

LOOKOUT!

December 1986

Number 23

THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT

Nation's Long-Running
Soap Opera Threatened
With Cancellation As
Plot Lines Collide

A Bewildered Citizenry Asks:
"Was Gibt, Herr Reaganführer?"

When the news first broke of Ronnie Reagan's undercover escapades with the Iranians, I thought I might have the makings of a good cover story. I started planning a satirical article in which the USA, Iran, and Israel would merge to form the Three-Gods-In-One Religious Republic.

But before I could piece together all the details, like the part about all the labor unions favoring the scheme because it would give them an extra day off each week (Friday is the Islamic holy day), the Reagan mob torpedoed my aspirations by letting slip some more of the tragi-comic deeds with which they'd been befouling themselves and the rest of the planet. I mean, I consider myself a fairly good satirist, but how can I compete with concepts like:

PROFITS FROM IRANIAN ARM SALES FUNNELED TO CONTRAS BY ISRAEL

I spotted that headline on my way home to work on this story, and knew right away that the old Double-R had outdone me once more. As is so often done by the true masters of show business, he had bamboozled and befuddled us with the obvious.

Reagan has of course been lying for a living through most of his professional career (those who refer disparagingly to him as an actor flatter him undeservedly; he spent more years and gained considerably more income from advertising, a barely concealing euphemism for lying). Still, even those who loathe everything about the man had some lingering expectations that, once installed in the world's most powerful office, he would conduct himself with a shred of dignity.

And on the surface, that seemed to be happening. While a revived CIA spread death and terror



Gangland leader "Dutch" Reagan, prompted by his constant sidekick, syndicate mouthpiece Larry "Spokes" Speakes, took the 5th Amendment 347 times in response to inquiries about the activities of his international crime organization, considered by many to be a modern incarnation of "Murder, Inc." "I didn't know none of them guys," the aging mobster repeatedly insisted.

throughout the world, just as in the days of old, and the bloated U.S. military searched frantically for Third World trouble spots on which it could try out its mind-boggling array of new weaponry, back in Washington, all was pomp and glitter. The Reagans had brought style and elegance back into government, fashion commentators gleefully proclaimed. The mangled bodies, the malnourished children, the desperate throes of a world poised on the brink of extinction, these were far removed from the jewel-bedecked nights, the long, cool limousines, the gleaming affluence of businessmen, artists, and sycophantic journalists making haste

to align themselves with the latest incarnation of the all-powerful empire.

In the midst of all this glamor, of course, the United States was spending itself into bankruptcy, millions of people who had been leading a marginally tolerable existence found themselves slipping or being driven into the desperate ranks of the permanent underclass, and a whole nation was led to believe that its highest, even its divinely ordained purpose, was to prepare for war to the death against all enemies of the state. Anyone with even the vaguest grasp of history could see what was happening, but history, like popular culture, was being rewritten faster than nearly anyone could understand, and even many of the well-intentioned were swept along by the same age-old call to glory that has turned out to be in truth the death knell of all the earth's empires that have gone before.

The Roman republic lasted 500 years before it fell victim to the imperial ambitions of the Caesars; the American republic is not likely to come anywhere close to that record. And in light of the depths to which we have sunk in recent years, there is little reason to think that it should. It's hard to say where exactly we went wrong, even harder to say how things might be put right again. Was it when Woodrow Wilson intervened in Europe to set up the power imbalance that made Adolf Hitler and World War II not only possible, but nearly inevitable? Or when Roosevelt and Truman got together with the Russians to lay the groundwork for World War III? How about the CIA-military coup, which was what the Kennedy assassination was really all about, and the 1960s version of the Opium War, which was what Vietnam was really about? Or does it go back to the beginnings, when our noble experiment in democracy was established on a foundation of genocide and slave labor?

Whatever. Only the seriously astigmatic or those who have been getting rich off the whole business could seriously argue that things haven't been going downhill for quite a while. Nixon and his gang of Keystone Krooks provided some comic relief, but also created the dangerous illusion that the system was capable of policing itself. Less than 15 years later, while some commentators still speak earnestly of "putting Watergate behind us," the country has fallen under the sway of a criminal syndicate that makes Nixon, Haldeman, Mitchell, and the rest of that band of bozos look like true statesmen.

So let's get down to it. Reagan may live in a big white house and ride around in a long black car, and fly in his own 747 and make front page news when he goes to the bathroom, but underneath all those fancy trappings he is a liar, a thief, and a murderer, one of the worst in history. There are only two places a man like him belongs: in prison, or, if I could be persuaded that capital punishment is as good an idea as he thinks it is, dead.

But though the wheels are in motion now, and in the next year or so we're likely, through impeachments or resignations, to get rid of the whole crowd, I'm afraid it's too late to do much good. A system that has produced a downward spiral of incompetence and immorality for this long is not likely to suddenly rectify itself. Even if Reagan and Bush are both impeached and convicted, which, of course, they should be, the next in line for the presidency is House majority leader Jim Wright, a right-wing Democratic party hack who is virtually unknown outside his own state, and deservedly so. One very plausible scenario presented by columnist Warren Hinckle has Bush resigning, and Reagan appointing Senate Republican leader Robert Dole to the vice presidency before resigning himself. Dole, who somehow reminds me of J.R. Ewing minus the personal charm and sense of integrity, has distinguished himself in the past as Gerald Ford's acerbic axeman in the 1976 campaign and for being the first politician to be implanted with a personality designed by committee.

Anyway, things are not likely to improve to any measurable degree, and perhaps that's as it should be. Thomas Jefferson is reputed to have said that a country should have a revolution every 50 years or so, though I've never seen the specific quote to that effect. I'm neither bloodthirsty nor energetic enough to want to run around tossing molotov cocktails at tanks, but a good case could be made for regularly tossing the whole system and starting from scratch. Violence may not be my forte, but ridicule can be equally, if not more effective as a revolutionary weapon, and if there's one thing for which we can be grateful to the Reagan mob, it's that they've given us ample ammunition.

So there's where the silver lining may be in this whole affair, that this may mark the final unravelling of a government that has outlived most of what usefulness it ever had. As it loses its credibility with more and more of its citizens, it may also begin to lose its power to inflict harm on innocent people all around the globe, which, it's important to remember, is what this current crisis of confidence is all about. Contra terrorists, the concentration camps and random bombings of our neo-nazi puppet Israel, and now weapons to fuel the demented ambitions of the medieval religious fanatic who rules Iran, and who, it must be becoming obvious, has more than a little in common with the Christian fundamentalists who would rule our country: it all adds up to death and suffering on a scale that few of us can even imagine. And all in the name of what?

"I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children," Bob Dylan once sang, prophetically, it would seem: today we see Ronald Reagan and the Ayatollah Khomeini, two twisted old men who mock the very notion of what it means to be human, teaming up to send 13 and 14 year old boys to die, by the hundreds of thousands, on the desert sands of their own private Armageddon. It's hard to look upon the faces of the dead and dying, it's hard to think about the black, black hearts of those who would profit from this madness, it's hard to live in a world that lets it go on and on and on. And, as Dylan finished his song, "It's a hard rain a gonna fall."



CARTOON BY "M." FROM THE ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER.

Ho Ho Ho And A Bag Full of War Toys

A BORN-AGAIN PAGAN LOOKS AT CHRISTMAS

I've never had a chestnut roasted over an open fire, in fact the smell of the things makes me sick. I've never been kissed under the mistletoe nor ridden in a one-horse open sleigh, and more than once my stockings have been stuffed with coal.

But I love Christmas. I know that may sound strange, even blasphemous, coming from someone who spends as much time and energy as I do defaming religion and all its pernicious works. But every year around about October (and sometimes even in July) I get out the sheet music and start practicing Christmas carols on the piano, even the ones whose lyrics consist of little more than the most inane doctrinal prattle. Does this indicate a kind of schizophrenia on my part, or some unrooted-out vestiges of my religious childhood?

I think not. Remember, Christmas, or at least the festivities associated with it, was ripped off by the Christians; it had been around for centuries before the new religion showed up. Nobody really knows when people started celebrating the winter solstice and the beginning of the sun's return with an orgy of feasting and drinking, but it's probably safe to assume that the observance goes back to the prehistoric days when man first became aware of the passing of the seasons.

And with that kind of awareness comes, or should come an almost-but-not-quite mystical reverence for the earth and the sun that make all things, including life itself, possible. To most "primitive" peoples this goes without saying,

but the anthropomorphic gods of more "civilized" societies permit, even encourage a dangerous alienation from nature and reality. There may be some great spirit beyond the sky that created everything in the universe, but when it comes to spirituality, just as in music, art, or politics, I say keep it simple. Pay attention to rocks and trees and water, essential things that you can touch and feel, and that are an obvious part of the biochemical tapestry that adds up to you and me.

And all of it grows out of what could be just a frozen ball of mud hurtling through space if it weren't for the awesome power of the sun. Just a touch of those magic rays and things start coming to life. It's no wonder that the ancients must have been terrified when the sun started heading south for the winter and the days started getting so short that it seemed as though soon there would be nothing but endless night. And what an incredible feeling it must have been when they first realized that the sun, which they correctly saw as the giver of all life, was going to come back after all. What a great excuse for a party!

So it was then, and so it should be now. Sing, dance, give presents, act like a fool, and make yourself remember how good it is to be alive. And when you're done giving thanks to all the things material, spiritual, magical, or none or all of the above that make life possible, make sure and give extra thanks, and love, to the people all around you who make it worthwhile.

Strangers in the Night?

In the November 19 issue of the ANDERSON VALLEY ADVERTISER (and if you don't already subscribe to what is probably the best weekly newspaper in the United States, what are you waiting for: \$15 a year in Mendocino County, \$20 elsewhere, to PO Box 459, Boonville CA 95415) editor Bruce Anderson tells of a chilling new development in rural Mendocino, one that further illustrates our county's status as a third world-like colonial preserve.

It seems that military-style hit squads have been attacking and robbing residents of remote rural areas, perhaps not too coincidentally immediately following CAMP raids in the same area. The heavily armed robbers strongly resemble CAMP personnel in both appearance and operating methods, and seem to have a knowledge of their targets that would be difficult, if not impossible for ordinary strangers to obtain.

The parallels to the death and terror squads of Central America and are as unavoidable as they are unpleasant. Just as military force alone has never succeeded in completely subduing the unruly peasantry of other lands, CAMP's activities in northern California have accomplished little more than driving the price of marijuana up to previously unheard of levels. Growers have begun to adapt to CAMP tactics, and without tossing out the Constitution altogether, there's little more the police can do. Legally, that is; teams of thugs operating with tacit government approval have been known to work wonders, as in the case of the Tonton Macoutes, who under the direction of the Duvalier *père et fils* kept Haiti as a fertile ground for U.S. exploitation for so many years.

MUSIC REVIEWS

VICTIMS FAMILY, *Voltage and Violets*, LP, Mordam

Get out the salt and pepper, gang, and the steak sauce and chili peppers, too; Lawrence has a lot of words to eat this month. While I've never made a full-scale verbal assault on VICTIMS FAMILY, the way I have on some other bands, I've been less than kind to them more than once in print. Too metallic, too jazzy, too eclectic, and besides, they know how to play their instruments way too well (actually, the first time I reviewed a live show of theirs, I accused them of playing some rather pointless noise-thrash). All this past year people have been telling me that VF were the Bay Area's best band, and I've been laughing at them.

Well, guess what. They were right and I was wrong. I know such an unlikely development deserves front-page banner headline treatment, but I haven't got room there, so this will have to go on the music page: VICTIMS FAMILY are the Bay Area's best band. And I say this while still not being completely fond of the kind of music they play. How did this realization finally penetrate my ordinarily opaque skull? I don't know exactly; though it had a lot to do with a VF Club Foot show on the night the record was released. The Club Foot was packed and the waves of energy pulsing through the place were way palpable. I took the record home and listened to it that night, and again in the morning. The music is great, the lyrics possibly even better. As both a musician and writer myself, I am humbled.

Nearly all the songs feature intelligent approaches to very real issues, but with hardly a trace of pedantry or preaching. I especially appreciated "Homophobia", which speaks out strongly against the neo-primitive sexual intolerance being fostered in the punk rock scene by so many dumb-jock bands these days (the DESCENDENTS are merely the first to come to mind). Besides, how many punk songs have you ever heard that contain a word like "exacerbate"? Get this album, it's one of the year's best.

-LL

DEAD KENNEDYS, *Bedtime For Democracy*, LP, Alternative Tentacles

At last! One of punk rock's truly great groups has come up with a truly great album. Sadly, but perhaps fittingly, it looks like it will also be the last for the DKs. The final survivors of San Francisco's original punk explosion, the KENNEDYS persevered through years of ridicule ("great name, but it's all downhill after that"), scene violence, and the poor production that kept their first LP, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*, from becoming an all-time classic, to become probably the best-known underground band of the 1980s.

The DKs' other two Alternative Tentacles LPs, *Plastic Surgery Disasters* and *Frankenchrist*, suffered from a lack of really memorable material, but that's definitely not the case here. Biafra's lyrics have never been more biting, as he assails with equal vengeance America's accelerating drift into fascism and the mindless conformity and trend toward commercialism that has eviscerated the punk underground. The more I hear this record, the more I realize how much I'm going to miss the KENNEDYS and how foolish I was for not appreciating them more when they were around.

The packaging is outstanding, too, with cover art by Mendocino County's own resident genius, Winston Smith (and all this time I thought he only knew how to do collage); I'd like to see it turned into a poster and plastered on every wall in the country. There's also a charming little newspaper enclosed, called *FUCK FACTS*.

If you were to want one single record that could sum up all the great power and potential that political punk rock once had and maybe still does, you couldn't do better than this one. Buy it.

-LL

SEWER TROUT / NEW VULGARIANS, cassette, \$3 to Jim MacLean, 2728 Capitol Ave #1, Sacramento CA 95816

SEWER TROUT are a folksy garage thrash band from the "bowels of suburbia." Well, those "bowels" have produced some good shit! Eleven songs, covering subjects such as "Vagina Envy", "I Hate Fun", and "President of the Anarchist Club". Delivered in a humorous, aggressive, do it yourself style. Side two is the NEW VULGARIANS. Made up of the same people, but all the songs are about the trials and tribulations (and ridiculousness) of rock climbing. Comes complete with a booklet containing all the lyrics and nifty photos. This tape is great. Buy it, OK?

-David Hayes

BIM SKALA BIM, LP, (41 Boston St., Somerville MA 02143)

What we have here is an independent release by a politically aware ska band from ...Massachusetts! Well produced, danceable, and lyrically on target. Guaranteed to tap your toes. Besides, how can you lose with a song titled "Jah Laundromat"? ("The Key": *Don't give up 'cause you don't like what you see, don't give in, control your destiny, take control, you alone hold the key, don't give up, don't give up!*)

- David Hayes

A.P.P.L.E. *Neither Victims Nor Executioners*, \$3 to 25 Van Dam St., Brooklyn NY 11222

Along with URGENT FURY, DOG, and a few other bands, A.P.P.L.E. give us a break from all the CRO-FRONT-SUCKERS clones in New York City (it's lucky I no longer live there or I'd probably get my "fucking head kicked in" by the NYHCs). Anyway, this tape is even better than their first one, though I wish the guitar was a little louder. Favorite tracks: "Why Work?", "Time", "Fuck RCA", and the cover of Dylan's "Blowin' In the Wind". ("Rape Our Mother": *Toxic sky, toxic sea, polluted minds, polluted subsistence, shall it continue, our earthly disease? Disintegrating our means of existence!*)

- Joe Britz

RHYTHM PIGS, AFFLICTED, DRI, BAD BRAINS at the Farm, San Francisco, Nov. 28.

Let's get one thing straight from the start: no way would I pay \$10 for this show (or any other show, for that matter). I won free tickets, and still probably wouldn't have gone if my friend Justin visiting from Australia hadn't wanted to see a real American "hardcore" show. And once inside, I wished I had paid so I could ask for my money back.

This was a typical Paul Rat mega-show, with the Farm jammed to the rafters with sullen suburban youths, the exact sort I had hoped I'd seen the last of when I graduated high school and lit out of my parents' hometown. Something about bleary-eyed 19 year-olds with middle-aged beer bellies, matted, stringy hair, and \$50 a week allowances and parent-provided cars doesn't appeal to me, especially when I'm expected to believe that this is the wave of the future for the punk rock "scene".

Scene? This was just a run of the mill rock show, the kind Bill Graham would be cashing in on if he wasn't consistently out to lunch with his Marin County millionaire pop star burnout and dope dealer buddies. There wasn't a thing about the whole evening that wasn't completely predictable, from the \$10 T-shirts to the arena-style guitar solos to the flying fists and spattering blood (the product of both the almost no-haired and the very long-haired, who seem to have quite a bit in common).

One of the reasons I wasn't very enthusiastic about going to this show, even for free, was that the best part of shows for me, even more than the music, is seeing all my friends. I didn't expect many of them would turn up for this one, and I was right. I saw maybe ten people I knew, another five or ten I wished I didn't know, and at least a couple hundred that I'm profoundly glad I don't know. Much mindless macho energy was in evidence, even from the girls. In fact, one of the evening's best entertainments was a soprano screeching match between two pasty-faced teenage twits about who was the bigger liar -- I thought of soliciting them to do backing vocals on MDC's "Greedy and Pathetic".

Well, anyway, I guess I should get around to saying something about the music that was responsible for drawing this aggregation of unpleasant rock and roll consumers together. The RHYTHM PIGS started off with a well enough played, but not particularly inspiring set. Just as in the other two times I saw them, the PIGS had virtually nothing to say on stage, so you had no idea (unless you're familiar with their record) what they were singing about, or even if they were having a good time, or anything about them. A little more exhibitionism would be in order. I didn't see the AFFLICTED at all; I was trying to get some sleep on one of the tables out in the lobby. I'd seen them once before, a year or so ago, and thought they might have been fun back around 1979.

My main rationalization for coming was to see the two "big" bands that I'd somehow managed to never see before. I was especially interested in checking out DRI, since it was only a few weeks ago that I'd first heard their record, and I was fairly impressed with it. But different people kept telling me different stories about whether DRI had or hadn't "gone metal," so I thought I should see for myself. I was talking with a friend about some personal problems he was having when DRI came on, so I asked him if he'd mind waiting while I went into see the band. "No problem," he said, offering to come in with me, "just let me know when you've had enough," implying that it wouldn't be very long.

And he was right. My first impression of DRI wasn't so bad; they may have looked like garden-variety headbangers, but the music issuing from their speakers was fast, powerful, and loud, even awe-inspiring. The crowd was going wild, too. This went on for about five minutes, when the guitarist uncorked a generic wankoff and a deep layer of sludge settled over the room. And that was the pattern for the rest of the set, or at least for as much of it as I could take. As I headed out into the lobby again, I saw someone I knew from Maximum Rockroll, and he asked me what I had I thought. When I told him it was the first time I'd seen DRI, he smiled sadly and said, "You should have seen them when they were good."

I wasn't expecting much out of BAD BRAINS, either, based on what I'd heard about them over the years. Of course, much of it was second and third hand, so I wasn't taking it as gospel, but unless someone had devoted him or herself to going around making up unflattering lies about the BAD BRAINS, I figured some of it had to be true. I had heard especially that they had made some exceedingly stupid and sexist remarks based on their Rasta beliefs. A lot of punks and/or hippies will go out of their way to excuse religious zealotry of the Rasta variety when they wouldn't tolerate for a minute the same sort of ignorance spewing forth from the mouth of a Christian fundamentalist. Hey, religious crackpots are religious crackpots, no matter what kind of music they play.

Fortunately we were spared any quasi-spiritual mumbo-jumbo; BAD BRAINS came out thrashing, and for a few songs, they did it as well as I've ever seen it done. Then reggae time came, and it wasn't as bad as I'd feared. In fact, it was better, or at least less boring than some "real" reggae groups I've seen. After that it was time to trot out the material from the new album, some of which came dangerously close to mainstream pap. All in all, a mixed performance; if they'd thrown out most of the newer stuff (along with about half the audience), it might have been pretty good.

After the show finally ended (and for a while I thought it never would), I stopped by the Chatterbox on Valencia Street to catch the MR T EXPERIENCE. What a relief! While one generation of punk rockers gets old, mundane, and tiresomely predictable, a new generation keeps the spirit of rebellion (and fun) alive. May a thousand MR T EXPERIENCES bloom!

-LL

LETTERS TO THE LOOKOUT

To Lawrence Livermore:

I squinted my eyes as you suggested, and the type of the latest *LOOKOUT* didn't look almost as good as it used to. It looks like shit, and it physically hurts the eyes to read it.

Like the corporadoes you affect to disdain, you place yourself at the disposal of the computer and, predictably enough, have to work even harder to turn out something that looks even more like crap. How many *McLookouts* sold?

Your type is repellent, in both (dis) respects. Dogs don't hold elections but you're more domesticated so you do vote for capitalism with a human face (lift). You're just a journalo. If I can't be bothered with you, you're going to have to assume that I support, or at least don't object to, the creeping, indeed the galloping badness that threatens to overwhelm us.

I hope this cheers you up and inspires you.

Dan Todd
Eugene OR

Dear Dan,

I think that your hostility is misplaced; the computer is just a glorified version of the electric typewriter you used to compose your letter. Apparently you're unaware that the *LOOKOUT* has been done by computer since last spring, beginning with issue #17; the only difference with last month's issue was that the printout was done on a much lower quality machine than usual.

I used to do the *LOOKOUT* on an electric typewriter. Once last year I miscalculated the size of the columns and had to retype the entire issue, which took me about 14 hours. The same job on a computer would take about two minutes. Ditto for mail order; are you going to volunteer to hand address a couple hundred copies for me each month? The computer does it in five minutes.

The *LOOKOUT* is a labor of love, not profit. I think I put in enough hours on it every month as it is without adding hours or even days more of tedious menial labor that can be done better by a machine to cater to the technophobia of someone who, if I'm not mistaken, doesn't even pay for his subscription.

But I am cheered up and inspired; it makes my job much easier when people write me obnoxious letters because it saves me the trouble of having to make them up myself.

LL

Hey Diphthong,

I sent you a buck fucking two months ago and I haven't got shit! I thought your mag was for a stamp... I'm getting rather pissed, thank you. Hey, I don't really need the zine, I do need the fucking buck. I'm 300 bucks in debt and I could use the fucking dollar back. Just fucking send me something, please.

Mike
Hampton NH

Dear Mike,

Wow, this must be my lucky month! Just be thankful you're not one of the people who sent in *four* fucking bucks for a *LOOKOUTS* tape *three* fucking months ago.

LL

Dear Lawrence,

A friend and I were chuckling over the revelation that a lot of the more visible and active environmentalists and "hell raisers" from northern Mendocino and southern Humboldt are "risen Catholics" (or fallen Catholics, depending on your perspective). Then I noticed your lead-off in *Life on Planet Disney* (LOOKOUT #22): "Like most children of the 1950s, my religious training was twofold. Sunday mornings and schooldays I was steeped in the faith of my fathers, but the rest of the time I worshipped at the electronic shrine." Sounds like you may have had similar indoctrination?

It seems that products of intense religious programming end up either as terminal cynics or goose-stepping smile buttons, but in either case there's apparently an overriding need to stamp out perceived notions of evil.

Don Morris
Willits CA

Dear Don,

Well, don't leave me in suspense. Which one am I?

LL

Dear LL,

Yes, I did notice the time warp between *LOOKOUT* publications. I'm glad to see it back. I must tell you that I missed the music reviews, that was one of my favorite part of the mags in the past. What happened? Maybe if you could review tapes, ask folks to send in tapes, you can keep correspondence. Instead, the music transitioned into articles on politics. I realize you like the political messages in the music I have never seen the LOOKOUTS, I hope to, and I imagine you have political subjects in the songs. Publish your poetry, maybe? I'd like to see some in print in an issue. You could even ask people to send in their lyrics to be published with a letter. I guess I missed the communication from readers and bands from before.

Thanks much for the article on CAMP and the reports of problems in your area. I can understand the militia feel to CAMP's invasions and see it as a worldwide disease that takes on different forms of intensity around the world. CIA, guerrillas, terrorists, contras, all a playground for masses of people who enjoy or at least feel the need to play war games at the expense of violating other people's human needs. And once one has been in it, sucked into the war machine, terror takes on incredible forms and visions. Is heaven a place without terror? Or is this it right here?

Okay, reading your mag has brought out philosophical thoughts from me. Thank you. It did work. That's what I hope your goals for this project are - to reach some people, bring about some thought-provoking ideas. Thank you. That is what I equate with the "magic" in people's music. I want you to know that someone listening to music is such a strong force. I believe it to be more potent than voting, personally. I find more of this "thinking for myself," to actively engage when communicating on a personal level rather than on a mass level. I mean, I feel weaker when I feel I think for a group of people. Somehow politics simplifies things like that. I don't want to register to vote - that is why I don't vote. I don't want a bank account. I don't want my name in the machine. I don't want to pay taxes. I don't want a license, eventually. I enjoy people with drive to grow in spite of all these political and societal constraints. It takes effort to disconnect from the many years we've been programmed in how to be part of the system. There are many other systems that exist alongside it, however.

So thanks again for your continuing effort to reach people. Looking forward to future issues of the *LOOKOUT* and hopefully some stuff about music.

Alyson Steinman
San Francisco

YOUR GOVERNMENT WANTS TO PROTECT YOU FROM DANGEROUS MUSIC, COMRADE

Last night I watched a little bit of a British documentary on the repression of artists and intellectuals in Russian-controlled Czechoslovakia. It followed the case of a university professor who was imprisoned for two years for putting on a cabaret and publishing a book of jokes that poked fun at that country's communist government.

The film was well made, and soon me rooting for the brave professor and thanking my lucky stars that I live here in the United States, where the free expression of ideas is not only allowed but encouraged. Then I remembered one of the things I'd planned on writing about this issue: our government's new policy on musicians and artists wishing to visit the United States.

Ever since the beginning of the Reagan regime, visitors to this country could easily think they had somehow shown up by mistake at the border to the Soviet Union. Anyone who is not obviously well off and here on what the corporate state could consider legitimate business is subject to extensive interrogation and harassment, even extending to a degrading strip search (not that American citizens are immune to such treatment; it's happened twice to me). Still more disturbing has been the exclusion of thousands of intellectuals and artists simply because they at one time or another expressed opposition to military, social, or environmental policies of the United States. Naturalist Farley Mowatt and poet Pablo Neruda are only two of the more notable victims of this neo-totalitarianism, which its proponents claim is necessary to protect American interests. In other words, we have to destroy freedom in order to save it. In other words, just as in Russia, your government doesn't trust you to think for yourself.

Now things are about to get worse. A new Immigration and Naturalization Service policy, to become effective this January, states that musicians and other artists from other countries will only be allowed to perform in the United States if they are "of distinguished merit and ability" and "pre-eminent status." The idea of letting INS bureaucrats determine what constitutes artistic merit would be ludicrous if it weren't tragic. It doesn't take much in the way of brains to see that what we're getting is a real-life set of Thought Police.

Punk rockers and other "subversives" will find the new restrictions to be not much more than an official confirmation of what they've had to deal with all along, and not just when it comes to entering the United States; England is almost as bad, with Canada lagging not far behind. In fact, some bands have reported having an easier time getting in to east bloc countries like Poland and Hungary. By the same token, bands have had to acquire some expertise in evading international barriers, including such obvious steps as splitting up before trying to cross the border, and leaving the leather and spikes at home.

The obvious course of action when it comes to stupid laws is to ignore them and encourage others to do the same. All international borders are a totally unwarranted insult to human intelligence and dignity, and the sooner we get rid of them, the better off we'll all be.

Sharyn, The Good Witch Of The Lower East Side

Oh, mama, can this really be the end?

...B. Dylan

The year was 1968, and the apocalypse was just around the corner. For most of America, that was; on the back streets of what New York hippies had wistfully named the East Village, it looked as though it had already come and gone. I was a wide-eyed boy not quite ready to deal with the idea of becoming a man, even though the number of my years and the nature of the world I inhabited said that it was time.

The streets were paved with broken glass and falling bricks. Half the buildings were abandoned and the rest looked as if they ought to be. I wandered barefoot through the rubble, trying to reconcile my flower-child ideals with the matter-of-fact brutality of everyday life. I had a portable tape recorder, the kind secretaries used to take dictation -- this was before the days of the walkman and the ghetto blaster -- and I'd recorded, via a hand-held mike, a couple of my favorite records. I'd walk around with the thing strapped over my shoulder, its tinny tunes echoing across the midnight wasteland, or, even more eloquently, from the cathedral-like walls of a deserted subway station.

*This is the end, beautiful friend
This is the end, my only friend, the end
Of our elaborate plans, the end
Of everything that stands, the end*

...the Doors

How I'd come to be there was sort of a convoluted story. A few months earlier I'd been living in a hippie crash pad in the midwest that the locals, even the other hippies, had dubbed "Insanity House". We took it as a compliment, though some years later it finally occurred to me that it probably hadn't been meant that way. There were 14 or so of us, in what was meant to be a one-bedroom student apartment, and we devoted our days to consuming massive amounts of drugs and proclaiming loudly our intention to overthrow the government and all other forms of established order.

It being a small town, we soon attracted the attention of the authorities, and I, being the biggest-mouthed, and in at least some ways, the dumbest of the Insanity House inmates, became the principal target of that attention. A way was soon found to set me up on marijuana charges, which at that time carried a minimum sentence of 20 years in prison. The police were kind enough to offer me an alternative, which consisted of helping them bust the local pot dealer and sending him to prison for 20 years.

Though I wasn't, at that point in my life, the most moral person I ever met -- in fact, I was a no-account sleazebag -- I couldn't bring myself to ruin someone else's life to escape the consequences of my own stupidity. Besides, the pot dealer in question was a grad student with a wife and two kids; I was your original dead-end kid, yapping about no future long before Johnny Rotten ever glommed on to the concept. So, after an all-night conference with my peers, fueled, of course, by yet more drugs, it was decided that my best course would be to get out of town, fast.

As it happened, one of the peripheral members of our little peace and love mob, inspired, no doubt, by a new band called the Velvet Underground, had decided to give up his life of LSD abuse and return to his native New York City to become a heroin addict. He had a 1941 Mercury with no headlights, windshield wipers, heater (it was February), or registration papers. Perfect! I was bored with the Midwest, anyway, and with my girlfriend, as well. I was sure all the folks out in New York would be thrilled to see me, and to hear my plans for saving the world.

The trip took three days. We pulled up at our destination in Brooklyn early in the morning and slept the rest of the day. That night we headed into Manhattan to hook up with my partner's friends. I figured we'd get together, maybe smoke some pot, burn some incense, and sit in a circle discussing cosmic politics and the secret messages encoded in the lyrics of the latest Beatles record. Instead I found myself waiting in the back seat of a car parked in a Harlem alley while my newfound pals ran upstairs to score some heroin. Later on, in the Lower East Side flat of a snarling borderline psychotic who was making a living selling machine guns to black liberation groups, I watched the guys go through the whole romantic ritual, cooking the stuff up in a dirty spoon, tying off their arms with belts until the veins bulged up, then jamming the needle in, sucking blood up into the syringe to mix it with the heroin, then plunging the whole mixture deep into their central nervous systems.

I've never even tried heroin, so a lot of users have sneered at me when I condemned it, something along the lines of, "Don't criticize what you can't understand." But ever since that night I've felt I knew all I needed to know about heroin. Call it psychic transference or an overactive imagination, but as I saw the drug hit the blood stream of the first person to shoot up, my stomach turned inside out and I crumpled to the floor. "Everybody gets sick the first couple of times," junkies had told me, "but once you get over that, it's great." I watched my friends, who were already past the getting-sick phase, to see what great things might be happening to them, but they mostly looked on the verge of falling asleep. When I tried to talk to them, they seemed irritated, and when they'd answer me, they'd have trouble even finishing a sentence, as if it was just too much bother.

*There must be some way out of here,
Said the joker to the thief
There's too much pain and confusion
I can't get no relief*

...Dylan

For want of anywhere else to go, I found myself living with these guys, saw heroin go from a weekend treat to a 24-hour-a-day obsession, until our basement apartment might as well have been the tomb of the living dead. Outside, beyond our triple-barricaded door, there was little respite. Our block was one of the roughest, and most dangerous in the city. Slurming white boys were not appreciated. Out for a stroll on the first warm night of spring, I got my head bashed in with a gun butt and nearly bled to death.

I was lonely, confused, and, when I allowed myself to think about it, terrified. I was 20 years old and hiding out from what seemed at the time the equivalent of life in prison. When I had first taken off on this big adventure, I was figuring that I only had to lay low for a while, seeing that the revolution was just around the corner, but now I was beginning to have some doubts. The subculture I'd had so much hope for was turning out to be not much more than a bunch of junkies, and the rest of the world seemed to be going on just about as it always had. There were demonstrations and riots at various universities, and in the days following the Martin Luther King's murder, the ghettos of over a hundred American cities were in flames, but a few blocks away the hod carriers, the taxi drivers, and the secretaries went about their business as if it were part of the pre-ordained way of the world, looking right through the occasional ragged misfit like myself.

I started avoiding the daylight, tried to lose myself in the darkest parts of the city, the streets that even the muggers shunned. I didn't eat much, but I didn't much care. I was looking for visions, not a long, comfortable life.

*The bricks they lay on Grand Street
Where the neon madmen climb
They all fall there so perfectly
It all seems so well timed*

...Dylan

One of those nights I ended up in Tompkins Square Park about 3 a.m. Though it was in the heart of the East Village, the park was not the kind of place most people chose to go after dark, so I had the whole place to myself. I found a swing set, and soon I was soaring high into the purple sky, and even the multi-story tenements that ringed the park seemed to shrink to the size of child's toys far below. Until, just when the city didn't seem to be such a bad place after all, the strings of gravity would start to pull me back to earth.

I sensed, before I heard or saw, the presence of another human being. My normal reaction in that situation should have been fear, but what did I have to lose? I watched calmly as a figure emerged from the semi-blackness at the northeast corner of the playground and walked in a resolute, almost ritual-like series of circles around the slides, around the sandbox and the teeter-totter, around the other swing set, all the time giving no sign that she was aware of my presence. She looked as if she might be 12 years old. She was quite short, and wore a long grey coat that reached almost to the ground, topped with a broad-brimmed straw hat, the kind a farm girl might wear to keep the sun off her face. Her intently serious manner contrasted with her almost comical clothes to create a disorienting effect, as if I were watching Alice in Wonderland come to life.

She finally came to the jungle gym about 10 feet away from me. She climbed to the top and perched there, contemplating the occasional taxicab cruising down Avenue A. I wasn't then, and never have been an extremely social sort of person, but it seemed under the circumstances that I should say something; the best I could come up with was "Hi." "Hi yourself," she answered, right out of Huck Finn.

She was easy to talk to, practically the first person I'd found like that in New York. She was older than she looked, all of 15. She'd grown up in a rural part of South Jersey, "pretty, but boring," she said. She'd come to the city for... well, I don't remember exactly why; it seemed to make sense at the time. She'd hardly gotten off the bus when a man asked her if she needed a job and a place to stay. An old, old story, I was to learn, but still new to me. She was just coming back from work now; she spent the evening with a businessman from Iowa City, in town for a convention. "He was sort of nice," she told me, "not too gross, anyway." For a typical trick like that one, she got \$50, which she usually took in the form of heroin.

"My pimp's not too bad," she explained. "He gave me my own building." I laughed. "No, really," she said, "it's got six apartments. Do you want to come live there?" I figured she was pretty far out to lunch, but I liked her, and there was no one else around, so I let her talk. "I'm sort of like Wendy, you know, in *Peter Pan*. I go out and find lost boys and take care of them." She smiled. "Are you a lost boy?"

Well, I was, but I sure wasn't going to admit it to this ditsy pipsqueak. We talked almost till dawn, but then I headed back to my place. But a couple days later I was out walking and realized I was near the address she'd given me. It turned out that she hadn't been lying: she did have a whole building, and it was full of lost boys, some of them about as lost as I'd ever seen. Well, the building wasn't exactly *hers*, and the boys weren't exactly *boys* (most of them were older than me), but close enough. Down on 2nd Street, east of Avenue B, almost the whole block had been abandoned. There were probably half a dozen buildings with the doors (if they had doors) wide open to anyone who wanted to move in. Apparently her pimp had visions of filling a whole row of buildings with his girls, but so far Sharyn was his only working tenant. It was only nine blocks uptown to the desperately dangerous precincts of E 11th Street, where I'd been living, but down here things seemed different, almost peaceful. I didn't need another invitation; I gathered up what little I had and moved right in.

There were a couple of empty apartments upstairs, but they were barely habitable, even by my standards, so I ended up living in a little two-room apartment on the second floor with Sharyn, some other guy whose name and face I don't have the foggiest recollection of, and a pimply-faced, wiry-haired youngster named Leon, who was just coming out of a three or four day coma caused by a barbiturate overdose. We all slept in one room; the floor was completely covered with mattresses, the walls and ceiling were painted completely black, and the only light was ultraviolet. One day we found some day-glo paint the hippies before us had left behind and we redecorated the walls and ourselves.

There was no lock on the front door, so we could pretty much assume that whenever we went out some of the local junkies would go through the place to see if there was anything worth stealing. There seldom was, and my new neighborhood must have had a better class of junkies, because they were considerate enough not to take our ten-dollar record player and the two records we owned. Up on 11th Street they would have burned the place to the ground.

*I asked him would he hurry
But we crawled the canyons slowly
Thru the buyers and the sellers
Thru the burglar bells and wishing wells
With gangs and girly shows
The ghostly garden grows*

...Joni Mitchell

Maybe I'd found a little corner of the world to hide away in, for a while, but meanwhile, all around us, the ghostly garden grew. Jay, the guy I'd first come to New York with, died of an overdose in the back seat of a car on the way to a rock festival; his "friends" tossed his body out onto the turnpike and went on to the festival. Our roommate Leon was able to walk again, but he couldn't talk quite right; it seemed he might have suffered permanent brain damage. Late one May afternoon Sharyn and I walked him to the subway station to send him back to his mother in Yonkers. We stood at the turnstiles watching him until the train was gone. My little tape recorder kept up its mournful soundtrack; it all seemed so incredibly sad. Sharyn was getting worse herself, doing more drugs, I guessed, though she would never shoot up in front of me because she knew how upset I would get. One night I was awakened by a loud pounding and somebody yelling "Police!" Too startled to think that they might have come for me, I opened the door and was told that Sharyn was in the hospital. OD, of course. She would "probably" live.

She did, and was back at work within a few days. She didn't have much energy, and kept saying that she was afraid she might have hepatitis, which I didn't take too seriously because I'd never even heard of the disease at the time. The first days of summer came steamrolling in, and the door fell off the refrigerator, which rarely had anything in it anyway (the junkies would usually clean it out for us). There was this crazy guy, a hyperactive Brooklynite who went by the name of Speedy Gonzales, who had appointed himself as our building's unofficial superintendent and took care of things like jerry-rigging the wiring so we could get free electricity. He liked to talk. "Do you know where the sound of sirens comes from?" he'd say, with unblinking eyes, "See, the devil takes all the damned souls, right, and they're all screaming their guts out, and he puts them all in this big jar, you know, and then everytime they need a siren back on earth, he just lifts the lid a crack." There was a fire station directly across the street from us, and New York, especially in a neighborhood like ours, has a lot of fires. I heard the damned souls screaming on an average of once an hour, night and day.

One 90-degree day Speedy showed up with a truckload of mink coats that he'd "found" in an alley off 5th Avenue. He thought our apartment would be a good place to keep them. We celebrated the first day of summer literally knee deep in fur. He tried to get us to sell them for him: "Hey, those hippies got money for drugs; they got money for genuine mink coats." We tried, dragging a couple of furs around the East Village with our feet practically sticking to the pavement. Even at five bucks a coat, we never collected anything but laughter for our efforts.

*The carpet too is moving under you
And it's all over now, baby blue*

...Dylan

Somehow I sensed my time in New York was coming to an end, and sure enough, I got a message from an old friend who was living in San Francisco now. I called him, and as I told him tales of my life in the big city, I could almost hear his jaw dropping. "Hey, get out here," he told me, "California's where it's at." He offered to pick me up in Detroit, where he was going to be visiting his parents, and take me back to California with him. I pawned my little tape recorder and got enough to buy a \$16 youth fare ticket. When I told Sharyn I was leaving, she barely seemed to notice; it was if we were waving goodbye from a great distance.

One of the two records we owned was by Joni Mitchell. On the cover it showed her walking in the rain on a street that looked very much like our own. All the songs on side 1 were about living in New York, and the last one was about leaving it. I ran the needle through those grooves one last time and headed for the airport.

California was a lot better, though it would be years before I really got that jangly New York adrenalin edge out of my system. I hid out there for a while, until things cooled off enough with my pot bust for a lawyer to get it dropped to a misdemeanor, and eventually came back there to live for good. I never saw or heard from Sharyn again. One day, sitting in a eucalyptus grove in Berkeley, I wrote her a long letter and addressed it to The Good Witch of The Lower East Side, but she never answered. Eventually I figured she was dead, although for all I know she could be a housewife in New Jersey or a movie star or a broken-down old hooker living in some fleabag hotel off of Times Square. I probably wouldn't even recognize her if I saw her again; I can't even see her face in my mind anymore. All I really remember is her smile.

Do You Wanna Be Like the Folks on the Hill?

by Joe Britz

I recently began a school course which 200 people had applied for. After a process of elimination that included a written test and an interview with the program director, 17 students were selected. As I'm sitting in class at the moment, half asleep (whoever thought up the concept of school must have been setting out to find a cure for insomnia). I'm thinking about the procedure which allowed me to "capture" such a "valuable prize."

It's funny how the pressure to compete was enforced without a complaint. Or worse still, no one even noticed. After a lifetime of conditioning, the competitive drive becomes second nature, an involuntary reaction. Few even think of it as unnecessary or counterproductive. In fact, if the subject arises, it will inevitably be defended as a healthy, efficient way of existence. After all, it is argued, competition can lead to higher quality health care and advanced technology (see nuclear weapons), among other things. It is the root of all capitalism. To me, that's the problem.

Well, I'm not in the mood (nor knowledgeable enough to analyze the different systems throughout the world. Besides, whatever regime one happens to be slaving for doesn't make much matter. My basic point is that if people don't improve their day to day interactions with one another, our ingrained "competitive spirit" may put a quick halt to the whole tragic affair we call life.

Take a look at your own situation for a minute. When was the last time you tried to push yourself ahead of someone else for personal gain (or glory, happiness, etc...) at school, work, home, or wherever? I believe everyone is guilty of doing it to some extent. When taking the qualifying test at school, for example, I was conscious of how others were doing and hoping that I would do better. I saw an opportunity for something that might benefit myself and unfortunately became a bit of a detestable character in the process (only for a couple of minutes, mind you; I'm too likable a person to behave in such a manner over a long period) (editor's comment?). But as I said before, the sad part is that I didn't notice the feeling at the time. I wonder how many others are completely oblivious to their competitive urges, whether it's at work, in the music field, or, most frightening of all, in foreign policy matters (a synonym for competition, according to the thesaurus, is "warfare").

To tie up this mercifully brief diatribe, I'll add that I realize there is regrettably a time and place for competition. But (if you'll excuse the closing sermon) when you're working on projects involving other people, try to be aware of their feelings and don't be so eager to pit yourself against them.

*Can't stand on your own in these times
Against all the odds*

...JOY DIVISION

ZINE REVIEWS

by Joe Britz

STATE OF FURY, 25 Leroy St. #11, New York NY 10014, 22¢ stamp

This one-man operation doesn't contain any generic departments such as reviews, scene reports, or the like, but it's full of opinions nonetheless. Abraham's (of the band URGENT FURY) captivating writing style conveys his frustration over those "perfect products of our plastic society," the hypocrisy of government, and his disdain for "parading" fashion punks among other things. The words flow from the pages of SOF in a smooth, sharp, and angry manner. Great!

INCOHERENT HOUSE, 1445 Leavenworth, San Francisco CA 94109, 50¢ plus 22¢ stamp

Editor Mitzi puts this friendly, intelligent zine out quarterly (or so) and manages to combine a humorous and serious feeling in it. I especially enjoy the editorials, interviews, silly cartoons, and the distinctive way she strings IH together (no pointy staples to rip your fingers apart with). What are you waiting for? Write!

YIPES!, 9911 Goff Rd., Temperance MI 48182, 50¢ plus 39¢ stamp

Ken Cousino, madman *extraordinaire*, has worked hard at getting this mag from the planning stages to its present state, and it shows. He even had one of his columns reprinted in MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL recently. That's a long way from writing to me for advice on zinedom, isn't it, Ken? Please don't forget us little folks on the way up, though. Anyway, YIPES has loads of fun-filled reading, kiddies, with eye-catching covers to match.

Hey Kids! Let's Get Together And Put On A Show!!!

Sometime this month, barring any further bureaucratic snafus, the 928 Gilmanp Warehouse should finally be able to open its doors, and just in the nick of time, with the Bay Area's only other reliable venues for alternative music, the Club Foot and the Farm, in danger of being forced out of business by greed and yupification.

The Warehouse, a long-held dream of a handful of inspired lunatics, has the potential to be the most exciting cultural development hereabouts since the days of the Avalon and Fillmore Ballrooms. Running directly counter to what the mass media would have us believe is the prevailing, in fact the only trend, the Warehouse is a not-for-profit cooperative enterprise, developed entirely with donated money, materials, and labor. The money, \$30,000 so far, has all come from MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL magazine, but all kinds of people have pitched in to do the work of soundproofing, electrical wiring, carpentry, plumbing, and so on. A group of about 50 people has been meeting regularly since last June to plan the operation of the Warehouse.

Right now construction work is in its final stages, involving such unromantic but necessary things as plumbing and bathroom fixtures. I only wish someone had been there with a video camera to capture the improbable sight of a bunch of diminutive punk rockers, artists, and intellectuals struggling with jackhammers, power tools, and other unfamiliar implements associated with manual labor.

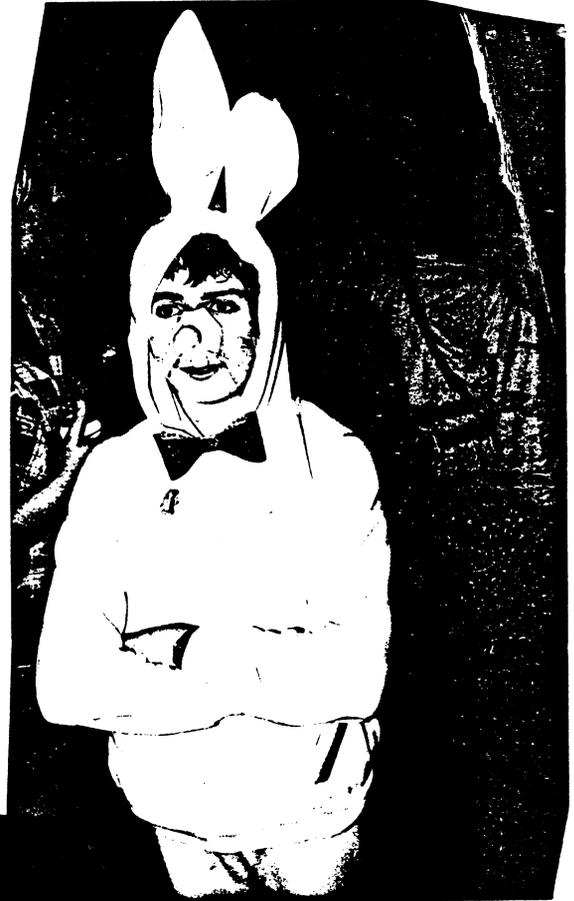
The first official show is now set for New Year's Eve, though there may be a couple of impromptu parties if construction gets done sooner. The exact nature of the entertainment will be a surprise; there is going to be no advance advertising

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ARTIST AND SCENEMAKER DAVEY NORMAL MODELS THE UNIFORM TO BE WORN BY WAREHOUSE SECURITY GUARDS
PHOTO BY MIDREAY BOWLES



of who or what will be performing at the warehouse. In the meantime anyone interested in getting involved can come by on Thursday evenings at 7 p.m. or Saturday and Sunday afternoons from about 2 p.m. on. And if you'd like to perform or present whatever it is you do in the name of art (really, just about anything as long as it doesn't involve bloodshed), get in touch with the booking committee by writing to PO Box 9683, Berkeley CA 94709. Try and send some kind of representation of what it is that you do, and equally, if not more important, an explanation of why. And, beginning with the new year, come on down to the warehouse any weekend night and prepare yourself to be amazed.

BEST (WORST?) OF THE LOOKOUT?

Dear Readers:

I've been thinking about publishing a special retrospective issue that would contain my (and, hopefully, your) favorite articles, letters, and graphics from the past two years. In format it would look pretty much like a regular LOOKOUT except that it would probably be 20 pages instead of 10. Another difference would be that it would cost money, part of the reason for publishing it being to help defray the cost of distributing the monthly LOOKOUT free in Mendocino County and San Francisco. So, I'd really appreciate hearing from you about a) what you'd like to see included in such an issue, b) how much you think it should cost (it would have to be almost a dollar just to break even), and c) whether you think the idea is even worthwhile.

Also, I now have copies of all back issues of the LOOKOUT available to anyone who's interested, but I'd like a contribution to cover printing (reprinting in some cases) and mailing costs. A dollar an issue would be nice, though 75¢ should cover it if you're really strapped.

Another thing: why do you guys write me great letters and then tell me not to print them? Can't you make up an alias or something? A lot of readers say the letters column is their favorite part of the LOOKOUT (as author of most of the other articles, I can only say, gee, thanks!). So send more letters that say *Please Publish Me*.

Your beleaguered editor,
Lawrence