for free? If not, why are they any less commercial than UB40?

Last but not least, if you want to hear some white boys who can play some real ska, not the kind played by most white bands who try to slavishly imitate black bands, but who instead reach deep inside and find their own unique brand of soul, check out the new Operation Ivy EP on Lookout Records. See, even us uptight honkies have some natural rhythm.

LL

Educating Our Children... And Ourselves...

The origin of wisdom remains a matter of some mystery. Is there a vast reservoir of the stuff, stored somewhere beneath the surface of consciousness, that we can tap into if we only know where and how to dig? Or is it an artificially constructed compound, one that can only be produced by carefully combining certain elements according to a pre-determined formula?

Regardless of its nature or source, the importance of wisdom is made most painfully obvious by its absence. Primitive peoples may have been unaware of the molecular structure of water and completely mystified by the fact that it emerged from certain places within the earth, but when the rains failed to come and the rivers and springs went dry, they needed no one to explain to them that water was very close to the essence of life.

So it is with wisdom in the life of a society. Sometimes people act wisely, and things flourish; then for mysterious reasons they are overtaken en masse by folly and the institutions they have carefully constructed collapse on them. Is this something we have no control over? Do the cycles of wisdom and foolishness emanate from something greater than ourselves, like the sun or the wind or the rain, or can we learn to cultivate wisdom in ourselves and those who will come after us?

There is no shortage of those who would have us believe that wisdom is a quantifiable commodity, one that can be systematically imparted and in many cases even bought and sold. While few are reckless enough to openly proclaim themselves wise, the world is full of people who do not for a moment doubt that everything would function far more smoothly if others could simply learn to do things their way. Such people naturally find themselves attracted to professions like religion and government, and, unfortunately, to the education of the young.

Perhaps the most fundamental error of would-be educators is to confuse knowledge with wisdom. A person can know a great deal and still know nothing of value, but all wisdom is by nature precious. Knowledge can even be the enemy of wisdom. Just as a person can work so hard and incessantly toward a goal that he or she ultimately forgets the goal and remembers only the work, someone can relentlessly stuff his or her brain with knowledge in the belief that it will somehow reach critical mass and transmute into wisdom. But how much one knows, even how well one knows it, is irrelevant. What is vital is the way in which one knows it.

This is something that can only come from within, and the best thing that any teacher can accomplish is to give the student hints about where to look. Certain skills, like reading and writing and calculating, are valuable both because of the enrichment they bring to a student's life and the way they stimulate further mental activity. But as important as they are, they are still only tools which can be grievously misused. Our institutions of "higher learning" are filled with miserable and embittered intellectuals who know something about nearly everything except themselves. And it is they who, like some sort of priesthood, control our educational agenda and poison the wells of both knowledge and wisdom for generations to come.

Yes, of course many wise, caring, and compassionate individuals are attracted to the field of education. How many of them are able to remain that way by the time they have threaded their way through the bureaucratic obstacle course that comprises modern education is another matter. It has yet to be proven that there is a systematic method of learning that can reliably be expected to produce results; how much less likely is it that the skill of teaching, which is more art than science, can be taught? And yet no one, no matter how brilliant, is allowed to become a teacher in our public schools until he or she has spent years of memorizing and regurgitating the unproven and unprovable theories of this year's educational "experts." Small wonder that when they are finally unleashed, their students suffer the same sort of mental abuse.

In a larger historical context, the idea of public education is of course a noble undertaking. It is only in the past century or two that any effort has made to extend more than perfunctory vocational training to anyone outside of the ruling class. But it could also be argued that public education in most cases still provides no more than vocational training. The technical skills required of today's peasant class are more complex than those of medieval times, but an ability to follow orders is still more highly valued than a predilection for asking questions.



GRAPHIC BY BARR

Things might be different, of course, if the business of education had not become a vast centralized industry that mirrors the bureaucracy of the government that administers it and of the offices and factories for which its graduates are destined. While I'm not suggesting that public schools are part of some nefarious scheme cooked up by corporate string-pullers to provide themselves with a reliable supply of human fodder, in all too many cases, that is exactly what public education is producing.

Most of the institutions of American society have been in a state of decay for some time now, and it is not surprising that the schools should reflect that. The fact that schools appear to be declining faster than society at large is alarming, but not surprising. Pervasive corruption breeds cynicism and despair, and these are qualities that are especially deadly to the young. Idealistic teachers are an endangered species, and most of them are to be found in the sheltered environments of small towns and private schools. Large urban schools more closely resemble penal institutions than marketplaces for ideas. Teachers and students alike learn to look elsewhere for intellectual stimulation.

But while the world remains as strange and wondrous a place as always, the glut of distractions produced by the modern age leaves many of us feeling detached and alienated in the midst of the splendor. Again, it is the young who are especially affected by such feelings. Traditional sources of information like books are rendered inaccessible by rising illiteracy, and as the paving and malling of America accelerates, nature, the greatest teacher of all, becomes ever harder to find.

A truly determined person can and will educate him or herself, of course. This has always been the case, and most of the great thinkers whom we force our children to study about in school were largely self-taught. Such people are in the minority, though not so tiny a minority as the professional educators would have us believe. But if we as a society are to ever attain anything resembling true democracy, or at least to reverse our decline into a high-tech neo-feudalism, we must find ways of awakening a hunger for knowledge and wisdom in the masses of people who are currently treated as little more than spare parts for the grossly misnamed Information Age.

The challenge facing modern education is twofold. Giving people the intellectual tools they need to begin thinking for themselves is the obvious first step, but equally important is that we keep from stifling those who are capable of learning on their own. Einstein, one of

many notable thinkers who found himself more hindered than helped by formal education, later said, "It is...nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry; for this delicate little plant, aside from stimulation, stands mainly in need of freedom; without this it goes to wrack and ruin without fail."

But freedom is in short supply in most schools. To be fair, this is not entirely the fault of administrators and teachers, though they must take their share of the blame. But adults as a species seem to have a hard time letting children go their own way. A young girl staring out the window and idly humming to herself may be planting and watering the seeds that will one day enable her to expand upon the Theory of Relativity, but too many parents and teachers see only an idle child who would be better off doing her lessons or helping with the housework, or at least outdoors playing with the other children.

This dread of unstructured time permeates all of western society, and is perhaps at its worst here in the United States. This can undoubtedly be traced in part to our Calvinist heritage, but our tendency to interpret uninvited thoughts and feelings as emissaries of Satan rather than naturally occurring opportunities for growth and enjoyment is also a symptom of our relative lack of sophistication as a culture. For most of our history we have believed, or at least been told to believe, that we could gain our freedom through the material security and mental discipline produced by hard work. The contradiction inherent in this thinking should be obvious, but the slogan *Arbeit Macht Frei*, (work makes you free) posted by the nazis over the entrances to their concentration camps, is still to some extent the watchword of not only our institutions but even our personal lives.

If we can not allow our own minds to run free and wander where they may, we will not be very successful in encouraging our children to do the same. And if we are unable to learn from them, we are certainly unable to teach them. Any real education involves the exchange of ideas, not, a one-way transfer of information. "Teaching must be done by conversation, the way Socrates did it," said José Martí (on the other hand, he also said, "Seeing everybody work is more beautiful than seeing one person think," a philosophy which, if put into practice would probably leave little room for the likes of Socrates to be hanging about the town square engaging in random discourse).

In any event, conversation is not to be found in abundance in most schools. John Goodlad's *Study of Schooling* found, based on more than 1,000 observations of elementary-level classrooms, that teachers asked 96 per cent of the questions, and that most of those questions were not aimed at eliciting thought or discussion so much as at finding out whether the students had done their homework. Again, this is not entirely the fault of the schools. Large classes are not conducive to conversation, and the modern teacher is faced with a generation that has been conditioned by television to be passive consumers of information (and it had better be entertaining information, or it's tune-out time).

To fulfil the Socratic ideal education would require a teacher-student ratio that is essentially one-to-one, obviously something that is not going to be achieved by our current educational system no matter how extensively it is reformed. It is in fact impossible given the current limitations of our society. There are simply not enough intelligent and aware adults to go around. It would be ideal if parents could educate their own children, and in many cases they can, but there are millions of children whose parents are unwilling or unable to do that. It is essential that we provide them with the opportunity to avoid becoming yet another generation of intellectual and emotional cripples while at the same time decreasing our dependence on institutions that have arguably done at least as much harm as good.

Where do we start? A good place would be to do away with the whole notion of compulsory education. People can be forced to repeat slogans and formulas, even brainwashed into thinking that what they are doing is good for them, but true learning can no more be dragged out of an unwilling subject than a flower can be forced to bloom ahead of its time by forcibly prying open its petals. The disciplinary problems caused by students who simply do not want to be sitting there in a classroom waste the time and energy of students who do, not to mention what they do to the teacher who is forced to deal with them. Some children thrive on the competitive social atmosphere of the classroom, while others dread it. Above all, the element of compulsion turns what should be a joyous experience into one of drudgery. While this may serve as good preparation for the workaday world as it now exists, it is the antithesis of true education.

"In the tender grades," says Paul Goodman, "the schools are a baby-sitting service during a period of collapse of the old-type family. In the junior and high school grades, they are an arm of the police, providing cops and concentration camps paid for in the budget under the heading "Board of Education." While there is an element of hyperbole there, there is also an element of truth. It has yet to be demonstrated that it is beneficial to keep healthy young children cooped up in the unnatural environment of a classroom when their natural response to the world is and should be one of happy play.

Letting children lollygag around the playground instead of struggling to "better" themselves will not sit well with our Puritan ethic.

But play, as Froebel, the inventor of kindergartens, said, "is the first means of development of the human mind, its first effort to make acquaintance with the outward world, to collect original experiences from things and facts, and so exercise the powers of body and mind." And you thought they were just running around screaming at the top of their lungs!

The lesson of play is in fact one that children can better teach to their elders. Another is the non-linear and undifferentiated approach to experience, which adults, particularly those overburdened by intellect, have the hardest time grasping. But to play and to gather experiences freely takes time, and that is something we deny to both our children and ourselves. To take six or more hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year out of the fleeting years of childhood is an unconscionable crime. A child of average intelligence should be able to grasp the amount of information imparted in a week of schooling in a matter of a few hours. The rest of the time is spent in busy work and boredom while the teacher struggles with recalcitrant students and silently communicates the lesson that much of life and learning are meant to be tedious and boring. Outside the window (if there is one) the sun shines and butterflies skim the edges of an enchanted forest. Inside a child learns to shut up his or her most vital impulses, to discard the magic of dreams and fantasy, to begin to grow old and die.

It is only too typical of those who control our educational system that they respond to its failures by prescribing more of it. As test scores have fallen along with the productivity of American workers (this "productivity" is of course measured only in terms of quantity, not quality; nerve gas cannisters and canine diet pills count for the same as food and warm blankets), the recommended solution is to increase the length of the school day, to make the children attend school twelve months a year. The same logic dictates that if a farmer noticed after putting a load of manure onto his fields that his plants were beginning to shrivel up, he should solve the problem by doubling the amount of manure.

Another problem with schools is their size. Although herding a thousand or more students into one centralized location may be efficient in terms of administration, it is counter-productive when it comes to developing individuality and personal relationships. It is a popular myth that one of the most valuable lessons of school is the socialization that occurs when children are thrown together with large numbers of their peers. But children are no different from adults in this regard: they function at their best in small groups of two or three. It is in large groups that the least desirable characteristics of human behavior thrive, things like bullying, cliquishness, and blind conformity. A child who is not vocal and assertive, and plenty of perfectly normal children are not, may never get a chance to express and develop his or ideas when the social agenda is dominated by the loudest or the strongest. Yes, but this is the sort of world children will grow up into, many will argue, so they may as well prepare for it. But in education we are not trying to duplicate the world as it now exists, but to search for means of bettering it.

It should be clear by now that my own preference is for very small, decentralized schools, with no more than a handful of students per teacher. The ultimate ideal would be for children to be taught in the home by their parents and/or by neighbors and friends. The public schools should remain open, but on a completely voluntary basis, both to serve those children whose parents are not qualified to teach, and as resource centers for the whole community. Many children would choose, for one reason or another, to attend a traditional school, and it would be better still if adults could feel free to join them. The concept of grades should be abolished; students should proceed at their own pace. If a three year-old wants to come to school and start learning to read, great! If an 18 year-old, or a 28 year-old hasn't progressed beyond *Peter Rabbit*, so what. At least he's reading, which is more than can be said for the majority of adults in this country today.

These are radical suggestions, and I don't expect to see them implemented any time soon, although increasing numbers of parents are beginning to take it upon themselves to educate their own children. In order for this to happen on any widespread scale, though, the fundamental structure of society will have to be overhauled. Just as children need less, not more time in the classroom, adults need far less time in the workplace and far more in the home. The future of a society lies not in the number of widgets it produces, but in the quality of its children.

"The main thing children learn in school," said H.L. Mencken, "is how to lie." "And to be devious little weasels," added cartoonist Matt Groening. We can do better than that; we have to, and the place to start is not in tampering further with our children's minds in an attempt to see what makes them tick and how they might be more easily manipulated. If we are to educate anyone, it should be ourselves, and in order to do so we must become not only knowledgeable, but wise. If we fail at that, our children will disregard whatever we say, and quite rightly so. If we are not working toward creating a world where learning is a joyous and lifelong experience, then we forfeit any right to teach others. As Paul Goodman summed up his writings on the subject, "There is no right education but growing up into a worthwhile world."

Two Slightly Opposing Opinions

Public Education: Is It Worth Saving?

Bruce Anderson: It's Hopeless

Bruce Anderson is best known for the weekly newspaper, the Anderson Valley Advertiser, one of the best or worst newspapers in the USA, depending on who you listen to. His uncompromising views and incendiary language have drawn the attention of such establishment organs as the Wall Street Journal, Time, the Los Angeles Times, and NBC News. Anderson has hurled an unremitting stream of vitriol at the American system of public education, particularly as it's operated here in Mendocino County, and last year was an unsuccessful candidate for county school board.

LOOKOUT: *The other day a woman said to me, "You know Bruce Anderson, don't you? Can you tell me exactly what it is he's trying to accomplish?"*

BRUCE ANDERSON: What I'm trying to accomplish is the destruction of the American way of life, if she asks that question again, because it's insidious and threatens the entire world, and that probably hasn't occurred to her before.

Hmmm...

Yeah, and that's where it starts, at the elementary level of education. This is why only 5000 people in America buy first-run fiction or first-run poetry, because it's a civilization on the skids, and people aren't properly educated, or educated at all to the possibilities. You talk to local so-called liberals in Mendocino County, for example, and they'll say, "Well, Bruce, we really need enrichment in the schools," and I say, "Well, it wasn't that long ago that mathematics, reading, and writing were considered enriching experiences." And believe it or not they can be interesting. The whole argument is so skewed and it goes off in so many crazy directions that I don't think the system works at all. I think that for most children, especially sensitive, intelligent children, that to send them to a public school, or to most schools anywhere, amounts to cruel and unusual punishment. I think it's just a very painful, depressing experience for them.

Yet you send your own kids there...

Because they live in a painful, depressing country, and it sort of acclimates them to what the country is like. I'd be apprehensive to keep them out, because I've known a lot of kids who've been kept out. Some of them have been very tough and very resourceful, but others of them seem to be protected to the point where when they get out in the world they're just going to be blown away.

I've heard a similar theory used to justify young men going into the army...

Well, I know there's contradictions to it, but basically you send your kids to a place that's dumb and boring, and often vicious, and you send them there for five or six hours a day, and it's counterproductive. In many cases, it turns them away from learning and the life of the mind for all of their lives. That certainly happens at the high school level.

So it you're saying that the school system as it exists now is hopeless...

It is hopeless. America's basically hopeless, and the school system is hopeless. All of our institutions are corrupt and rotten and hopeless, and should be dismantled, beginning with the education system.

And assuming it was dismantled, how would you, for instance, educate your kids?

In an ideal world, you'd have these sort of free-floating tutors, and the most successful of them would have the most students. You'd find the kindest, most intelligent person you could find, and assign your kid to him.

This is back to the Golden Age of Greece...

Right. Of course, Socrates would never be permitted in our schools. Or Plato. Or think of any great intellectual or historical figure. There'd be no way. He wouldn't be elected to school board, he wouldn't be appointed principal...

Of course at that time there was only a very small educated class, and the majority of the population were slaves. In a system of free-floating tutors, how would that provide for the people who couldn't afford to pay tutors?

Well, we're talking socialism here, an ideal sort of world...

Also, what about the parents, and there are a lot of them around here, who couldn't care less whether their kids can read or write, who don't think it's important?

Parents with those attitudes are also victims of public education, and unless a person is mentally retarded, an educational system can be devised that will be interesting, stimulating, and challenging. Our educational system doesn't do it because it's been captured by the dumbest people in the country. That's essentially what's happened.

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Brian Buckley: It's Working Here

Brian Buckley began teaching in the Laytonville school system in 1980, and with the exception of one year spent as principal of Anderson Valley High School, has been here ever since. This year he assumed the dual duties of superintendent of the Laytonville Unified School District and principal of Laytonville High School. He appears to be popular with both parents and students, and is very optimistic about the future of public education, at least here in Laytonville.

LOOKOUT: *I'd like to start by asking you about the accusation made by Bruce Anderson in a recent interview; he says that you're a butt-licker who just goes along with authority. Do you have any response to that?*

BRIAN BUCKLEY: Like I said before, he never did know how to spell my last name.

I get the impression that you feel Bruce's main aim is being critical and attacking, and that you feel you're more engaged in positive actions such as building a system that works, that you think the system can be reformed and improved...

Yes, I don't think the system is universally bad. I think that there are examples of the system working and doing what it's intended to do. That seems to me to happen most frequently in a small system like Laytonville. I think that we can capitalize and build on the inherent advantages that are part of the Laytonville system, and create excellence.

So, bringing things down to our own local system, you've said that you consider this a great opportunity because it's small. Do you think that we have or are creating a better quality of education here than a lot of systems are able to offer?

Yeah. I think that's because, whether we like it or not, it's what could be called a holistic system, and because there's a high degree of personal interaction between students and staff, and that we've been able to create an atmosphere that is familial in nature, trusting, and cooperative, to the point where on a per capita basis I think we have fewer discipline problems, certainly of a less serious nature than most other institutions I'm familiar with. We're able to channel the energy we put into the system into positive and productive endeavors. Again, that's theoretical, that's not to say that it's perfect; these are just natural consequences of the social arrangement that exists in Laytonville.

Let's talk about that social arrangement. We have a fairly unique population here. We've got a lot of students that come from a very underground kind of culture, we've got others from fairly mainstream working class families; how does it all mix together?

It seems to me that the people in Laytonville have learned to peacefully co-exist to a greater degree than other communities that have had to knock dogmatic heads for a while. I'm sure that money has played a role in that, for example, the underground economy that has come as a result of some of the illegal agriculture in the area. But beyond that, I think that because people have had to deal with one another face to face, they realize that there's a person behind a philosophy or lifestyle. Once they get to know one another, they tend to accept one another. I think other communities have remained highly divided based on philosophies as opposed to interpersonal relations.

You mentioned illegal agriculture, which is obviously a major element in the cultural mix here. I'm wondering how you perceive that affecting the kids, both in terms of the family backgrounds that they have, and also in terms of their own values. And also, do drugs play a major role or create a major problem in the local schools?

That's one of the most surprising elements. I think that we have no worse, and possibly a better situation with regard to drug abuse than many other communities, and I'm talking about communities that aren't necessarily part of the Emerald Triangle. It seems to me that despite all the dope growing, the drug of choice seems to be alcohol among teenagers. I am not aware of a lot of marijuana being smoked by teenagers. It certainly goes on, but I would be surprised if the numbers are as high as they were seven or eight years ago. I don't think that the trend is continuing among young people. By the same token, we have a greater abuse of speed and coke than we used to.

You're entrusted with teaching the children of some, probably quite a few of the pot growers; given the picture that's painted for us by the mass media of there being a bunch of drug-crazed idiots running around with machine guns up there in the hills, how is it possible that kids can come out of such an environment and have a chance of being good students?

Well, obviously, as with most media, one needs an angle for a story, and to have a catchy or sensational theme helps to unify the story and to sell papers, and I certainly don't think that the recent portrayals of Laytonville in various local media have been that realistic. Certainly there have been some tragedies with violence that have occurred locally recently, but if one takes a look at the suspects, particularly in the one murder trial that's going on now, those are not Laytonville people. They're people that have come up to Laytonville and have spent some time here. They're

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Anderson...

It does seem to encourage mediocrity. The person who's most likely to get a job seems to be somebody who's bland, inoffensive...

You've been to college, right? Who took education courses? They were even dumber than the jocks. The jocks at least had to take physiology and kinesiology, which were difficult classes to get through, a lot of memory work. Whereas the education majors, they took... I don't know what the hell they took, but it was a joke, it was a farce. And they were considered the dumbest students on the campus.

I've heard stories of people who taught for years in private schools, even run them, and done so very successfully, but still weren't allowed to teach in public schools until they took a couple more years of education classes...

Well, they've set up a guild, not a meritocracy, but a mediocrity. And you have to get certain papers and credentials to belong to this guild. And to become a school administrator, the guild is even more difficult to crack. Just because you have to take an absolutely insane course of study for three or four years, and so only a person utterly lacking in imagination and talent would sit through those classes.

As if it were designed to boil your brains down to mush before they let you loose on the kids?

Capitalism requires brains that are boiled down to mush. It requires certain assumptions. It requires certain lessons, and the lesson is: "Get to work on time. Do stupid things. And don't ask questions." We have a whole nation of people who don't necessarily want to be sheep, and they feel guilty about being sheep, but they've lost their freedom of speech and other basic freedoms, because if they exercise them, they get fired, and become an outsider and an outcast. And that's what education does to people. It trains them to be pegs in the machine. To make money for other people. It has nothing to do with independent thought, creativity, learning at all, in a traditional sense. Nothing. I would rather send my kid to school in the psycho ward at the Mendocino County Jail every day than I would to, say, Laytonville Elementary or Anderson Valley Elementary, given that narrow choice.

Let's assume for discussion's sake that the abolition of the school system isn't going to happen any time soon. In the meantime, is there anything we can do to make the existing system work better?

No. And I think it's the obligation of every citizen and every person to undermine the schools as much as it's in his power to do. Attack the personnel on a personal level, insult them, analyze them, all with a view to destroying them. And ruining their lives. Who cares? Good. If every teacher in Mendocino County marched into the ocean tomorrow and committed suicide, I would be right out there on the bluffs applauding. I hate to be that cynical about it, but I do not know one interesting teacher. That's my personal experience. There may be one or two out there, but I just don't happen to know any. I don't even know a teacher who reads books.

I had a scientist, a very highly educated and intelligent man, tell me the other night that books are obsolete, fiction is boring, that you can get more out of good television programming...

That's a typical ignoramus technocrat point of view. Lots of people with advanced degrees in technical sciences think like that, and they tend to be very narrow. I mean, these are the people who brought us the bomb, right, and nerve gas? Again, they're also victims of their education. The great scientists, Einstein, Oppenheimer, those guys, they were also humanists who were well-rounded and had a vast fund of knowledge.

*I've been giving a lot of thought myself to the kind of knowledge you get from books as opposed to "educational" television. My own belief is that books are indispensable because not only do they contain all the information that you need to educate yourself but they also stimulate the mind to work on its own in a way that video just can't. It doesn't, no. Video is a passive sort of medium, and you just sit there and absorb whatever it's throwing at you, without much effort on your own part. It explains everything for you. It doesn't require any sort of thinking or act of the imagination. Even the great movies... I saw *Ran* the other day, you know, the Japanese film. Actually the impact it had on me, it was just sort of stunning that it could be that good artistically, but it would be entirely different, maybe even a greater experience if you could read it. But everything was right there in front of you, it was unmistakable and very clear, and it didn't require anything but to sit there and watch it.*

To me that's the whole problem with video, movies, etc., that the whole experience is just poured into your brain...

And most video of course is negative, and it's trying to sell you something. It very seldom approaches an art form.

In light of the minimal value that seems to be attached to reading these days, how do you interest kids in reading? Especially if their parents have no interest in it?

I thought that was the function of the schools, but obviously it's not. Again, it's a good argument against the schools, the terrible job they've done, evil job, I think. Because children have not reached a point where they read well enough to know that it's probably the most stimulating form, not only of entertainment, but of obtaining knowledge. That's the teacher's function, to communicate that, and the teachers haven't fulfilled their function.

Actually, a couple of teachers have expressed that same view, and even asked me how I thought they could motivate kids to want to read. Well, you can't do it if you're not interested in it yourself.

I'm speaking of teachers who do care about reading, who think it's the greatest thing in the world, and they have an incredible amount of trouble convincing some kids of that.

Maybe they're in the wrong profession. If they can't switch on the light bulb with these kids, maybe they should consider doing something else. I mean, I'm not talking about all kids, there are a lot of them who you're not going to reach, they're too blitzed, they're too immersed in the culture as is. But with the brightest ones you should be able to do that.

You've got a pretty substantial library in your own home, and I assume your kids read...

Well, because when they were smaller we lived outside of town, and there wasn't television, so to amuse themselves they reached for books. There was nothing else to do. And that's the way I grew up myself.

So would you be inclined to say that television was in some ways the enemy...

Television's another negative force in the society. We live in a pathological society, and the education system, television, technology, the economic system, all contribute to the pathology, and it's driving everybody crazy. What's surprising is that there aren't more crazy people. It's testimony to the resilience of the human being that we're all not stark staring mad, because this is a pathological culture. It's nuts. Completely nuts. And everything that's poured into a kid's head, about 90% of it is crazy. It's completely out of mainstream human traditions, it's completely... We're in uncharted waters more than anything else, and it's nuts... It's destroying the earth, it destroys individuals, it's evil...

Do you think any other societies or cultures are doing a better job of educating their young?

Yeah, I would say that the socialist countries are probably doing a better job. And even some of the advanced... As we all know, Japan does, and France and Germany, and England, I guess does... But again, they're pathological in their own way.

How do you feel about the trend toward specialization and vocational training?

It's a trick. It's another trick. You go to any public high school, Laytonville included, though a better example would be the bigger ones, like Ukiah High School, and you'll find all the working class kids, all the proles, regardless of what their intelligence quotient might be, they'll be out there in the shops, and the message to them has been right from the beginning, "You're basically a schmuck, and we'll teach you how to repair cars or work on assembly lines, so you go out here to auto shop or wood shop and we'll just keep you busy." There isn't even an attempt to teach a lot of kids. And then the kids in the so-called advanced placement classes, they'll be the sons and daughters of the local ruling classes.

Why do schools seem to have two or three times as many administrators as they did when you or I went to school?

Again, they're a product of a system that encourages mediocrity. Nobody ever examines these school districts... It'd be very interesting to put a video camera on one of these guys, [Mendocino County Superintendent of Schools Jim] Spence, for example, for eight hours a day, and see what he actually does, how he passes his time. I think the results would be shocking. He just dicks off all day long. They go to conferences, and they relate to one another, and they interface, and they walk around... You can just see them walking around like Vincent Price in that movie where he spaced out whenever things became unpleasant. You go to these bureaucracies, like at Ukiah High School — they actually have Muzak piped in there, by the way, and all this lush carpeting — people are sort of walking around with vague smiles on their faces, with cryptic messages in their hands. They smile and everything... I think it's very weird...

I'm told that Willits High School has started accepting paid advertising to be put up in the halls, like Drink Coca-Cola, Eat Snickers, Join the Army...

Yeah! That's typical! Good! I applaud them! That's the message of public education, that's what they're preparing them for, yeah, put the advertisements up... You want these kids to be good consumers, don't you? You don't want them to drop out and not buy stuff. Heavens, we couldn't have that.

You and one of your friends (David Colfax) both have sons who went to Harvard. Colfax's kids were taught at home, yours by the public school system. Would you say that in both cases the kids were successfully educated, by virtue of their being accepted at one of our most prestigious universities?

No. All it proves — and I wouldn't encourage any of my other children to go to a place like Harvard — that certain children from very privileged backgrounds — either materially or intellectually — can do very well in this system. You learn to master the system. I could take any child from Ukiah or Laytonville or anyplace, and you send him to my house, say at age 5, and I'll guarantee Harvard or Yale. Any kid of normal intelligence. The kids who go to those kind of places are raised in homes where there's lots of reading material around, where there's intelligent conversation, they learn how to talk, they learn what words mean, they learn how to play the game the way that the system requires the game be played. I knew I could get my kid into Harvard. There was no problem. We went about it systematically. He started taking the SAT test when he was in eighth grade, and he was already in the 600s, so we knew he was a shoo-in. High school in his case was just a silly place where you went five or six hours a day. Luckily he liked sports, so he enjoyed that, and he enjoyed his friends, and he enjoyed monkeying around all day. But then the real learning was at home.

Would you have made him go to school if he didn't want to?

No, of course not. I have a kid who's now a sophomore, but for the last three months of school last spring, he refused to go. He just said it was stupid and he was just required to do a bunch of bullshit, and he said, "I'm not going." And I said, "I agree with you. You don't have to go if you don't want to." You're right." His perception was right, and I'm not going to force him to go.

I take it you're opposed to compulsory attendance...

Yeah, sure, it shouldn't be compulsory, especially in this system. I know a little about Laytonville now, for example, and I'll bet for a number of high school students there that's a very unpleasant, frightening place to have to go to each day. Because there are some really stupid, brutal people on that staff, I know that for a fact, and I know that they're the kind of nazi assholes that would take advantage of weak kids, or weird kids, kids who didn't quite fit into the great football halftime show that they put on up there...

Would it be an improvement if kids could just come into whatever class they felt they needed help in, or were interested in?

There'd be all kinds of things that you could do to improve the system, sure, but they're not going to do any of them. They're going to take the easiest way out. Because the people who are in charge of the schools don't have the intelligence, or any sort of vision at all, to even make obvious improvements.

You have personal experience with our Superintendent of Schools in Laytonville (Brian Buckley), who spent last year as principal of Anderson Valley High School. How did he do there? What do you think of his qualifications to run a school district?

He's just sort of a natural-born butt-licker, so he does well in any kind of system. He's a harmless sort of guy, but you know, if the nazis marched in tomorrow, he'll put the swastika decal up on his office window. You know, you wanna get along, you go along. That's the ethic. He's not going to take any heroic stands against Bill Bailey or Lorne Strider or the football coach, or the Larsons, or any of the other jerks who run the town up there. I mean, they run the school district, obviously.

By the way, did you want to send your congratulations to Bill Bailey for being elected to the school board?

Well, there you go. Okay, yeah, tell everybody on Spy Rock they can just send their kids down to school with no qualms at all.

Buckley...

not a homegrown variety. I think, being located where we are in the Emerald Triangle, being located on Highway 101, we're going to get our share of imported violence, and as with any other community, we'll have our share of homegrown violence, but I don't feel that it's out of proportion to what one could expect in any community. In terms of the kids: we have kids from horrible family backgrounds attending school who are actually testimony to the human spirit and being able to overcome their background, and we have some kids who succumb to a number of background factors that have put them at a disadvantage. But again, we're like many other schools and the negative elements in a person's family structure come in all forms. Kids growing up in Los Angeles have some; kids growing up in Willits have some. I think it would be a mistake to make any generalizations about the kids here.

Another of Bruce Anderson's gripes concerning you was that you congratulated the new school board members and said that the community had chosen wisely. Apparently he felt differently about some or all of the board members. As an administrator, you have to work with the school board, no matter how good or bad it may be, that's been chosen by the community, and that requires a certain amount of compromise. How does that fit in with the ideal of education being, well, let's say pure, of being unfettered by political considerations?

First of all, within the system that was set up by the state of California, that doesn't exist, and I would maintain that in any social system you will not have any institution untainted by politics. You might have one group replacing another group that's in power, one form of government replacing another form of government, but there will always be somebody who's laying down rules for other people to follow. In an anarchical society, that will evolve from anarchy. In response to Bruce, who wants to tear everything down in order to build it up again, I would say that he's advocating capital punishment for education, and I think he does so pretty lightly, without examining all the consequences. In terms of his decrying my lauding the community for their wisdom in electing the board members that they did, I don't know what he knows about the people that were running, but I don't feel a need to retract that statement at all. I think that they chose three qualified individuals who will together create a balanced board and I don't believe that there's going to be one set philosophy or power group that will control that board. There is going to be a collection of five individuals who are going to be working for the best interest of the school district, and I think that the people that were elected were wise selections on the basis of intelligence, experience, and energy. I don't know who else Bruce would have voted for, but I would be hard pressed to find a better combination out of those who ran. In terms of how politics affects education, which I think was your basic question, yes it affects it at all levels. There are state tests that our kids take, and politicians decide that those tests will be taken, and they hire people to devise those tests. The very fact that there is criticism of education is political, and there is nothing without politics. To think that there could be education without politics is absurd. Everybody has an opinion, and since people have different opinions, all of a sudden you get politics.

A common criticism of modern education is the disproportionate amount of energy that goes into administration as opposed to actual instruction. Here in the Laytonville district, what would you say is the breakdown between administration and instruction?

Laytonville I'm sure has the lowest ratio of administrators of any district in the county, by virtue of the fact that we have a superintendent-principal, myself, and an elementary school administrator, Dick Matlock. That's two administrators for approximately 550 students.

Do you feel that's an advantage or a liability, that you have no more administrators than that?

I personally view that right now as a liability. The reason I say that is because we have a low student-teacher ratio — I think we're doing a good job in that department — and there are two differences in types of administration. A site administrator — a principal — is in a reactive mode. You don't know what's walking through the door next, you're dealing with immediate situations, you're dealing with discipline, a lot of day to day organization, communication. You're doing things that other people don't have time to do. Essentially teachers should be teaching, and there's a lot more to running a school than just what goes on in the classroom. What goes on in the classroom is most important, but it's not going to be a pleasant experience for people unless somebody else is taking care of all the details. I believe the superintendent should have time to set direction, tone, research issues that we can't afford to act quickly on. A superintendent needs to be a futurist, planning, thinking about the future, and spending a lot of discretionary time in those activities. A good superintendent many times will be spending up to half of his or her time outside of the district, finding out about programs, trying to bring in money.

I've been getting the impression that one of the superintendent's main jobs is that of fundraiser...

There's never enough money, the nature of the beast is that there's never enough money...

How about the theory that the need for money tends to expand commensurate to the amount of money available?

Absolutely true. That's what I said; there's never enough money. There are hard facts about education in California that indicate a lack of public commitment to education. We have one of the lowest per capita expenditures...

49th out of 50, I think...

Yes. That's inexcusable, as far as I'm concerned. But at the same time, when you have a population, only a third of which has kids in school at any one time, you can see why when it's put on a political basis, why schools should tend to be underfunded. At any rate, part of the tricks of the trade as an administrator is to try, if there is money for various special programs out there, to find out what those programs are and how they could work in your particular district. I don't feel I have enough time to do that as much as I would like to.

If the job were divided, which would you rather be, principal or superintendent?

I think a year ago I would have said principal. At this point I would say superintendent, but I should qualify that by saying only superintendent of a small district where I still would be able to have contact with students, know them personally, to feel intimately involved and tied in with the whole phase of what's going on. I think now I have an idea of the directions we need to go, what we need to do, and I think that if I had help in taking care of day to day things, which take up an incredible amount of time, that I would be able to do that. I feel that during the time that I spend out of the district, which averages close to one day a week, I'm not doing my job as principal. The school gets along fine, but I think there's a little bit of suffering that goes along, other people have to pick up the slack.

When you're out of the district, where do you mostly go?

A combination of meetings, essentially. I meet with the other superintendents once a month. There are league meetings, there are special education meetings, conferences that I need to go to, or workshops explaining this or that program. For example, we have a coordinator compliance review coming up this week. To find out the guidelines on how to conduct one and prepare for that, I had to go to an all-day meeting...

Some of this seems like apparently inescapable bureaucratic realities, which, if there were reform at a higher level, you wouldn't have to go through...

Yeah. I think some of it comes from that age-old desire of people to, I think, correct human problems with political or policy solutions. To give an example, the rise of unions was brought on by mismanagement. Unions are facing a difficult time now because of their own mismanagement. When people hear about the connections with organized crime in terms of the retirement funds, and the fact that there's a tremendous political presence that's been created for the National Education Association, it causes a polarization. Because of mismanagement, because of screwups by people, we get these large reactions to it. I would maintain that if managers in the past had been fair and up front in dealing with individuals, the need for unions would never have arisen, and then we wouldn't have the excess that unions have gotten into now. In teaching, for example, school boards used to fire teachers routinely after two or three years. Why? So they wouldn't have to pay them more on the salary schedule. A teacher couldn't buy a home, they knew that they would not stay in a community for very long, and this was *de rigueur*, it was not an unusual situation. That's why we got tenure.

Now that's being abused, some say...

Exactly. Now you have a situation where there are some teachers that are not doing the job, but to remove them would take an extremely talented and committed administrator the equivalent of a full year, and that means you're not doing something else. And it would cost the district, the district would have to plan on 10 or 20 thousand dollars, frequently, to accomplish this. It's created a very difficult situation, yet it wouldn't have happened if the boards hadn't abused their power in the first place.

What kind of budget are we talking about for Laytonville schools?

\$2.6 million. Approximately \$4000 per student.

One criticism frequently levelled at the Laytonville system is the result of what might be called the "brain drain," where you have the brighter kids going down to Willits or other larger school districts in the belief that Laytonville is unable to offer a lot of diversity in courses. For instance, I think you only offer one foreign language. Do you see any way for a small school district to keep the brighter and more talented kids?

I think a lot of it is a matter of perception. Perhaps we need to do a better selling job. I don't feel that our educational system is in any way inferior to schools that offer more courses. The courses that we teach, I think we do just as good a job with those as any other institution. However, through a correspondence study, we can have a student take anything he or she wants. Foreign language, college level, high school level, it's virtually unlimited. If Berkeley or the University of Nebraska offers it, the student can take it here in Laytonville.

I wasn't aware of that. Are the students?

I don't believe they are, as much as they should be. Right now we're in the process of writing a student handbook in which we're going to be explaining that to them. It was something that the school was not aware of until just last year.

The parents of kids living in the Spy Rock area have been complaining that it's a considerable hardship to get them down to Laytonville every day... I understand you're in favor of establishing a satellite school, a one-room type school up on the mountain rather than continuing to bus the kids to town...

It's all real exploratory right now. I'm behind the concept and have done enough looking into it to feel that it could work to the advantage of the students and parents, and, from a financial standpoint, for the district. I haven't been up to look at a potential site, so I wouldn't begin to know where it might be. One of the things I'm waiting for is the parents, who've agreed to do an informal demographic study, a head count, essentially, of where the students and families who'd be taking advantage of this situation are located.

I assume this school would be aimed at both Spy Rock and Iron Peak...

I may be stepping on toes here, but I'm assuming we'll lump them together.

You seem to feel pretty positive about how the system is developing here in Laytonville. Are you committed to working here for the foreseeable future?

Yes.

Not interested in moving on to bigger and better things?

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. No, I'm not looking towards that. If there were a move in the future, it would not be to go to a bigger and better district, that would not be the motivation behind it. The reason I feel positive about what's going on here — it'd be easy not to, because there are no guarantees — but the most important part of my job is to hire truly good people. The system works well when you have good people working with the students. There are no guarantees, no matter how many hoops you make applicants go through, there's no guarantee they're going to be good until you have a chance to see them on a day to day basis in the classroom. I think the reason that I'm pleased with our progress and why I look forward to more is that we've got good people in there right now. Not that everybody's an educational artist at this point, and that we could take any one teacher in Laytonville and throw him or her against the best teacher in another district and ours would do better, I'm not saying that at all. But I think on an average, we're doing very well, and I think the attitude of our staff is that they are serious and dedicated about doing the best job they can, and that when we provide them with tools, they'll take those tools and respond.

How are we doing with test scores, and with kids going on to college?

We have in any given year between 25% and 35% going on to college. When I first got here in 1980 it was less than 10%. And I think that part of the reason for that is that there's not necessarily a guaranteed future here locally. I think students are perhaps realizing more than they did in the past that there's a lot of opportunity out

there, but that it requires a more extensive background than just floating through high school. Also, I think we have increased parental expectations, and a combination of social factors creating more of a college prep atmosphere.

Would you say this is partly due to the newcomers?

Yes. Without question, some of the back to the land people of the 60s and 70s brought with them a philosophical stance in terms of where they were living. They weren't coming here for economic reasons, yet they brought with them an attitude that valued education. They wanted their children to go on in school and fully expected that they would. Compared to, say, 20 or 30 years ago, the families that were here were long-time families, and there were a few major employers, most notably and still remaining, Harwood, and if the father or mother was working for Harwood, it was natural to expect that the son would work for Harwood. It was a community-oriented company and was real good about hiring local people. There was a pretty secure career or job track for kids. I don't think that exists anymore. Harwood is still real good about hiring local people and helping kids with summer jobs, but the days of free-wheeling expansion of the lumber industry are gone, and jobs are tight all over. The back to the landers have lots of roots elsewhere in more urban or suburban areas, and the kids seem to be traveling more these days. They're more exposed to life outside of Mendocino County than they were only 10 or 20 years ago.

That brings up an interesting question: how much attention should schools pay to preparing students for jobs as opposed to teaching them how to think?

I would posit that the two go hand in hand, that in any job the ability to think clearly is regarded as a plus.

Even in something like assembly line work?

Yes.

It would seem that there you almost have to turn off parts of your brain... and some people would argue that that's exactly what the public schools teach students to do...

I would say systematically that that's not true. I think that jobs that are absolutely brainless are being taken over by robots, that people who are working on assembly lines now are there for a reason, that for whatever reason it cannot be done by a robot, there's a human interpretation factor. Whether it's a matter of putting a bolt in this way or that way, regardless of how limited the decisions made by the worker, clear thinking is required. If you talk to the California Business Roundtable, the Roundtable on education, the employers are constantly asking the school system to send them better qualified people, people better able to read, write, think clearly, to figure things out for themselves. It's also a fact that because of the increased specialization, there's no job that in the future isn't going to require some on the job education. So what the schools are left to do is to give the fundamentals of an education, reading, writing, and arithmetic, and clear thinking, and beyond that I think they want to pass on some sort of cultural legacy.

A View From The Old School...

Charles Saltzer, 80, began his career in education as the principal of a rural Michigan high school in 1928. He was 20 years old at the time. He devoted nearly 40 years to teaching and school administration, most of it in the Grose Pointe (Michigan) school system. He also managed to raise a family, build several houses, and co-found an insurance company. He also happens to be my uncle. I wouldn't have dreamed of trying to do this education issue without asking his opinions. I obviously don't agree with him on everything, but I think he makes a very good case for the traditional approach to education, which despite its many obvious faults, seems to have produced better results than the current mishmash being dished up by our public schools.

Dear Larry,

It was nice to hear from you, but you sure dreamed up a monumental job for me to do. Some days ago I started making some notes of things about education and all its ramifications. I'm not finished, and I have enough things listed for about five doctoral dissertations. Whew!

Now I must admit to you that over the past 22+ years I have been retired, I have become lazy, and with age, also tired. After having exerted my withering brain thus far, I don't think I want to put all the time and energy necessary to do a good job for you. However, I will make a few comments.

First, you must remember that since I retired things have changed immensely, socially, economically, educationally, etc., some good, some bad. Unfortunately, from the teachers' point of view, the feelings of many is that salaries are most important, and many are faring quite well. Last year the average teacher salary in Grose Pointe was \$38,000. Not bad when you consider that some of them would have a hell of a job earning a good living otherwise. Contrast that with the \$14,400 I got my last year as a principal. The change in attitude is really something. When I started, I received \$1500 and had to teach six classes, one study hall, sponsor the S.A., be athletic director, and coach football, baseball, basketball, and track. How about that? Now, I believe, they work a maximum of five periods. So much for that. Now to the school itself.

Well, after starting with the necessary ingredients for a good school - interested parents, healthy kids, good teachers, and decently equipped buildings, I believe one should begin with a philosophy for the education of pupils.

Thinking is terribly important, but we do have to earn a living to survive in a society and hopefully contribute something worthwhile so life will be better, at least, for some of us. I am not up to date on what is going on in schools today except that I see some of the things our grandchildren are doing. I must say I

disagree with a lot I've seen.

I'm inclined to think that schools are not teaching the fundamentals of the three Rs, etc.... Some of the textbooks I've seen are atrocious. Our grandson, who is 16, can't read, and I mean that literally. He has a rough road ahead. I don't think he is dumb, but he is having problems. The "new" math really throws him. He can't read it or understand it, and if he misses the teacher's explanation, he is sunk. I believe educators have lost sight of the needs and tried to be fancy to the detriment of most of the students. As you may know, I have a master's degree in math, but I would hate to force feed the math junk now being given to kids. Very few will need or use the kind of things they have to offer.

This gets back to philosophy. What are we trying to do? Surely all kids shouldn't go to college, but we should all be able to read, spell, write enough to be able to communicate and not get screwed in "big deals," have some knowledge about other people and their problems and how they relate to us. I gather a large percentage of students have no idea where various countries are, let alone the nature of their governments, industries, etc... I am amazed when I see what scam deals are now being perpetrated by unscrupulous people. Of course, some of this is a result of greed on the part of those who lose. People want to get rich quick!

I believe it is good to give kids a general education - expose them to different things so they have some idea of what's going on. We used to have many clubs, i.e., art, stamps, homemakers, sports, newspaper, science, shop, etc. - dozens, so we could find something of interest for almost everyone. This is a part of a school's job. If you don't find a vocation, maybe an avocation. Some of our sponsors are still in contact with kids after 30 or so years.

Of course, one of the problems is: who is going to teach? Some people are natural teachers, but others must be taught. For this I would have an intern program where prospective teachers would move from one teacher to another to watch how they work. At times they should teach a unit for the regular teacher. Finally, at regular intervals, they should meet in a group with a recognized good teacher in charge to discuss what they said and did. This is an extension of the so-called "practice teaching." They may be doing this today. I don't know.

You mention discipline. Today this is a real big problem. It is no longer a case of pulling a girl's hair, whispering in class, or throwing a paper wad. Now they have to deal with drugs, booze, insubordination, violence, etc... This is bad!! In this day and age, if you are weak in discipline, you better not teach. One of the problems stems from the fact that so many parents are afraid of the kids and won't help the school. In fact, they cause the school problems they don't need. Take your line, the newspaper. To me the paper is the information and school spirit stimulator. It is not for the editors to go all out for free speech. It is a teaching instrument and the faculty (ultimately the board of education) is responsible. This brings up school dress. Kids want to dress like freaks. Allowing this is a great hindrance to learning since it is very distracting. Parents (many) think it cute or something, since they will not support a dress code worked out by responsible parents, teachers, and students. You must have the cooperation of parents if you are to survive as a good school. They should be called in often, singly and in groups, as appropriate. Of course, I always felt rules and regulations should make sense or you had better not

have them. Also, disciplinary action should fit the crime as much as possible. Don't have a kid write an essay when he has destroyed property. Make him pay for it. I used to bring parents in and have them promise the kids would earn money to pay for destruction. I think most did so. Teachers must be fair and firm. Don't say you'll do something and then not do it. Better be quiet. Teachers with problems many times are wise to visit the home of the kid causing trouble and talk it over with both parents and kids if possible.

TV can be a very important tool of teaching at home and at school. However, there are so many atrocious programs it is sickening. For every good one there are many that do much harm. A good TV coordinator in a school can do a lot of good. Viewable programs during the day should be used. Teachers should be informed of educational programs in the evening and work them into the curriculum. It would not necessarily have to apply to the day's lesson but, by subject matter, use it either to reinforce or inspire interest in a given subject.

Incidentally, I believe a lot of the crime wave and school discipline problems are, in a large part, due to the murder, gangster, etc. programs - and I'm not stumping for *Snow White*, either. But when idiot TV programs keep kids from going outside to play, having fun, getting some exercise and fresh air, it is a shame. I'm glad to say my granddaughter does not allow her kids to watch TV indiscriminately. She watches it, so that she knows it's OK when used. We should make every

effort to have the programming changed. Parents and school should cooperate. There are many things that could be done. For instance, historical stories can be fascinating. Science programs, nature programs, art, etc., done right would interest loads of kids (do a lot of parents good, too). It would cost money, but look what it costs to take care of one kid who goes wrong. So maybe they won't all watch like they do now. Gosh! All we used to have was a ball and a bat - and - WE HAD FUN!

One of the problems today is that kids are so involved in peer pressure brought on by "smart" advertisers, etc., that they miss the boat in being themselves. What a shame! And it costs plenty of money, too. Incidentally, my grandson will not buy anything at K-Mart. Kids will only go to the best stores and pay the top price for a name brand. Same item at K-Mart - no go.

Yes, Larry, I want kids to think! They don't have to be Einsteins, but they should be challenged to do their best. Extensive reading, starting along the lines of their interests and branching out to what they are capable of doing should be promoted. It is pretty hard with all we have available in science, history, fiction, philosophy, etc., not to be able to find something to interest practically anyone.

I have skimmed over a few of the items I have on my list and I hope this will be of some help to you. To develop each one would take me well past July. I guess you'll have to put it down to an old man too tired to think. Ain't it a wful.

Uncle Chuck

Doing It Yourself: A Family of Home Schoolers

I met the family being interviewed about three years ago, and was immediately impressed with their children, who seemed to be both more mature and more childlike than almost any other kids their age that I'd met. They were capable of sitting with adults discussing historical or political or philosophical issues that, to be honest, would be beyond the grasp of many people my own age, and ten minutes later tear off into the woods to play some sort of game that most teenagers would scorn as "kid stuff." The boy is now 17 and the girl 15. Both are extremely intelligent, but without a trace of that neurotic self-absorption that afflicts so many intellectuals and "educated" people. Neither of them has spent more than a few months in a formal educational institution. Because what they are doing is at least technically illegal, I left their names out of the interview, and I'm sorry, we couldn't agree on any cute pseudonyms, so they'll just be "Boy," "Girl," "Mother," and "Father." Kind of minimalist, but that's who they are...

LOOKOUT: OK, you guys, what's the worst thing about going to school at home?

BOY: You're around your parents a lot.

You can't skip school very easily...

GIRL: Uh uh...

Did you ever want to go to "real" school?

B: Yeah, when I'm mad at my mom.

G: Once in a while, but then I think about the good things of studying at home...

The good things... What would you say the good things are?

B: We get to go on vacations in the middle of the winter, when everybody else is in public school, and as you drive by you can go "nyaaah nyaahh nyaahh."

We'll note for the record that he's thumbing his nose...

G: You get to learn what you want... almost...

B: Yeah, you don't have to learn American history 572 zillion times over and over...

Do you feel you're missing out on anything, either educationally or socially?

G: No, not at all...

You see a lot of the kids who go to public school socially, don't you? Do they seem different from you?

G: Yeah. They don't love learning. They don't have anything to do, they just hang around all the time...

B: They don't have any imagination

Why do you think that is?

G: Because they're going to school because they have to; they just wake up in the morning and know they have to go to school, and just take a test, or get their report card...

Well, there's a certain element of compulsion in your schooling, too, isn't there? If you guys didn't want to study, would you be allowed to just hang around the house?

B: No.

G: No, if we didn't want to study, we would have to do something creative...

B: We would have to work...

So as long as you do something creative or constructive, you don't have to study the conventional things like reading or writing?

MOTHER: Usually you have to study, but if you have a particularly... off day...

G: Yeah, or where you have something going already...

B: Like one day a week, I don't do school because I have a job where I'm learning to make jewelry...

I got the impression you'd learned several things they don't usually teach in school...

G: I've learned to weave baskets, and I worked in a grocery store...

B: And I went to China...

M: There are also things that they might not be doing now, but have learned over time.

(to Mother) Was this a joint decision between you and your husband that the kids should study at home, or was one of you more in favor of it?

M: We both had to agree. I probably was the one who gave the beginning push, but we both had to agree. Otherwise it wouldn't have worked, because our lives circle around it.

Is it pretty much of a full time job?

M: Sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. In the younger years, when the kids couldn't read or write on their own, it was full time. Now there are things they can do more independently.

What was your main reason for wanting to do it at home? Was it based on your experiences in your own education?

M: No... Our son was in school, and he wasn't learning to read, and he was being pushed

faster than he felt secure in his learning ability...

FATHER: Then we tried to get that school to change some things, socially as well as educationally, but they couldn't do that...

When you say he was having trouble learning, it makes me wonder, because he doesn't seem like a slow learner now...

M: He's not, it's just that the school has a time schedule that isn't as flexible, and if you don't fit right into the time schedule, maybe you start not feeling good about yourself, which I didn't want him to do. I'm not a believer in doing things just because you're a certain age, or a certain grade or whatever. I think people develop at different ages and that's the healthiest way to learn. Also, I felt that the particular social environment — this isn't necessarily true of all schools — was extremely negative...

Was this a local school?

M: (Laughs)

You don't have to name it; I just wondered if it was in this area...

M: Yes.

(to BOY) Do you remember when you went to public school, what it was like?

B: I remember getting in fights a lot.

Over what?

B: I don't remember over what. I just remember a lot of fights...

Were you starting them or were other kids?

B: I don't remember...

So the main thing you do remember is getting in fights?

B: Yeah, and crying when I was doing tests. I didn't get what they meant in the questions and then I'd flip out and start crying.

(to GIRL) How about you, have you ever been to school at all?

G: Kindergarten.

In public school? Do you remember much of it?

B: I remember my teacher... She always liked me a lot, and then all the other kids got mad at me cause she liked me.

M: Remember how you already knew how to read and...

G: Oh yeah, I remember that. I knew how to read, but she wouldn't let me read, and I had to wait until we studied the ABCs, even though I already knew the ABCs.

I had that same experience when I started school; I already knew how to read, and the teacher got mad at me, said you're not supposed to know that yet, so I got real upset and went home and yelled at my parents because they'd ruined everything by helping me learn to read. But let me ask you about some other residents of our county, the Colfaxes over in Boonville. They've got a lot of media attention because they've sent three kids in a row to Harvard, in spite of, or perhaps because of teaching them entirely at home. Some people tend to downplay that accomplishment, saying the Colfaxes represent a special case, since they're both highly educated people who could easily teach in the regular school system if they wanted to. How about you; what kind of education do you have?

M: Not much...

Have either of you graduated from college?

M: No.

F: I went to junior college for about five semesters, maybe longer than that, and eventually got about three units away from my A.A. degree.

M: I had some college, but I think I learned more once I got out of the school system and got on my own. Then I finally realized what my real interests were. I do think it's good for home schoolers that the Colfaxes have shown that you can meet the system's standards, but I don't think we all have to do that. I don't know the Colfaxes, but from what I understand, their point is whatever you're going to do, do it well. That leaves a whole bunch of options open, whether you're a jeweler, or a boatbuilder, or fly airplanes, or be a mechanic, or go to college, be a nurse, whatever... The important thing is to explore the possibilities...

So you're not too concerned whether your kids make it to Harvard?

M: No.

F: We don't hold college in that high a regard.

M: No, I don't, I think it's an extension of the regular school system, which I don't really want to participate in. But at the same time, I don't feel that you can criticize... There's not one formula, is what I'm trying to say. I don't think that home schooling is a formula for everyone, I don't think that public schools are for everyone, or private or prep

schools... I think that good people, good students can go through all of those systems. I personally am not willing to put up with the crap that comes with the public school system.

If your kids come to you tomorrow and say, "We're sick of this; we want to go to public school," how would you feel about that?

M: Fine. If they want to go to public school, that's great. I'd have a lot more free time. It would be less expensive, too.

Less expensive?

F: Yeah, because our kids have tutors, too.

M: Just buying the books...

B: Yeah, the books... I took Russian history, and we bought a ton of books

So you started having tutors when they got to an age where you couldn't handle all the subjects yourself?

F: Algebra!

M: In their younger years they had tutors for things I wasn't particularly interested in...

F: So, what have they done with tutors? Science...

B: Geography, math, logic, computers, biology...

So it sounds as if you kept up at least to the level of other high school students...

B: We were doing high school science stuff three years ago. Our teacher taught at the high school, too.

You've never had any problems with the local authorities insisting that you come to school like normal children?

G: No, they're real nice to us, they always say hi to us...

M: And I used to work in the local public schools, so people knew that I cared about my kids. I cared about the other kids in school, too, but I couldn't change the system. But they knew I wasn't going to do anything that would be to the detriment of my kids.

G: And I knew one guy that was on the school board, and he never seemed worried about it...

Do you have any plans to go to college?

G: I don't know what I want to do yet.

B: I think I'm going to go to an art school.

Soon? You're getting close to the age when you'd normally be graduating from high school...

B: I think I'm going to go to Mendocino College and try it for a while first, starting when I'm 18.

What would you be aiming at getting out of college?

B: More knowledge.

Are you a little bit nervous about going off into a much more organized, structured world after spending most of your life in a fairly isolated environment?

B: Yeah, I am sometimes.

M: But your life is pretty structured anyway... We're flexible to a certain degree, but then it's pretty well structured...

B: The program we're using now, you still have to cover a certain amount of hours in history and English and math...

I'd like to get back to this question about going out into the world, though... That's one thing that a lot of people up in the hills say, that it's terrible for the kids not to get down to town and socialize with the other kids, and that that's actually a more important part of the education than what they learn in the classroom... How do you guys feel about that?

G: I think we socialize enough. I don't think that's the point of education. And when we socialize, we socialize with older people, younger people, and people our own age. I have a pretty good view of life...

I think that maybe what they're suggesting is that it's not like the real world when you only choose the people you want to be with, whereas in public school, or in "real" life, you're thrown together with all kinds of people that you might not want to be with...

G: But we deal with people we don't like...

(laughter)

B: We do that almost every day...

M: We do have a great diversity of acquaintances...

G: And we travel...

You don't see much TV up here, do you?

M: No.

B: Wow, man, you know there's ONE channel...

F: And we can't even get that...

You don't feel you're missing out?

M: We do have a VCR...

B: And we watch some educational stuff, like PBS and Nova...

G: We don't get exposed to all the commercials...

M: We do get exposed to them when we go someplace else and watch TV, but then we're much more critical of it...

I was wondering if some people wouldn't say that you're going to be a little naive when you get out in to the "real" world...

M: We are in the real world, aren't we?

G: Yeah.

M: We deal with the real world every day.

I wasn't trying to make a judgment myself, but I've had the same criticism directed at me, to the effect that, "Oh, you people up in the hills, you're just living in some big fantasyland, as if you're still at Woodstock or something, while us people down in the cities have to deal with real life..."

G: But we have to do that... we have to deal with real life...

B: Yeah, we're living, man...

G: We have to go to work!

M: Plus you go to workshops, you have different teachers in different places, and you have to mix in real-life situations... To me, they're not in an environment where you've got 30 kids, all the same age, with a ratio of 30 kids to one adult. They're mixed with what I consider a more normal group of people... In real life, you're not just with your peer group...

G: And the kids I know who go to public school, if they're in ninth grade, they don't want to mix with eighth graders, and eighth graders don't like seventh graders, or third graders. You're just stuck with your own age group, so you're all trying to do the same

things... I mean, you might try to mix with the kids up above you, cause they're "cooler," but the younger kids, they're just "dumb" or something...

F: And I think that's one of the things that we worried most about, the socialization. It sometimes seemed that the worst part of the public school we were involved in was the values the kids had and without much adult supervision, it was like the blind leading the blind. You get this real false situation of what they think the real world is... I don't know how you felt about it, but when I was in high school, the "real" world was the little clique of friends I was in, and when I got out of high school, I found out that what I thought was the real world was a bunch of bullshit.

(to kids) Tell me, what do you think the main value of your education is? Are you doing it just because you're told to, or did you reach a point as you got older when you also wanted to?

G: Yeah...

B: We were always given the option every year of whether we wanted to go to public school or keep studying at home.

I was thinking more of education in a general sense, like why are you learning at all?

G: Every year, we go through this thing of, "Do you guys want to do school this year or not, and if you do, what do you want to learn? And if you don't, what are you going to do with your life?" Usually we want to do school, and we get to do what we want.

M: Within reason...

B: Like history - you can learn what you want in history, as long as it's history...

M: You can pursue a particular interest of yours...

G: And you can change it if you decide you don't like it, or it's boring, and do something else...

I guess you couldn't do that at public school very well...

B: No, I don't know any public school in the US that teaches Russian history...

F: Yeah, he was really interested in Russian history...

For any particular reason?

M: Yeah, as I recall, it started out because you wanted to know why they were the enemy...

B: Yeah...

Did you ever find out?

B: Kind of, and kind of not. I never really did figure out why they were the enemy. At one point, I figured it was maybe because they were communists, and then I read the Communist Manifesto...

M: Oh, great... (laughter)

B: ...and I went, "Hey, that sounds perfect, sounds good to me, why'd we become their enemies," and I never did figure out why we did...

M: You did figure out why the governments were enemies...

B: Yeah, but why, if you randomly choose a person in the US, that person dislikes the USSR, there's no reason, the USSR didn't do anything to them... I mean, we were allies in the war... It's not like we were shooting at each other and one guy's brother got killed by a guy from the other country...

F: Like in our own civil war...

B: Yeah, we should be mad at each other, not them...

F: I think one of the other things about having the kids learn at home is that we wanted them to love learning and not get turned off to wanting to learn...

G: That happened when I had algebra this year and I had to choose between algebra and geometry. So I tried geometry and I didn't like it - I only did it for two months - then I was able to change to algebra, which I like better. I don't think I could have done that in public school...

With respect to loving learning for its own sake... Do you see education as mostly a way of getting ready for life, or as something that is its own reward?

G: It's its own reward. I don't want to go through life being dumb. Some people may be happy being dumb, but I don't want to grow up like that. I don't always know what I want to learn, because I don't know all that there is to learn. So I'll let Mom suggest something, or I'll just pick a subject and try it.

So how do you think your life would be different if you didn't know a lot of the things you know? Would it be less rewarding?

G: Yeah.

B: You'd be stuck working at the lumber mill. Wow! That'd be so much fun!

That sort of negates what you were saying, that education is its own reward. Now you seem to be saying it will get you a better job...

G: Yeah, well, that's its own reward, because then you don't have to work at a grocery store for minimum wage, you can do something you really like...

B: If instead of just learning about one thing like how to cut logs, you learn about a bunch of other stuff, and you find something you really like, like jewelry or some sort of art, something you wouldn't normally find, you may not make a lot of money at it, but still you'd enjoy what you're doing. And that's got its own reward.

G: Who wants to go through life doing something you don't like?

M: When you talk about going to work at the mill, don't you mean it's something you wouldn't want to do? It doesn't bother you that other people want to do it, does it?

B: Yeah, I was being sarcastic...

G: One day I was at work and I was having an awful day, and I decided that I was going to go to school forever, because school was much easier than working for 40 more years.

B: And then at the end being so old that you can't do anything.

When I came in tonight, you were working on current events, looking through the newspaper for stories to discuss... You seem to be pretty aware of what goes on in the world, politically, ecologically, and so forth... So I'm wondering, do you see that much of a future for any of us?

G: I don't know...

B: Not if some country decides they're getting pushed around too much and decides to drop an atom bomb, there's not going to be much left...

G: I think we need to stop that so we will have a future...

But yet you still are preparing for the future...

B: Well, it's better than not preparing for the future and then ending up living till you're 104 and being like, "What happened, man?"

Do you feel as though you're going to be equipped to at least take care of yourself, and possibly make a difference in the world?

G: Yeah.

Now that you're getting to the age of going out into the world...

B: Yeah, I can handle that.

When you've grown up, do you expect to be living in an environment like this, or possibly in a city?

G: I don't know. I don't think I would want to go live in a city. I could live just outside of a city...

B: I could live in someplace like Vancouver that's got a lot of trees... I couldn't live in some place like LA. It'd drive me up the wall...

M: So what are the advantages of living outside the city?

B: You can breathe without choking...

G: You can get cancer from the air there... Every time you breathe, you go (gasps) "Oh, I died once!"

B: Kill three or four hundred brain cells every time you take a breath. It's got to get better. They can't go sticking oil wells in the ocean, that won't help anything...

G: But it's getting worse... Like I was reading a book about how doctors from LA used to send their respiratory patients to Arizona, but now they can't anymore because the air there is just as bad as in LA.

F: They'll be sending them here soon. We can open up a guesthouse for them.

G: Then here will get just as bad.

(to parents) OK, how do you feel, are you satisfied with the educational product you've produced?

M: Well, you know, nothing's perfect... There are times when I, uh, wonder... But I think the family's real important. I think it's real important to find things you're interested in, even if you can't get a job doing them. And of course they're still working on it, but I think they're very... extremely aware of a lot of the false premises America is built on... And I think they know what's healthy, and what's important, though of course they still have their own decisions to make...

B: McDonald's, here we come!

M: Once they're out of the house, you can't control them, but at least I feel we've done

real well in having them think about questions of ethics, what their own actions are, and to question the ethics of others...

G: And I'm glad that my mom doesn't expect me to go to college... I might go to college and I might not, but if I don't go to college, I won't be disinherited...

F: I'm happy with the way it's worked out... The thing I wondered about when we first started was that I kind of had the attitude of "If I suffered through the system, they should have to suffer through the system, too," and that that would somehow make them good people, but as we went on I realized that was a bunch of bullshit, and I'm real happy with the way they've turned out...

M: When you've got questions about teenagers, and I think every family does...

B: They have questions about us?

They haven't driven off any cliffs lately?

M: No...

B: Not that we've told them about.

M: They're pretty normal...

F: But we get along with our kids better, I think, than parents who left their kids in school. Most of them are having big problems with their kids. Some have already been disowned, or disinherited, whatever, kicked out of the house, and the parents are having a lot of problems and complaining about teenagers.

G: And the teenagers are complaining about the parents...

F: And we enjoy each other... We have fun... We have arguments; that I think is normal, but the truly alienated thing, the generation gap and all that crap, I don't think that happens with us...

Do you guys on the other side of the generation gap agree with that? Is there a generation gap here?

B: No.

G: No.

Besides the fact that they're two hopeless old geezers...

B: They're over the hill, but other than that...

Music Can Make You STUPID

Strange goings on in the local music business... Corporate mega-mogul BILL GRAHAM, apparently unable to stomach the idea that someone somewhere might be presenting live music under auspices other than his own, has gone on a takeover-acquisition binge aimed at independent Bay Area venues. First to go was MICHAEL BAILEY, who's been putting on shows at the refurbished FILLMORE BALLROOM, the legendary hippie palace where, of course, GRAHAM made his first millions. BAILEY is now a (high-paid, it's said) employee of BILL GRAHAM PRESENTS, aka BGP. Also on the block is the BERKELEY SQUARE, which BAILEY used to run, and is such a dinky little place that one would think it was beneath GRAHAM's notice. GRAHAM has also obtained the booking rights to the KENNEL CLUB, the remodeled and quite successful version of the old VIS CLUB. You can expect to see ticket prices escalating at said venues, along with a corresponding mainstream-ization of the acts playing there. If GRAHAM didn't have the local media and government in his pocket, he might be a likely target for an antitrust suit. As it is, we'll probably have to continue putting up with him doing to the live music scene what his corporate buddies have been doing to the radio airwaves.

But all is not lost... Amazing new groups continue to burble and gurgle up from the underground. One of the most exciting of them is SCAB, who wowed a GILMAN STREET audience with their debut performance in January. SCAB consists of two wise-ass 12 year-olds backed by musicians known elsewhere as BOMB, JULIANO and JAKE are their names, and their act features songs like "Fuck Safe Sex," "M&Ms On Our Tonka Toys," and "My Mom Smokes Pot" (not the LOOKOUTS song of the same name). The SCAB boys make a return performance at GILMAN on April 1, provided JAKE can manage to avoid being grounded again, as he was this past month for putting bananas in the microwave (yes, they exploded, just like poodles). A similar fate befell the LOOKOUTS, by the way, as drummer TIRE COOL found himself confined to quarters for the more mundane crime of bad grades (yes, it's really true, you vicious rumor-mongers; in addition to failing algebra, he's also in danger of flunking band).

Other hot news this winter has concerned the sudden change in lifestyle of MARTIN (the boy wonder) SPROUSE, who chucked his sedate but secure existence as co-editor of MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL to move into a bohemian hideaway in an obscure and far less prestigious corner of town. But that's only the beginning. Possibly stemming from his loudly proclaimed belief that the sex life of band members is vastly superior to that of zine editors, the hitherto unmusical MARTIN planned to be one of two lead singers in what might justly have been called a Bay Area punk rock supergroup. Alas, it was not to be...

Operating under the name of BREAKWIRE (borrowed, as it seems most exciting new musical developments are these days, from ISOCRACY), the band was to consist of JOEL WING (ex-CORRUPTED MORALS) on bass, PAUL POULTRY MAGIC on guitar, WALTER GLASER, cover boy from TURN IT AROUND (a photo so ugly that he admits even his own mother didn't recognize it) pounding the tin cans and coconuts, and sharing lead vocals with MARTIN would have been CAM-MASTER CLIT of the almost world-famous YEASTIE GIRLZ (now being eyed by DEF JAM, the East Coast mega-rap major, and, late word has it, PROFILE, too). MARTIN, who a month ago was busy plastering BREAKWIRE graffiti all over GILMAN STREET, now denies the whole thing, and even called FLIPSIDE to beg them not to print anything about it, despite widespread rumors that he had been seen on Lower Market Street shopping for spandex briefs. As things now stand, BREAKWIRE may go down in history as the first band to break up before it formed. And MARTIN... now he's writing/editing a book, which should do wonders for his sex life. Just ask NORMAN MAILER...

Speaking of spandex briefs, MAX VOLUME brought his NAKED LADY WRESTLERS into GILMAN STREET New Year's Day for a battle to the finish with bitter

rivals ISOCRACY. The stage was turned into a wrestling ring and the refereeing chores were handled by the above-mentioned WALTER, known to be a bit rambunctious himself, but who looked like an altar boy compared to Mr. VOLUME, who may have pushed his occasionally funny stage persona into the realms of occasionally serious asshole by hogging the stage for a period of time beyond normal human endurance, and nearly kicking in some young man's face for trying (with the good wishes of quite a few other enervated Gilmoids) to unplug his guitar sometime during the second hour of one of his masturbatory solos. Needless to say, ISOCRACY, playing without any of the usual Isocraprops and using about one tenth the playing time of NLW, won by a landslide.

While we're on the subject of the boys from El Sob, now's as good a time as any to plug their new record *Bedtime For Isocracy*, a 7" EP on (ahem) LOOKOUT RECORDS, which, incidentally, is one of four LOOKOUT releases that came out in January. Want to know what the others are? Of course you do. There's CORRUPTED MORALS, with Chef, CRIMPSHINE, with Sleep, *What's That?* (and any band that drinks as much coffee as CS might well wonder), and the wonderful OPERATION IVY with *Hectic*. All right, all right, I don't want to start inter-band rivalries; you're all wonderful, I mean mega-wonderful, and cool, too. Some other CRIMPSHINE News: singer-guitarist JEFF went on an unplanned sabbatical courtesy of the local police and the county of Alameda. His principal crime was jumping off a car into a hedge (you don't know about hedgecove? Well, ask someone else; this column has too much stuff in it anyway) and then failing to participate fully in the rehabilitation process. But he's back in action, along with CRIMPSHINE's newly added second guitarist, IDON.

Another new guitarist: MDC, in the wake of their European tour and the release (finally; it was held up for months because they had trouble getting the "blasphemous" cover printed) of their third LP, *Millions of Damn Christians* (not just a rumor: it really is out on compact disc) are looking to replace GORDON, who has left the band over the usual musical differences. Appearing to have the inside track for the gig is ERIC, formerly of the WITNESSES and SLUGLORD. Original guitarist RON POSNER still refuses to come back to the fold, preferring to concentrate his energies on his skateboard business. Other MDC news includes the band's performances at the Nevada nuclear test site demonstration in mid-March and at the SF Federal Building in the wake of Reagan's invasion of Honduras, and that Dave has joined a secret lesbian witch coven...

Furthermore, DAVE has taken a considerable amount of heat for his well-known devotion to major-label folk singer SUZANNE VEGA, to whom he even constructed a shrine in the RATHOUSE kitchen last summer. The shrine was soon debased by a mysterious visitor, possibly the mischievous FLESH, who affixed a mustache to Miss V's sublime features, which triggered a crisis of epic proportions in the RATHOUSE, with DAVE and fellow Vegan RAY RAT reduced to near tears. Now, months later, DAVE is able to smile about it, and even was overheard admitting, "I like corporate feminists."

DAVE has also been working with the considerably less corporate MICHELE SCHOCKED, who managed to hit the top of the British indie charts with a Walkman-recorded tape of her singing her highly original folk songs at a campfire in Texas. MICHELE is starting to get airplay on US college radio, and was recently recording in Los Angeles, with DAVE backing on at least one track.

Out any day now with a new album, and it couldn't happen to a nicer bunch of guys: the MRT EXPERIENCE. The MTX boys also were recently accorded

the great honor of being named the Bay Area's worst rock band ("The Mr T Experience is to rock music what the real Mr T is to acting") by *San Francisco Focus*, a glossy magazine published by and for turtle-necked yuppies whose idea of high culture is National Public Radio. The geek who nominated MR T is reputed to have been MICHAEL SNYDER, currently employed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as understudy to JOEL SELVIN, who constitutes the greatest insult to rock and roll since PAT BOONE started covering LITTLE RICHARD songs...

Most independent bands, labels, or zines, have had some experience, not always pleasant, with SYSTEMATIC distribution. Just before Christmas SYSTEMATIC went belly-up, leaving many bands, zines, and labels up the proverbial creek for many thousands of dollars. Yours truly got off lucky, with only about a hundred buck loss. Where did all the money go? There are all sorts of nasty rumors flying about, but perhaps they'll have to wait till next issue, when there will no doubt be even more. SYSTEMATIC's legendary unreliability when it came to paying bills will not be missed, but its willingness and ability to distribute obscure and otherwise unsalable underground music will. A partial replacement is emerging in the form of BLACKLIST MAIL ORDER, a not-for-profit enterprise being spearheaded by RUTH SCHWARTZ of MORDAM RECORDS and the ubiquitous MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL. Although it originally will be limited to mail order, there's some speculation that BLACKLIST might eventually branch out into full-fledged distribution, too.

More news about everyone's favorites, the YEASTIE GIRLZ. The wonderful and amazing JANEY G has left not only the band (which doesn't play any instruments) but the country, also. It was generally thought that she was headed down to Nicaragua to straighten things out in that Central American trouble spot (she's not a good one to get on the bad side of), but now the whole truth can be told. According to QUEEN CAMMIE, Janey is pregnant with CAMMIE's baby (it's a girl, natch) and will stay in Nicaragua until the little YEASTIE is born. JANEY's place was taken by KATE (also of the CROWS), but now late word comes in that JOYCE VAGINA will also be leaving the group to relocate in Europe. Will JANEY up rejoining the YEASTIES? Stay tuned...

What kind of image does the band name SLAPSHOT conjure up for you? Sounds a little bit rough for me, being that I'm not all that big a sports fan, and having heard rumors that part of the bands *schtick* was to attack its audience with a hockey stick, I didn't expect that they'd be one of my favorites. Their varsity jackets emblazoned with SLAPSHOT - BOSTON logos didn't impress me too much, either, being as how I went to a high school where there were a bunch of people with similar jackets and hairstyles who were always trying to kill me.

SLAPSHOT came to GILMAN STREET, and spent most of the night sitting on the couches at the back of the room glowering while the regular Gilman Geeks (it was a Sunday night and a small crowd) bounced around like their usual frivolous selves to the sounds of TRANSGRESSOR, STIKKY, and, playing under the name BOBO to disguise the fact that this was their thirteenth time there this month, ISOCRACY.

Then SLAPSHOT took the stage, stopped glowering, and started growling. And bellowing, and screaming, and holding their breath till they turned blue in the face. These guys sure were pissed off about something. Their lead singer, a gentleman who goes by the charming name of CHOKE, and who looks like a cross between a professional football player and a big time wrestler, stomped back and forth across the stage like KEVIN SECONDS on crank, his eyes looking dangerously close to popping out of their sockets. The more he raged, the more the Gilmoids laughed (except for some of the gentler souls, who were cowering in the corners). CHOKE would bark out moshing orders, and the geek crew would start pogoing into each other like spastic jacks that had escaped from their boxes. CHOKE didn't like this. It was inappropriate behavior. Nobody was getting angry. Some people in the back of the room were falling asleep. At one point he announced that he had figured out why such a small crowd had come to see SLAPSHOT. "All our real fans have probably been 86'd," he declared.

When told afterward that the total number of people who've been 86'd from Gilman was about 15, he changed his tune slightly. "I don't mind what size the crowd is. I'm happy playing for 20 kids who know our songs and get into our music," he was overheard saying. "But I don't want to play for a bunch ofucking goofballs!" Yes, fellow Gilmoids, I guess he's got our number. Outside he could be heard to further complain, "This place is fucking Romper Room." Sorry we're not hard enough for you, Mr. CHOKE. Personally, I think you should move to California and take smiling lessons. The most succinct commentary on *l'affaire CHOKE* was provided by artist and record-biz magnate SPROCKET, who while admitting that he was entertained by the SLAPSHOT spectacle, pointed out that on the food chain, CHOKE fell "somewhere between pond life and Tyrannosaurus rex." He later added that if there had been a scoreboard on the back wall, it would have read, "Gilman 1, SLAPSHOT 0." Mr. Sprocket is, by the way, the other half (and I'll forgive you if you say the better half, because it's probably true) of LOOKOUT RECORDS.

OPERATION IVY is off on their first national tour of mid-March, and won't be back till the beginning of May. Admittedly I'm prejudiced, but this is one of the most exciting new bands to come along in years, so don't miss them. The first pressing (1000 copies) of the OPIV record is already sold out, by the way, and the record has been re-pressed. Late news... Tour mascot and token roadie SPROCKET called from Arizona to report on the first few days of OPIV's great adventure. They had great shows in LA, where somehow a whole lot of the audience already knew their lyrics and joined in singing with them on the stage, GILMAN-style, and in beautiful suburban CHULA VISTA, where they performed in the back yard pleasure dome of VINYL COMMUNICATIONS. They also had their show in Tucson AZ stopped by the cops, but were having fun up till then...

One of the few bright spots on the increasingly bland KALX is the JAMIE GENERIC show. JAMIE, aka JAMES MCKINNEY, well known GILMAN STREETer, is unfortunately consigned to the broadcast ghetto of 3:30 to 6 a.m. on alternate Thursdays when the moon is aligned with Jupiter in the seventh house of Mars, so if you don't know JAMES or else listen to KALX religiously and never sleep, you'll

have to be pretty lucky to catch his show. JAMES belongs to the self-effacing school of radio personalities, and in fact much of his on-air humor consists of deadpan and dead-on insults of himself. "But then what do you expect," he disclaimed early into one of his recent shows, "I'm JAMIE GENERIC, the KSFQ of punk."

I happened to attend one of my rare social events last week, a party in the lower Haight where I got to see for the first time not one but two great new bands. Well, new to me, anyway — you know, if a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it blah blah blah... PIONEERS OF HELL is three girls and one boy, one of whom (of the girls) is KAMALA, long-time scenester and scenemaker, who's both singing and drumming for this mid to fast tempo highly melodic quartet with two bass players (there, that sort of sums it up, a little). After all KAMALA has done to help other bands these past years, it's great to see her getting her own chance in the limelight. And she's good, too... Then came BITCH FIGHT (oh yeah, they're all girls; could you guess from the name?), who despite asinger who was so hoarse that she could barely talk (from yelling so much the previous two days at the Honduras demonstrations) and so drunk she could barely stand up (from drinking so much the previous two hours), BITCH FIGHT were amazing. In fact, to coin a hardcore expression, they *ruled*... Hey, between BF, the PIONEERS, FRIGHTWIG, and the YEASTIES, boy bands are in danger of becoming *obsolete*...

Oh yeah, is it really true that ISOCRACY broke up???? Hard to believe, but there are rumors flying to that effect. They're scheduled to play GILMAN Easter Sunday; show up and see if they manage to *resurrect* themselves...

Reviews (well, a couple of them, anyway)

All right, I know I promised last November that in the next issue I'd catch up with all the records, tapes, and zines that have been piling up on the LOOKOUT review desk. Well, I lied. Somehow I still haven't found time to get around to most of them. Maybe I'm just not cut out for it. Anyway, this is all I could manage. Sorry. Maybe next time.

Oh yeah, and you shouldn't need an official review to make you want to get the YEASTIE GIRLZ tape. I think it's \$2 or something from PO Box 7813, Berkeley CA 94707

MR T EXPERIENCE, *Night Shift At The Thrill Factory, LP, Rough Trade*

Once you get past the name, which sounds more like a CREEDENCE CLEARWATER title, and the fact that it's out on Rough Trade, this is a pretty amazing record.

But it would have to be pretty amazing to not suffer by comparison with the band's 1986 debut LP, *Everybody's Entitled To Their Own Opinion*, which was an instant classic. I was afraid that the band wouldn't be able to measure up to that high standard, and when I heard that they had spent more time mixing just one song than they had on the entire first LP, I was sure it the new record would turn out overproduced and with much of the life drained out of it.

But I guess I was wrong. While it does sound a lot more "professional," the new LP is great, and probably destined to be another classic. Even the one song I at first thought should have been shitcanned, a longish cover of HERMAN'S HERMITS' *No Milk Today*, has started to grow on me. And *Now We Are 21*, which should have been the title song, will be blaring from college radio stations all across the land this spring and summer. There's also a ripping version of *Itching Powder in My Sleeping Bag*, a song that was unaccountably left off the first LP, and other gems like *A Zillion Years and Velocets*. For better or worse, the MR T EXPERIENCE are probably headed for the big time, so you'd better get this record if you want to be able to say you knew them when... Oh yeah, apparently their first record, now out of print, will be re-released on Rough Trade too...

THE LAYABOUTS, *No Masters, LP, c/o Urbane Gorilla, PO Box 02455, Detroit MI 48202*

I'd been hearing about these guys for a long time, and I've even had their record for a while. And as an ex-Detroitier my interest was naturally piqued, but somehow I never got around to listening to it till today.

So... It's not at all what I expected, which was political punk rock with that loudmouth Detroit edge best typified by the likes of the MC-5 or the AMBOY DUKES. No, instead the only comparison that comes to mind is with San Francisco's LOOTERS. It's way political, heavy on third world-style percussion (including some strong ska and reggae influences), and at some points has some strong and memorable melodies. It makes you want to move around, and I imagine this would be a great band to see live.

If there's a weak spot, it's that some of the songs go on too long and the lyrics become repetitious. And though I'm essentially in agreement with most of the sentiments expressed (I think; there was no lyric sheet, a big oversight for a political band), they occasionally push them dangerously close to the edge of preaching. Overall, though, a good solid release, well produced and intelligent.

STIKKY, *Where's My Lunchpail?, LP*

OPERATION IVY, *Hectic, 7" EP*

CRIMPSHINE, *Sleep, What's That, 7" EP*

CORRUPTED MORALS, *Chet, 7" EP*

ISOCRACY, *Bedtime For Isocracy, 7" EP*

EPs \$5, LP \$5 from Lookout Records, c/o this zine

OK, no sense in trying to remain objective here, having both a financial and an emotional interest in the success of these records, but please trust me when I tell you they're great. And it's not just me that says so, they've been amazingly well received so far (the four EPs, that is; the STIKKY LP is just coming out as this zine goes to press). I was going to try and describe them to you, but I get in trouble with the bands every time I do that, so just take my word and buy them. They're cheap, too.

VARIOUS ARTISTS, *Turn It Around!, double 7" EP, \$5 from Maximum Rockroll, PO Box 288, Berkeley CA 94701*

No doubt about it, the best record of 1987. The sound quality's a little weak because of there too much music pressed into too few grooves, but you've got a volume control on your stereo, don't you? Use it!

This is a compilation of 12 Northern California bands that played at the Gilman

Street Warehouse during its first year. A lot of the Lookout Records bands are represented here, and of course they're great; some other standouts include SWEET BABY JESUS, RABID LASSIE, and the universally acclaimed YEASTIE GIRLZ. If I had to pick one single favorite, it would probably be SEWER TROUT's *Wally and the Beaver Go to Nicaragua* (not completely coincidentally, SEWER TROUT will be releasing a 7" on Lookout later this spring).

No one who's seriously interested in alternative music or the future of the underground can afford to be without this one, but plenty of people will have to, because it's almost sold out and apparently won't be re-pressed (ask Tim Y, not me). Get it now or be permanently culturally deprived.

BOO! HISS! PHFT! (WHY DON'T WE THROW SOME TOMATOES AT THOSE GUYS?), Demo Tape, \$2.25, c/o David G-String, 1329 Goettingen St, San Francisco CA 94134

What are some possible uses for this audio cassette tape? Hmm... I guess you could 1) prop up a table that has one leg too short 2) repeatedly call up Tim Yohannan and play it onto his answering machine 3) use it to provide background music while consuming enormous volumes of sugar-laden breakfast cereals in preparation for having a psychotic break and taking a machine gun down to the local school yard and mowing down noisy children by the dozens 4) in behavior modification experiments

with intractable white rats 5) to assure yourself that by comparison with some people you are indeed quite normal 6) as a reminder that life is not always pretty, nor is it sometimes even remotely palatable 7) to make ISOCRACY look mainstream 8) to send to your penpals who are in prison for life without possibility of parole (make sure of the latter condition) 9) to become more avant-garde than you ever dreamed possible 10) as a way of funneling money to these severely disturbed, albeit moderately talented young men who would otherwise no doubt have to be institutionalized and become a financial burden on the taxpayers.

All in all, ten good reasons to buy this tape, which gets the LOOKOUT's highest recommendation, which is at least three decibels higher than any previous highest recommendation except where otherwise noted.

NO DOGS, Demo Tape, No price or address available (which means I probably lost it)

East Bay thrashcore here which is good, but might be even better if (and you probably never thought you'd catch me saying this) if it were slowed down just a tiny bit allowing the hidden melodies to escape. The band has since changed guitarists, so this is not a true reflection of the current NO DOGS sound (if there is one; there are rumors that they broke up again, which is where we came in...)

Baghdad? Isn't That In India?

by Ralph Rez

Baghdad? Isn't that in India? No, I replied for the umpteenth time. It's a shame that most people, myself included, educated (or should I say, who attended school) in the United States have little knowledge of world history and geography. Being neither Aleister Cooke nor a modern day Sacagawea, I decided to accept an invitation to travel to Iraq.

After a long, tiring flight my father and I arrived at SADDAM International Airport. Everything in Iraq is named SADDAM Something or Other, in honor of the president. After we got off the plane, we received a bit of bad news: when we left London for Baghdad, our luggage left for Athens. "EGADS," I said. Half way around the world without a change of underwear! There was nothing left to do but get in my uncle's car and drive to my grandfather's house, where I stayed for most of the month of August.

On the drive to my grandfather's, I received my first taste of true heat, and this was night, when the temperature supposedly drops. On some days, it reached 120°F, but there isn't much humidity, so it only feels like 118°F. Praise Allah!

When I arrived at my grandfather's house, I noticed something I would be seeing a lot of in the next few weeks. A small framed picture of SADDAM sat on a ledge next to pictures of my family. In Iraq Saddam, or rather his likeness, is omnipresent. It can drive you crazy after awhile. You awake in the morning and a picture of SADDAM's smiling face is on your alarm clock. You go for a drive and every few blocks there is another huge portrait of SADDAM in a tough yet friendly pose. Once we drove past an outdoor art festival. There wasn't much art there. All I could see were about

ten large pictures of you know who. That's not an art festival. That's a SADDAM festival. The whole country is a SADDAM festival. The population of Iraq is twenty-four million. There are twelve million Iraqis and twelve million pictures of SADDAM.

In some ways, Iraq seems very similar to Orwell's tragic vision. It seems as if SADDAM got hold of a copy of 1984 and switched all appropriate names and places. It was kind of scary.

I feel guilty, but despite the fact that Iraq is in terrible shape, I had a wonderful time. The people are so friendly. Foreigners are treated like royalty. Never have I met such hospitable people. I have only one complaint. I was once the target of a vicious joke. While eating dinner, I noticed an unusual looking substance and asked, "What is that?" I was told it was tofu. Not being a Californian, I was easy prey for the "tell him it's tofu when it's really lamb brains" trick.

This sounds like a good place to end this tale, for now. Our hero (that's me), deep in the heart of Baghdad, his mouth full of lamb brains and without a change of clothes. Speaking of clothes, it was nearly two weeks before our luggage arrived in Baghdad. During that time, our luggage had travelled more places than you could shake a stick at, or maybe even two sticks.

To be continued...

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