

# PROCESSED WORLD 13





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# PROCESSED WORLD 13

Letters .....	2
from our readers	
Kelly Call Girl .....	16
fiction by kelly girl	
Sweet Relief .....	25
fiction by jake	
The Way It Was .....	28
reminiscence by ana logue	
The Oppressed Middle .....	33
review by lucius cabins	
Poetry .....	34-5
Graffiti .....	41
photo essay by zoe noe & acteon blinkage	
Mind Games .....	46
article by tom athanasiou	
Once More Unto the Bridge, Dear Friend .....	59
tale of toil by primitivo morales	
Hot Under The Collar .....	65
high-tech workers, eradicating tv, good 'zines	
Subscription Information .....	68

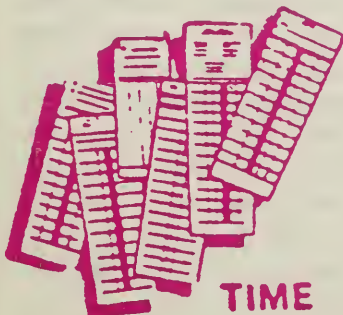
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Cover graphic by Melinda Gebbie

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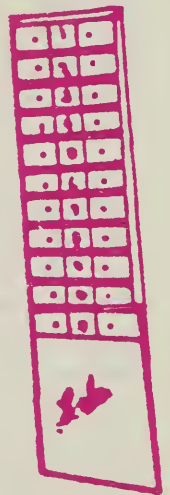
All of the articles and stories in **Processed World** reflect the views and fantasies of the author and not necessarily those of other contributors or editors.

PW welcomes contributions of all kinds. For written material, however, please do not send your original; even with an S.A.S.E., we cannot guarantee its return.



TIME  
CARDS

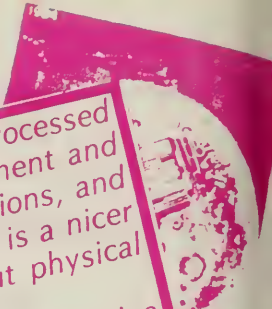
CARD RACKS



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IO DE LA B  
SOCIALES

EIRP OLSKA



Lucky Number Thirteen... 1,000 Thank Yous to all the friends of Processed World who gave us moral and financial support during our harrassment and eviction. Happily, the cost of the move was largely covered by donations, and our new shared warehouse a few blocks from the Financial District is a nicer space for all of our activities. The harrassment still continues, but physical attacks have abated for now.

We expect to have issue #14 out relatively soon after this one... tentative deadline for submissions is June 1, 1985. Your articles, fiction, poetry and especially graphics are always received with pleasure and gratitude, even if we fail to respond immediately. We had to hold a few letters for next issue cuz we got so many. Keep 'em comin'!



# Letters

Dear Processed World,

I wanted to write a letter about my fascinating work history, but it is just too depressing for me to write about it. As to my present situation, I am surviving on welfare and various cash-creation projects like sewing and providing friends with exotic spices. Life is not good, but it's not bad either. Soon though, I fear that employment will rear it's ugly head. The possibilities boggle the mind—will it be in the wilds of Scarberia? The frozen North York or the dreaded Rexdale? Two hours every day of rush-hour insanity and eight hours of boredom in between. I doubt if the experience of being employed will be worth the money I am paid, in terms of my peace of mind. Yes, it's depressing being unemployed, but it's even more depressing to sell your time for money. How sad that this is considered "normal" and "healthy," like drinking alcohol, getting married, and having children. Personally speaking, I refuse to bring any more human beings into this world. We dump shit into the oceans, shit into the air, we

poison the planet with radiation, the sky rains acid! The long-range effects of mass poverty and unemployment are just beginning to intensify. Outrage and despair, from the punk to the 40-year-old WASP male who shoots his wife and kids, then turns the gun on himself. Death is preferable to the purgatory of the welfare system. Is the world ready for revolution, or annihilation?...

... I find writing to be cathartic, like a mental purgative. Even if it is just ranting and raving, it sure feels good to put it down on paper. It is also quite draining to untangle all the hypocrisies and dig out the truth, which most people don't want to hear anyway. I have always had great respect for the truth and those who speak it. Because in the final analysis, it will not be the politicians or messiahs who will be remembered, it will be some tattered punk band shouting—"TOMORROW IS ... TOO LATE!"

I led the fairly "normal" existence of a baby-boomer until the age of 14, when

I discovered marijuana and Chinese philosophy (Lao Tzu, I Ching). From that point, my young consciousness expanded rapidly through the use of hallucinogens and certain reference books (Huxley, Alpert, et.al.). After drugs, I discovered love, or more exactly, sex, another aphrodisiac. Like most of my generation, I put off employment as long as possible, and got a job only when absolutely necessary. I somehow muddled my way through 28 years of crazy times, bad love affairs and dire straits in my hometown of St. Catharine's, Ontario, a pleasant enough place to grow up in, but socially stagnant. It is only recently that I have found domestic bliss in the Big City with a good man and my 3 fine Siamese cats...

In *Processed World*, I find a sane voice in the midst of madness. Keep that good stuff coming!

L.T. — Toronto

Hello Friends!

It's good to know that "wasting time" at work costs business \$150 billion a year, according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* blurb (well, we *all* know that the "work" we do is wasting time, so there seems to be some justice in that!)

It's a nice way to let off steam to arrange your day to get your personal business done at work... "down time" is one way to make yourself feel a little more in control of the situation.

However, this is merely a symptomatic and temporary "band-aid" solution to a much bigger dilemma... namely that most jobs are boring, repetitious, degrading to the human spirit, etc.

It seems our efforts should be directed towards changing the structure of the working world, rather than through random, individual acts of sabotage, wasting time, "liberating" your company's office supplies, etc... As for myself I decided to stop attending the *Processed World* collating parties, meetings at the North Beach bar, picnics, etc., because at every

function the main theme was cynicism and drowning the collective angst in alcohol and dope.

I got a great deal from the friends I made at *Processed World*... namely the feeling that I was *not* alone in my utter frustration and despair at having to be an office worker... However after spending time with PW folks and going to the events, I just realized that you *criticize* basically everyone from the Sandinistas, corporations, the government, the powers that be, other anarchists, etc. The main problem that I encountered ideologically with the PW philosophy is that cynicism is the prevailing emotion and criticism is the basic thrust of the publication.

As for myself, I *am* a skeptic, I look at things from a distance before embracing them, and I have a strong sense of an impulse to question things. I see this as merely having your wits about you to survive in the urban jungle... But what I found lacking in PW was a sense of hope, romance, or even a spiritual outlook. In general the graphics are entertaining, the dedication of the volunteers sincere, but in general the editorial content is sneering and sarcastic.

After looking a little more closely at the main movers of PW it seemed fairly uniform that the lifestyle was strongly involved with junk food, alcohol and dope as a buffer to deal with anxiety, alienation and despair...

I may very well be wrong, but these were my gut feeling impressions. Still I want to encourage magazines such as yours to continue and flourish. It does give an outlet for ordinary people to express their vision of the future, their dreams, their pain and exploitation.

As for myself, I can only say that doing office work for 15 years gave me a very strong self-destructive impulse and poor self-esteem and self-image. After wrestling with my self and festering in emotional convulsions from being an exploited but quite uppity secretary I finally decided once and for all to make a career change and do the type of work

that really makes me feel *ALIVE* and *HAPPY*.

I decided to quit office work, and recently graduated from professional culinary school and I'm on my way to becoming a chef. Of course, not everyone has the opportunity to take time off from work and go to school. Single mothers and others who have obligations are more enmeshed in being forced to work at oppressive jobs, without the options I may have been fortunate enough to enjoy... But still I *am* working class, self-supporting without any assistance from anyone else, a woman, without much education beyond high school.

What I am trying to say is *NOT* to publicly pat myself on the back for being able to be "upwardly mobile" and extract myself from the corporate dungeons of Montgomery Street... what my aim in this letter is to say is this: that if you really want the world to change, start with yourself... It is easy to criticize the way things are and the injustice in the world of work... It's another story altogether to *DO* something about it. I used to feel slightly "out-of-it" at PW events because unlike most of the people there I wasn't into heavy, alcoholic level drinking, marathon dope smoking, or endless sarcasm and criticism of just about every political group or movement for social change... Also I felt a little "out-of-it" for having strong spiritual convictions and perhaps even an idealistic outlook on the future of this planet.

Maybe that was good to feel that way, because I think to really be an artist, you must be a little "out of step" with the rest of society and perhaps even your friends. It's good to step back from the way "most" people think and look at things anew.

In closing, I would just like to say good luck with your work. A lot of the criticism you profess is justified, but I mean really, man you could stand to lighten up a little! I like "black humor" and can be fairly sarcastic myself at

times, but I do appreciate a *BALANCE*. At time you may be misguided, but at least you are trying to go *DO SOMETHING* instead of just being numb as most of the corporations would prefer their proles to remain!

Best wishes,  
C.W. — Washington D.C.

*Ed.: Alcoholics and pot heads, OK, but Junk Food?!! Never!!*

Dear P.W.,

I am sitting at work (I work at a Fotomat store front) reading P.W. 11. I don't meet many people here with this "attitude." Basically this job is an ironic joke—this company is dying, I sit here for hours with very little to do which has advantages as I create and put together the magazine enclosed ("*Bag of Wire*") in the time I make here. They are paying me to make it. Subversion. Of course my manager has not coincided his visits with *Bag of Wire* production hours, but I doubt he would be pleased to find "incomprehensible" or "offensive" collages spread over the back room desk, half finished. I *should* be smiling at the potential customers walking by, or dusting the dust free shelves. But this subverting of company hours definitely increase my sense of self-worth.

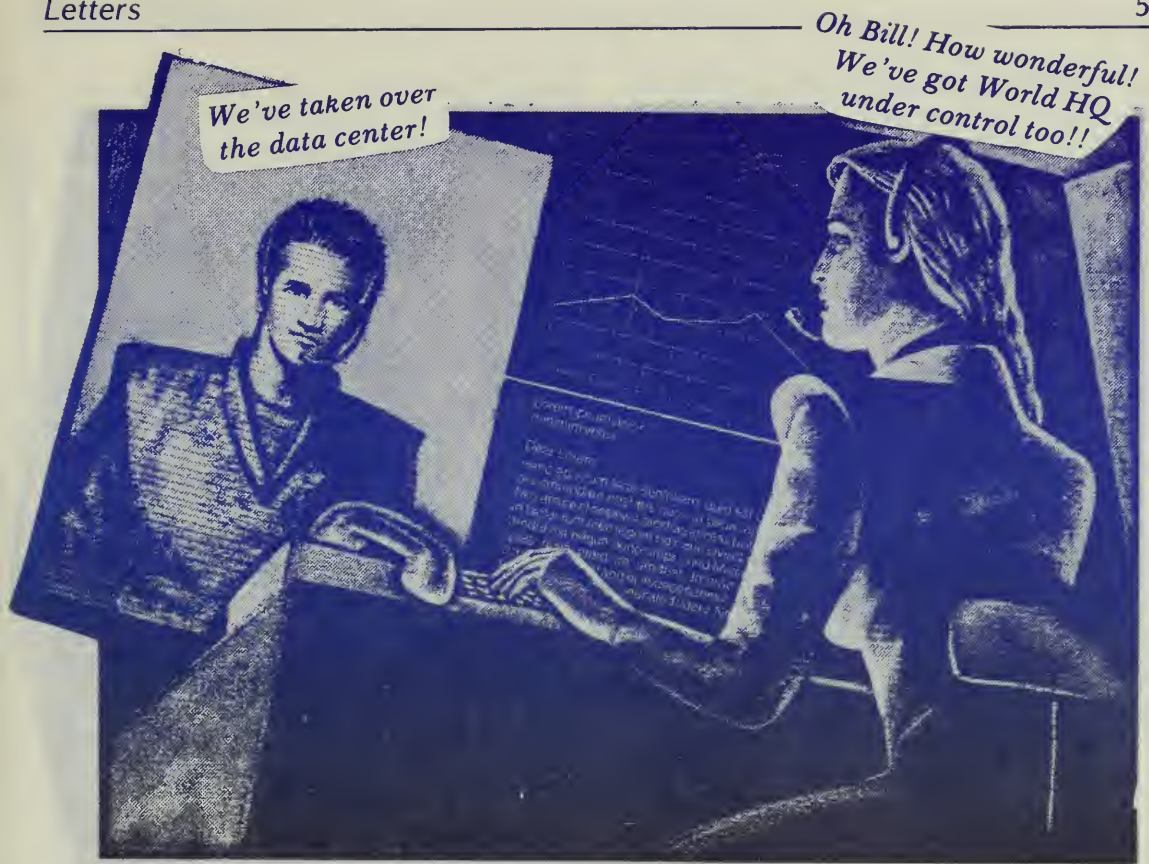
A. — W. Somerville, MA  
*Bag of Wire is available from P.O. Box 441230, W. Somerville, MA 02144.*

Processed World:

Just read issue #11 of PW. I've never read so much bitching, sniveling, whining, and complaining in my life. If you don't like your job: Quit. As an example, your anonymous janitor just couldn't get it together to finish school. Now he's a janitor. Tuff shit, pal. A payroll clerk steals from her company. Hey, honey, you are a thief.

I could go on, but you get the idea. People with no power are that way for a reason. They lack intelligence or initiative. Probably both.

Anon. — Chicago



P W,

Left-wing movements make as a positive point for themselves the fact that more jobs can be created by producing alternative energy sources (like solar) rather than nuclear power and by civilian as opposed to military production. At countless rallies, one is stuck in the midst of chants for "Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!", while the leafletters make their rounds handing out banal tracts explaining that alternative production will create more happy nine-to-five lives. More work seems to be an end in itself.

("Work" is the lousy experience one has in between the alarm going off and the clock striking the end of the waged-day. This definition thus excludes what would be included in a fuller discussion, the unwaged work, such as housework.)

Most of the "left" goes along with this "Jobs Not War" scheme, forgetting or not caring about the fact that *jobs are war*, given the adversary boss vs. worker relationship. Is more work what we really want and need? Do we really want the same old social relation-

ships, working for bosses who dictatorially control the workplace and rip off our wealth-creating powers, even if we are producing good "alternative" products? And in an age of largely automated factories and pulsing technological advance, is more labor-intensive drudgery necessary?

In Thomas More's "Utopia" he promised a 6-hour day (and this was in 1516!). Even Lenin proposed halving the workday and doubling wages as the only sensible program for U.S. labor in 1906 (most Leninists would sneeringly call such a program "utopian" today).

Of course we need alternative and healthy technologies like solar, wind, and conservation. Yes, military production should end and if wanted or needed (by whom?) these facilities should be re-tooled (with environmental safeguards) for useful products. We do need a way out of our increasingly ruined living situation, but the way out is not to promote another round of nauseating "full employment" politics with reformist programs of *more* drudgery with the same old capitalism.



Ruben M. Tani, Montevideo-Uruguay

The poor, the welfare recipient, the jobless, those who have suffered and paid the most and gotten the least, may in their heads say, "Yes, we need work." But hearts easily cringe at the "liberating" prospect of leaving the shit line at the unemployment office for the shit assembly line at the "productive" workplace. The initial happiness at scoring a badly needed job can easily turn into a permanent melancholy.

This is the world of working. The alienation, misery and boredom of labor in "modern" society is well known and documented. But the rebellion against work and for free time is the other side of worker history which neither our bosses nor much of the "left" (future bosses?) want us to know about. This history ranges from the fight for the 8-hour day to daily resistance against speed-ups (like stopping racing assembly lines by throwing marbles in the right place) to that wonderfully simple method, absenteeism. Many of us have, or know people who have, gotten fired on purpose in order to collect un-

employment, or maybe have stretched out a workers compensation case beyond a recovery.

We also know of the struggles to get paid for raising children ("welfare") so as to not have to work two jobs (or starve) and other, similar struggles in the "reproductive" unwaged sector. We don't have to get defensive and deny this just because the "big, bad State" is blaming us for its own economic mess. Taking welfare isn't "laziness" but a rational and healthy expression against the abusive and insulting world of working for the profit of capitalists who may have cushy daily routines or who *don't work* or *do anything*.

Computers and robots are increasingly being used, and the news is filled with stories of labor-saving techniques. Much of the work we do is pure waste such as military, advertising, keeping track of the ownership of bits of capital and all sorts of unnecessary packaging and duplication. Of course we should not blindly worship any new technology



that comes along, since use of new technology is out of our control and under capital's control, which is where the problem lies.

We can produce *increased* wealth (for many of use suffer an extreme absence of wealth) with *less* work. There is no reason to work ourselves to death. But of course the logic of the system is in our way. No businessperson is going to share the wealth "made" by robots with displaced workers. If we want to change this situation we have to think about overthrowing it. Workers and the community could then take over and cooperatively & democratically control production ("control of production" is only one part of a larger struggle for freedom, but that is outside the scope of this letter) and share its proceeds (as Poland's Solidarity tried to do).

We can then really be in a position to decide what, if and how to produce. A situation of vastly increased free time can be created, enabling us to live our lives more fully and creatively. The imperialist relationship to the Third World could end and we could channel wealth to them, instead of the other way around. Work we do can be redefined and rearranged to intermingle with learning and play, to make for a wholeness where one's life isn't alienated into stifling compartments.

We should, at a minimum, demand not "Jobs" but a *shortened workweek* (much shorter!) with *no cut in pay*. The *wealth certainly exists* to allow both work and wealth to be shared around; to attempt otherwise is backwards and irrelevant to the historical juncture we are in. We won't get there by feeble petition campaigns, getting arrested on purpose tactics, or another exhausting and futile march on Washington. A general strike helped usher in the 8-hour day, and that's the sort of thing we ought to start thinking about now. Those who would claim that such an idea is "silly" or "utopian" or "impossible" are the very people whose mundane "let's have a picket and go home" strategies get us no place.

Let's talk about the lives we really can live. There is nothing crazy or far-fetched about any of this; it's all here now. Let's take a hint from the popular appeal of science fiction and futurist writings, that wild imaginings of a better world can be real. The detonation required for this cannot include talk of more work but must address a life-enhancing *freedom from work*.

— Submitted by *Midnight Notes* and the *Brooklyn Anti-Nuclear Group*

*Ed. note: Readers are encouraged to check out both of these very interesting publications: Midnight Notes (Box 204, Jamaica Plains MA 02130) and B.A.N.G. Notes, GPO Box 2666, Brooklyn, NY 11202).*

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Dear Processed People,

Here's a few words from Ace's Soap Box on the dread subject of "work." As the kind of child who always dreaded the loathsome task of taking out the garbage, and cleaning my room, I've been batting my head against the mundane "work ethic" all my life. I think it's agreed that everyone should do *SOME* boring work—cleaning up after oneself, washing dishes, etc. The main fuck-up, however, with our economic system is "specialization" where one is forced to wash dishes continuously for 40 hours a week.

*Processed World* has done a magnificent job ridiculing the pointless drudgery of most jobs. However the next step for all of us seeking alternatives to this drudgery is to put up or shut up. It's up to *US* to create creative alternative occupations. To show *THEM* that it can be done. Because if we who have "dropped out" merely end up living off of welfare or tenuous scams, etc., that's not going to be very inspiring to the timid souls locked into their dead-end jobs.

I can't stress enough that it's up to *US*—We, the creative lunatics and visionaries on the fringe of this economic system. No Big Brother-benefactor is going to sympathize with our plight and dump a fascinating career on

our disgruntled laps. If indeed there *ARE* any alternatives, it's up to us to create them. To me that's always been the exciting thing about the Grand Process World Experiment.

Stay Twisted!,  
Ace Backwords—Berkeley

Dear Friends,

I enjoy reading *PW* so much that now that I have a few extra bucks—I'm sending in for my "very own" subscription (of course, the attitude is politically incorrect—nonetheless...). I am hoping that as I get more energy and optimism I will be able to submit some articles for you.

Until recently, I was a perpetual student (officially—unofficially, I expect to *always* be a *perpetual* student) My past employment has come from teaching (many years ago) and being a grad. asst. After assessing the usefulness of another set of initials after my name—I am back in the world trying to support myself and 2 kids while bringing the fucking system down. *PW* has made this endeavor much more *fun* and bearable. Of course, it's hard for me to get a job I'd like or to stay at a job as my eyes tell it all! So—here's my \$5 low income rate plus an extra \$2 (is this *too* mathematical?). Current occupation: Subverter of the ordinary and legal researcher/editor.

S.B. — Springfield, IL

Dear PW's,

I found your printing process *very* interesting! The bicolor process makes for a striking (though confusing) look. What process is used? It smells like NCR paper. [Ed.: *We use color ink with a Multilith 1250 offset press.*]

So far I have avoided much of the corporate world you display, outside of the job I got laid off from last year. They were just bringing a computer system in shortly before I left, and since I got stuck cleaning used printing machines (something for a Kalamazoo College former student, huh? I quit because I couldn't stand the Grosse Point/Early Preppies there), I never got to expose

myself to that—just to unmarked chemicals. I got laid off shortly after I voiced objection to a fellow employee over dumping outdated plate gum in the backyard—within earshot of the VP's newly-designated "troubleshooter," who ordered the dumping.

The article by Peter Wentworth, *Them That's Not*, on the state of education, was *especially* moving. Having dealt with Social Services quite extensively in the last 6 years, I know much more than I ever expected about these problems.

My concern on VDTs (and on electrical and magnetic devices in general) is on the effect they have on what is currently being called the Life-field (L-field, for short) of both people and the planet as a whole.

I myself once used a magnetic book desensitizing device made by 3M for public libraries, and found myself, first, in extremely high altered states of consciousness, and, second, had my health rapidly and thoroughly disintegrate. I was undergoing several different psychic/meditation-type trainings at the same time, however, so I'm uncertain how much was me and how much the device. Any data?

MSDD—Kalamazoo MI

Dear PW,

A couple of weeks ago, the county put on this presentation to announce a new employee assistance program. Every county employee is entitled to 10 hours of free consultation at the cascade counseling center. A statistic cited during the session was this: 25% of the American workforce is so depressed that it requires medication, hospitalization, or both.

I had a few questions:

- 1) By whose standards do these people require treatment?
- 2) If 25% are chronically depressed, and another 65% are mildly disillusioned, what makes the remaining 10% so fucking sure they ain't the problem?
- 3) If three drinks a day is alcoholism, what's a fifth and two six packs?

4) What's there to sober up for?

"Oh, Ligi," Mr. Moonbeam said, "why can't you just lighten up?"

"Beats me," I said. It's my answer for everything.

Take care,  
Ligi—Portland

Dear PW,  
CRT Word Processors endanger the

operator—check the high incidence of dysmenorrhea culminating in hysterectomy. Symptoms occur within three to six months of steady use. The female menstrual cycle runs amok—irregularity—heavy flow—irritability. Stress? Radiation? No one knows or cares.

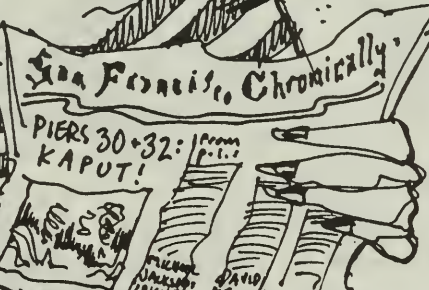
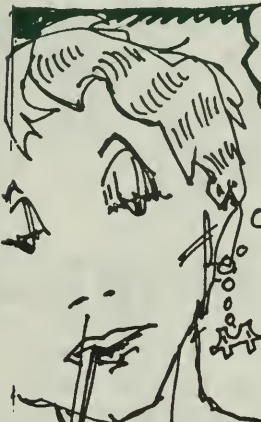
Attorneys are using these word processors, so won't take the case

# DISTURBED VISIONS of the 1984 GENERAL STRIKE!

SILICONE VALERIE FINDS A MOMENT TO READ ON HER LUNCH HOUR ... AND THINK ...

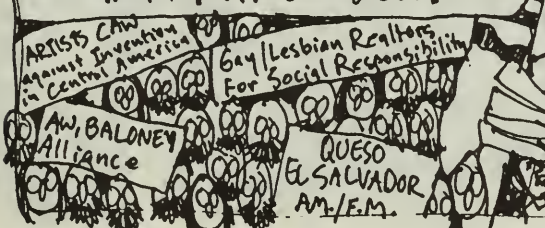
IMAGINE THOSE GREAT + HEROIC DAYS ... BEATIN' UP SCABS ... ORGANIZING THE RANK-AND-FILE FOR CONTROL OF HIRING HALLS ... BATTLING THE COPS ON RINCON HILL ... THE WORKIN' FOLK OF THE CITY UNITED IN SUPPORT!

WHAT A GOOFY CITY... CHOSE TO CELEBRATE THE 50th Anniversary OF THE BEGINNING OF THE '34 WATERFRONT STRIKE BY BURNING DOWN THE PIERS!



HMMM... THE LONGSHORE MEN UNLOADED THE GOODS, AND ALL WE GOT NOW IS INFORMATION...! I WONDER WHO NOW OCCUPIES AN ANALOGOUS PLACE IN THE ECONOMY?

MEAN, COMPARE THAT TO THE WIMPY POLITICOS WE GOT NOW!



WHUMP! WHUMP!

seriously because they believe they are putting out a larger volume of work, and are almost entirely a male population anyway.

Anonymous

DEER processed wrld. —  
am interested. this be-damned typish

writer speaks the language of arthritis in this, the core of salt lake's winter. forgive me addressing such a personal request in your direction when we hardly even know one another.... you must come to grips with a vague understanding of the bleak situation here — i do not mean to complain, as i am aware



of my responsibility for living where i do, or rather remaining where i was placed... the "TRUTH" is that i need to be exposed to your publication.

if need be, then forward the initial cost of my introduction. otherwise, please see to it that i receive an example of your genius....

i hope that my "red" hair does not create angst in your souls....

sweating,  
k.s. — Salt Lake City

Dear PW,

This is to thank you for publishing my poem "Breathing" in the Winter 84/85



issue. PW has entertained me for several years now, so it felt good to contribute something back.

Wrote the poem on the way to a temp assignment at One Embarcadero Center. I worked for one cool guy and one shithead. I often wonder what freedom is, exactly. I am probably more pro-capitalism than most of your readership (and contributors, too) but that's because I hope to break out of 8:30-5 by writing a best selling novel or a screenplay.

Nevertheless, a graffito near my temp agency made me think: FREEDOM DOESN'T HAVE TO COST MONEY. The anarchist (it was accompanied by the circled A) might have a point.

Conservatively yours,  
Christopher Newton—S.F.

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*COMMUNIQUE*: re Stock Market stench bombing: from *Creative Interference Anonymous* — C.I.A.

In the wee hours of Friday morning, January 19, 1985, we dropped a stench bomb on the Pacific Stock Exchange. The chemical used was ethyl mercaptan (ethane thiol); the amount was 500 grams.

The stock exchange is an unholy temple to the gods of avarice and amorality. It is the primary device by which commerce is conducted with scarcely a thought as to the human and ecological "side effects." It is a place where economic abstraction reigns supreme, and life and decency are sacrificed before the altar of greed.

The so-called "side effects" of limited liability capitalism are well known; the acts of indecency which are committed for profit are everyday knowledge. We mention a few general examples:

- Corporate involvement in promoting the arms race, and in manufacturing nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.
- Trade with South Africa and other brutal oligarchies and dictatorships.
- Abusive and exploitative labor practices, both within the U.S. and more particularly in third-world subsidiaries.

- "Dumping" unsafe products, such as domestically banned pharmaceuticals, into foreign markets where few safeguards exist.

- Consuming limited natural resources without thought of the needs of future generations.

- Promoting lifestyles based on materialism, social insecurity, and status-seeking; lifestyles which are lacking in human and spiritual depth.

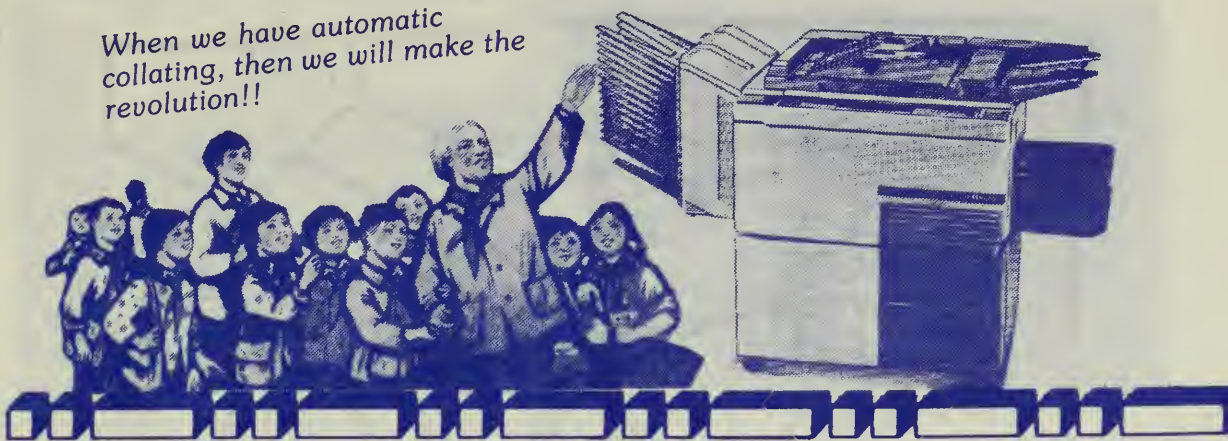
The rich, mostly white, mostly male people who own and manage the corporate state are usually nice, reasonable family men. Does their power and status limit their vision, making them unable to understand life outside of their own social sphere?

Can they begin to think of other families? Families who have lost members to the death squads and the torture chambers... families who have suffered disease and death due to pollution or occupational hazards... families who cannot afford to feed their children... families suffering the terrors of war waged for economic gain... and finally, the countless millions who will suffer and die horrible deaths if the products of the nuclear arms race are ever put to use.

We use stinkbombs as a way of making a direct, visceral protest. We call your attention to the stench of burned and rotting bodies on the battlefield; the odor of toxic waste and pollution; they reek of the decay of a declining society which glorifies greed and destruction. Above all, we call your attention to the most foul smell of all: the stink of the rotting consciences of the power elite.

Our demands are quite reasonable and simple: We demand that those in power begin to use their consciences; begin to think of the people who are directly and indirectly harmed by their policies; and begin to correct the imbalances they have caused. It is not all that hard to do. The Polaroid Corporation took a great step forward by refusing to allow its photographic equipment and materials to be exported

When we have automatic collating, then we will make the revolution!!



to South Africa, where these materials were being used by the authorities to facilitate the internal passport system and other means of repression. While we commend Polaroid, we condemn those who have not acted; there is much more that needs to be done.

In addition to measure motivated by conscience, we call for changes in the law, so as to make corporate and governmental officials personally legally liable for the harmful consequences of their policy decisions.

We have heard plenty of idle rhetoric about responsible corporate citizenship. We find this hypocrisy as sickening as the smell of ethyl mercaptan. Stink-bombings and other acts of creative interference can be expected as long as government and corporate leaders fail to authenticate their claimed concerns by implementing policies that preserve the interaction of diverse life which is Earth.

the C.I.A.:

Creative Interference Anonymous

**CAUTION:** many of the substances which can be used for making stink-bombs are potentially harmful if used incorrectly, e.g., ethyl mercaptan: Mercaptan is extremely flammable; if absorbed through the skin, it can cause genetic damage. It is extremely volatile and will diffuse rapidly into the air. In use as a stinkbomb, it is vital to avoid getting it on skin or clothing or exposing the concentrated fumes to open flame. It comes packed in a specially sealed container. Do not open the container until ready for use, or you will have no

way to re-seal it and you will stink out your own house.

Other substances used for stink-bombing include buteric acid (essence of garbage), valeric acid (essence of locker room), skatole (essence of excrement), putrescine (rotting meat), and cadaverine (corpses; good for die-ins). Some of these can cause skin irritation, and putrescine is capable of causing a reaction similar to food poisoning if you get any in your mouth.

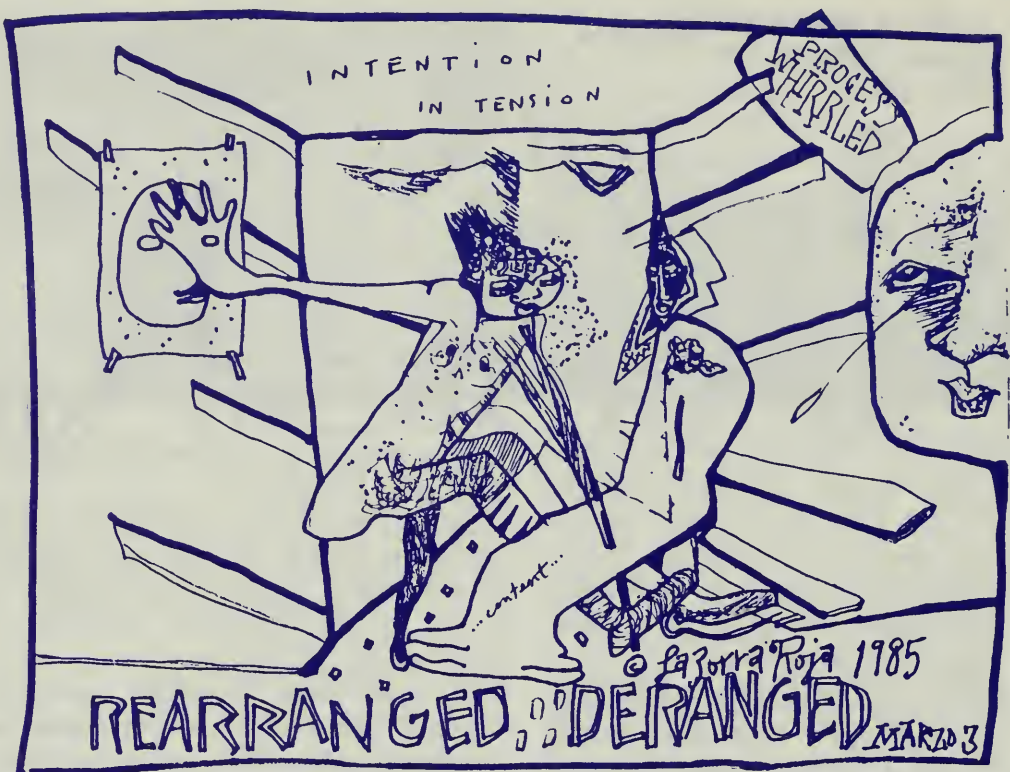
The objective of stinkbombing is to disrupt in a playful yet effective manner, NOT to send people to the hospital. If you don't think you can handle chemicals safely, then stick to simple and safe household items such as rotten eggs, dog or cat shit, vomit, rotting fruit or meat, etc.

If you do intend to work with chemicals, buy them over the counter; NEVER have things sent to your address; pay cash and sign a phony name. Students can often get all kinds of goodies at university labs. You should stockpile a whole bunch of stuff before actually using any of it; as soon as you hit one target, the cops will start looking for the source of supply and you could get nailed in a sting.

Before doing an action, practice your chemical handling methods using something safe like vinegar. Finally, always use rubber gloves, wipe all fingerprints with rubbing alcohol, and plan your actions well in advance.

Dear PW,

I like "Any Port in a Storm?" (PW #12). Much of it made sense yet I do not



regret voting against Reagan/Bush by voting for Mondale-Ferraro. Despite the vote totals and seeming inefficacy of such a decision, it was necessary to take such a (silent) stand. I'm saddened by what the outcome signifies for this society in racial and social-justice terms. But I'd like to think my vote was on behalf of those too alienated to vote and those in Central America who face more consequences of such electoral decisions than I do.

The "movement"(s) has a lot to do in the area of education and persuasion but there's little you can do with people who have been so drugged by movies and TV that they let themselves believe Reagan's smooth dreams and words and who are more concerned about the Olympics than the unemployed.

Hang in there,  
CF—Charlottesville, VA

Dear PW,

In their zeal to discredit American politics, the authors of "Any Port in a Storm" (PW #12) ignored differences between Mondale and Reagan which, as a radical fairy, I find too important to disregard. True, Mondale might have got us into war in Central America were

he elected—just as Reagan is doing. He would have raised taxes—just as Reagan will raise taxes. He might have continued the arms build-up—just as Reagan is committed to doing. And yet, an overwhelming majority of voters preferred Reagan to Mondale. Why? Obviously there were perceptible differences between the candidates.

A great many Americans want to feel good about the country. They identify with their country. Loss of face in Vietnam and Iran still smarts. The plural realities presented by radical women, gays and Blacks disturbed the peace of those Americans who were none of these. The threat of communist missiles catches the fearful attention of citizens who are, as individuals, as vulnerable as their country.

Reagan's solution to this spiritual dilemma is to summon a social vision which has justifiably lost in popularity over the past 30 years. The traditional American, "Christian," and "family" values which Reagan espouses are just doublespeak for fascism. To radical gays, to women, to Blacks, to people who do not speak English, to all who must resist conformity to madness, the political door has been shut *according to*



*the expressed policy of Reagan and his party.*

The Mondale machine, at least, sought the support of diverse cultural groups, if only out of self-interest as a method of getting votes. That 90% of Black voters voted for Mondale is a measure of the importance of the difference between the two candidates. That 90% of gay voters chose Mondale also tells a lot.

I voted for Mondale because I believe that our few relative freedoms are endangered under a lame-duck Reagan. I know that there are many ways to effectively restrict the free speech, education, free assembly, free movement, without outlawing them. A war-time economy and war-time political situation, under the leadership of a charismatic tyrant, have many times been used to create a stifling environment of suspicion in the home country.

As long as we can exercise our relative freedom, we have the room to make changes. But fascism throws a yellow pall on "unpatriotic" behavior. The wave of American patriotism, on which Reagan is riding, threatens us gay people. It threatens the heteros even more, for we queers are used to eking out our lives in the nooks and crannies of hetero social life. But hetero men and women, with children to provide for, may find it impossible to change jobs or cities without escaping scrutiny and suspicion. They may find themselves locked in social situations which leave no room for resistance. This is the social scenario of fascism which has unfolded many places the world over, while many assumed, "It can't happen here."

I hold by two main criticisms of voting: 1) that our thoughts and feelings on issues are inadequately expressed by a choice of YES or NO, and 2) that the choice of the minority is totally discounted.

But these are intellectualisms with little practical value. Practically, we're foolish to give up our right to vote if there's a chance that American white

hetero male Protestant fascism can be averted through the ballot box.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to work these things out.

P.B. — SF

Dear PW,

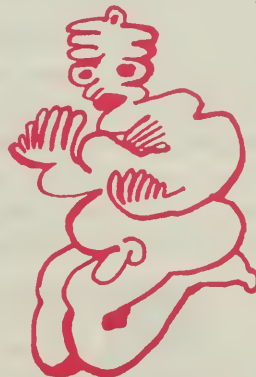
Well I did and didn't vote, both at the same time. I was already registered, but figured none of the assholes on the ticket deserved my vote (if in fact it does have any value). I wasn't going to show, but wanted to be sure that they knew I thought they sucked — and not think that I was just lazy or apathetic...so I showed up, signed the big book, went into the booth, closed the curtain, and did nothing. I thought about pulling the lever next to where it said "Radical Commie College Schixa Party" so that they could (Fat chance) get some bucks from the feds for next year's (ahem) camPAIN, but decided not to, they'd never get the money anyway.

I figure that if say 10,000 people show up in my district but there are only 200 votes (about the number that probably really support any of the sugar-coated candy-dates) then the media, etc. will get some kind of message, but I haven't really figured out what that message is.

It's just a twist on non-voting, sometimes I think it gives the system too much credit, as if voting could really change something; but it is one small way to say that the system is not reaching, working, effective.

Am looking forward to others opinions and tactics.

K7 — New York



"IT'S SO DIFFICULT BEING  
ANDROGYNOUS SINCE  
REAGAN GOT REELECTED."

Prisman Productions  
P. O. Box 1500  
New York, NY USA 10009





# Kelly Call Girl

—by Kelly Girl


## Assignment #HJ-3549

Everything inside the Petro building buzzes beige—a faint reminder of a vicious alarm clock. Loud enough to stay awake without ever quite waking up. All day, all week.

An impatient tap broke the hypnotic. Doug Toole was knocking his plastic coffee cup against his secretary's desk. Rosa adjusted her ruffled blouse and smiled at the grey-faced engineer in his nylon shirt. "Is that your way of telling me you want some coffee?" she asked. Toole tensed one side of his thin lips by way of acknowledging his wit. Rosa dropped what she was doing and headed for the corporate kitchenette.



WANG

I turned on my  so the people in Central Word Processing would know #12 was there right on time. They keep

records. WANG warmed up and started breathing green in my face. Eight-thirty-six, it said. Six out of sixty is a tenth of ten dollars is a dollar.

I took an Oo-La-Croissant bag out of my briefcase. Coffee and croissant—caffeine and carbos to keep the mind humming numb. Small things to look forward to.

"Giorgio" scent swiftly overpowered the French Roast.

"You know, you shouldn't eat in the office. It really looks bad," said Rosa, without greeting.

I picked off a wide flake, butter oozing underneath, and placed it on my tongue.

Rosa dropped a stack of mail on my desk, with two publications on top—TempoRite, the magazine of Kelly Girls, Inc. and the Wall Street Journal. "You can read the magazine if you don't have anything else to do," Rosa instructed. "But don't touch the Wall

*Street Journal*. Kenny—Mr. Denham—doesn't like anyone reading his newspaper but him."

She fastened back on the croissant, and told me the calorie content of everything she had eaten yesterday while I chewed slowly.

"...I've been so good. You see, Kenny—Mr. Denham—is having a brunch this Sunday to introduce his old friends to his new fiance, and she's such a tiny little thing that I've got to lose at least four pounds by then." She tugged her skirt around her designer ass and licked her plastic lips.

Rosa turned to look at her reflection in Denham's inner-office window, smiling as if he were inside. "Kenny asked me if I'd come early to fix things up—like he always does when he gives parties. He's so cute. People think we're having an affair, but I tell them he's just like my little brother." She snapped a lacquered grey hair. "Has anyone told *you* we're having an affair?"

I wiped the last crumbs on the *Wall Street Journal*. "No."

...Schultz's Meeting Won't Spark Talks With Nicaragua...The 1985 Continental. Its looks raise your expectations. Its luxury and technology fulfill them...Union Carbide is Fined \$3.9 Million by U.S. Over Test Report...An Appraisal: Technology Stocks Advance as Industrials Hit Record...South Africa Free Funds Entail Risk, Study Says.

"I told you not to read Mr. Denham's paper," Rosa said, over my shoulder.

"Just straightening it. I can't understand this stuff."

"Well, okay. It's just that the temp last week had it all messed up and folded wrong and we had to send a messenger out for another."

"You had a temp last week, too? What's wrong with the secretary who

usually works here?"

"Oh, we don't have a regular secretary here." Rosa looked around to see if anyone was watching us not work. "We have a couple of positions here that are just temporary. It's really a lot easier on the rest of us if we have someone come in and do the sorting and filing and typing charts and stuff. People in those positions never last long, so the company doesn't have to worry about training them, paying for benefits—*investing* in them. That way the people who *really* work for the company get treated a little better. We're kind of like a family."

"Uh-huh."

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★ ★ ★ ★

**KELLY** The  
**SERVICES** Kelly  
**KLONE**

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...Isn't your secretary important to you? Every sixty days, 16,000 top executives give their secretaries a new learning system called BIZ. Your secretary's productivity linked to yours. Secretaries are entitled to and need affirmation of the key role they play—along with ongoing encouragement and systematic assistance in learning how to become more valuable on the job. Here's a sample of the content of a BIZ portfolio: *Business Finance Made Easy, 22 Ways to Ship Almost Anything Anywhere; How to Help Your Boss Lead an Effective Meeting; How to Work Smarter and Get More Done; How to Get the Most Out of Temporary Help...*

I sorted some of the morning's mail—piles of forms which had to be routed to each engineer for initials before they were filed in several file drawers. I worked for three contract engineers—men who had done it right, gone to undergraduate engineering school and then headed for law school. They get memos for free company seminars on mortgage financing. Their secretaries get memos telling them to pitch in five bucks for a going away party for one of

the company guys.

I stuck the stack of the papers way in the back of the filing cabinet, and I was done. Somebody's Boss was watching, so I read my TempoRite magazine.



*...Opening mail is a Kelly Girl's first job every day—except for getting coffee, of course. There's a way to open the mail. Below are the things to do with the mail. But they're written in the wrong order. Can you put them in the right order?*

- Stamp the date.
- Give the mail to your immediate supervisor.
- Put the mail in a folder.
- Slit the envelope.

"Good morning, Petro Construction, Contracts Division, Mr. Denham's office, this is Kelly."

"Yeah, this is Ken." He sounded sleepy. "Listen, if anyone calls, tell them I'm in a meeting, unless it's Barnum, then tell him my car had trouble on the way to the office and I'm on my way. If Steele calls, he can call me here—I'm at Sharon's. If it's Caley, tell him I'm on long distance and I'll call him right back, and then give me a quick buzz here. Tell Morton the meeting's at eleven-thirty and I'm at the other office until then."

"Morton's at the other office."

"Then tell him I'm here, I mean there, at the other office. Not the other office he's at. Got it?"

"Yes, Ken."

"Good girl."



Doug Toole walked past me, studying the beige carpet. I called after him.

"What is it?" he mumbled, without lifting his head.

"You've got some mail here." He kept walking to his office.

My intercom buzzed. "Bring me my mail."

Toole's office had the kind of smell that accumulates when a person sits in a cubicle with the door closed for a long time. His office was bare—the walls didn't even have the watercolors of oil rigs which the other engineers sported. Just papers and charts on a meticulous desk, with a neat pile of coffee whitener saved up in one corner. Toole's tight, grey-tinged collar was barely distinguishable from his neck. He didn't look up when I came in—he only looked at me when he thought I couldn't see him. I dropped the papers on his desk. He didn't say thank you.

"Do you need anything else done right now, Doug?" He shook his head sharply.

Two minutes later, Toole came out of his office and slid a stack of papers in my in-box, with a yellow Post'em squarely attached: "Six copies immediately, collated, stapled, original on top."



*...The Fine Art of Giving and Receiving Compliments. Want to have a really good day? Give a sincere compliment. Receive a compliment graciously.*

*Problem 1: It's embarrassing. The blushers of the world give and receive the very best compliments. If you turn slightly red when people tell you, "You do excellent work," you let your complimenters know they've said something meaningful.*

*If the spoken words are just too difficult for you, begin with notes. A little note clipped on top of your typing can say, "Thanks for the good directions. They made this go much faster."*

*Gracious receivers: Both the complimenter and the complimentee will feel good when the compliment has been acknowledged with a simple thank you and some recognition of the effort: "Thank you. You made my day by noticing."*

Morton poured himself a 4-ounce disposable cupful of coffee. He blew on it fiercely, took a sip, and tossed it all in the trash. "Kelly!" he yelled.

"What is it, Phil?" I smiled.

"This coffee tastes like a warm Coors."

"I know, Phil, I didn't make it."

He came over to my desk, put one of his thick hands on my in-box, glanced at my tits, and gave me a smile. "Well, that's okay, then, Kelly. We're glad to have you pitchin' for us even if you *can't* make coffee. Now why don't you sprint down to the corner and get me a cup of the *real* stuff."

I don't like to get coffee. "I wouldn't mind going out, but I have some Xeroxing to do for Toole," I told him, sweetly.

"Get me Toole on the intercom," he ordered. I buzzed Toole, though he'd probably been listening.

"Look, Toole," Morton hollered into the box. "Your little project for Kelly's going to have to wait a little while, 'cause I got a priority game-plan going here, and we've got to *move*." Morton hung up. He handed me a dollar.

"And why don't you get yourself a cup too, hon, on me."



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★ **KELLY** The  
 ★ **SERVICES** Kelly  
 ★ Klone

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Phil Morton bounded in with his gym bag, his blonde hair still wet. He gave me a big wink.

"Hey, Kelly, did you catch the game last night?"

"What game?"

He thought that was a good joke, and gave me another wink on his way down the hall. He yelled in a Toole. "So when's the kick-off for the GLF bid?" I couldn't hear Toole. "Oh yeah? Well, we better go for it soon or we'll never make the big game." Morton beat his fist into his hand. "Damn, we've got to beat those fuckers at Shortek. We've got to *kill* them."

*Q: I'm a non-smoker, and sometimes on assignments I find myself in the uncomfortable situation of being surrounded by smokers. As a temporary employee, I don't feel that I have a right to say anything. How should I handle this?*

*A: The fact that you are a temporary employee does not mean that you are entitled to comfortable working conditions. If you find that your environment hinders your performance, contact your local Kelly office.*



Denham came in about ten minutes before his meeting. He hung his wet James Bond raincoat over my Temporary Jacket, nodded at me, picked up his messages, and handed me a twenty-page stack of papers. "These have to be out before lunch," he said. It was 11:25.

"Okay, Ken."

"Unless—hey. You know those reports I have to give to my supervisor every week over in the other building?"

"I don't think I've ever seen them."

He handed me some memo sheets. "All we're doing at this meeting is updating this. So if you could come and take notes on what everyone says and revise the report, that would save me a lot of work. Okay?"

I looked over the report, which described several technical projects in sentences which took about two years of engineering school to construct. "I don't know if I'd trust myself to do that for you, Ken. I don't know anything about your projects."

Denham looked away with a little-boy huff. "No, I guess you wouldn't understand something that complicated, would you?"

"Not immediately, Ken."

"Then I have to have that other stuff before lunch."



Denham came out. "I'm going to lunch. Are those papers finished yet?"

"They're not finished yet, Ken. And I type ninety words a minute."

"But there were only a few changes, Kelly." He checked his gold watch.

"There's twenty pages here."

Ken gave me a boy-are-you-dumb stare. "It's already on disk. Everything here's on disk. You should know that by now."

No one had told me all week that the documents I'd word processed were already stored somewhere in the cryptically-coded box of diskettes. "Sorry, Ken."

"Well, do it soon. I'm having lunch at the Embarcadero, then I've got to go shopping for Sharon's birthday present." He pulled out his wallet and riffled through some bills. "A hundred should be good enough," he reasoned to himself. He snapped his fingers. "Hey, Kelly. Do you want to go to Macy's at lunch and pick out something cute in a size four?" He pulled out a hundred-dollar bill.

I had a vow never to go to Macy's and resisted taking the bill to a friend's house for the afternoon. "I wouldn't know what she'd like, Ken."

"Well, you dress okay. Just get something a little more feminine." I folded my arms.

"I'd probably get something you hated, Ken."

"I'll be back at four-thirty." He was pissed.

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★ **KELLY** The  
★ **SERVICES** Kelly  
★ **KLONE**

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*... Good Kelly girls have to be able to adapt to changing situations. One on-the-job supervisor might want a temporary employee who is punctual, enthusiastic and eager to accept responsibility. Another says that being well-groomed, friendly and flexible is important. A third could describe the ideal Kelly Girl as one who is adaptable and dependable. String all those adjectives together and you've found certain qualities that allow Kelly girls to be truly helpful—and memorable.*

I took a late lunch, and stopped in at the Ladies' Room on the way out. The Ladies' Room is beauty-parlor blue, with floral kitchen chairs where women come to sit and smoke, or escape for a while (women spend so much time in the bathroom.) Three women were putting on make-up when I came in. I half-smiled in the mirror at two of them. They went on silently applying mascara and styling mousse.

I went into the stall, carefully placed the tissue cover on the seat to waste time, and sat down for awhile. Soon, I smelled "Giorgio," and noticed Rosa's red-bowed pumps pointed the opposite way in the next-door stall. The toilet flushed several times, and her feet did a fast jump backwards to avoid a chocolate splat.

"This triple helping of diet fruit has 600 calories, but I'll only gain 50. I'm so glad I discovered scarf 'n barf."



Washing my hands, I noticed a bulging Oo-La-Croissant bag on the counter. Rosa came out of her stall and quickly put the bag on the other side of her purse. "They're for my whole department," she said. I smiled.

"Sometimes I get so bored at work I think I could eat a whole bagful like that," I said. Rosa opened her multi-pasteled eyes wide.

"Oh, I never could. I don't even think I could make it through *one* of those big croissants."

"Or raspberry turnovers," I added.

"Umm, those *are* good. Have you tried the chocolate chip croissants? And the almond ones?" She laughed, leaned toward me secretively, and touched me with one of her cherry-ice nails. "Sometimes I'm not *that* good. In fact..." she bent down to see if there was anyone left in the stalls. "Once, I even ate a whole bagful like that by myself!"

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★  
★ **KELLY** The  
★ Kelly  
★ SERVICES Klonge

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*SLIMMING FOODS: It's lunch time. You're trying to shed a few pounds and should lunch lightly. But the gang's headed to the company cafeteria. Go ahead. Join them. The cafeteria isn't necessarily a dieter's danger zone. You can easily choose a delicious, nutritious and calorie-trimmed lunch.*

*SLIMMING EXERCISES: Sweating is not required for beneficial body movement. Thinking is the important factor. Plan how to move more often. Volunteer to go to the supply room when supplies are needed. Walking at a medium pace burns 210 calories; office work burns about 150.*

*SLIMMING LOOKS: After all that exercise and dieting, if the bathroom scale still reads higher than you'd like, don't fret. Let your clothes help you achieve a trim look.*



“Yeah, I pig out when I’m working sometimes,” I reassured her. “I get bored, I get tired of people telling me what to do, tired of being told I have to look thin and beautiful and manlike and professional all at once.” I dried my hands in my hair.

“And tired of being lonely,” she added, brushing her hair.

“Gotta fill up those holes inside somehow. You get depressed so you eat, you get fat so you get depressed. Lots of women feel so unattractive and unworthy that they just stuff themselves and puke.”

Rosa stopped brushing her hair. “Really? I can’t imagine...”

“Sure. Scarf ’n Barf. Number One Women’s Corporate Sport.”

“I wonder what they do about it,” Rosa ventured.

“Some get therapy. Some tell those bastards out there to go fuck themselves.”

Rosa looked at her reflection in the mirror and smiled a little smile. At herself.



*What secretaries say: The major findings were fairly consistent among all the secretaries.*

- Secretaries are very satisfied with their profession and with the current jobs.

- Secretaries love word processing.

- Secretaries believe that word processing opens up new career opportunities.

- Secretaries do not believe office automation threatens their jobs.

and held the book more assertively in my hands. “I’m done with everything else. I can’t just sit here.”

“What are we reading?” Toole leaned over my shoulder and I could smell Vapo-Mints. He read the title, *About Men*, by Phyllis Chesler, and twitched a little. No doubt the psycho-feminist title struck him as another *Happy Hooker*. Toole gave a superior snort. “That women’s lib stuff doesn’t affect me.” He extended his limp white hand and took possession of my book. “Why should I be concerned about other girls if the girl I spend time with is more like—who’s that one who does the anti-ERA stuff?”

“Phyllis Schlafley. The lawyer.”  
 “Yeah, she agrees with her. She’s content, and so am I, so why should I worry about anyone else? I’m just looking out for our interests.”

I didn’t want to get into it. I didn’t want to launch into yet another line of Palatable Good-For-Men-Too Feminism. I shrugged.

“Yeah, well I hope the women in this office are looking out for *their* interests.”

Toole brushed some imaginary lint off his sleeves. “Where are those xeroxes I asked for this morning?”

I looked at him straight-on. “Give me my book.”



Denham leaned his impeccable sandy-brown head out his door. “Kelly, is there a thesaurus around here?”

“I doubt it, Ken. But I know a few words.”

“Well, come in here a second.” I went inside Denham’s walnut-paneled office, which had glass bookshelves, leather desk accessories, and a great view of the financial district. I sunk in a low, crushed-velvet chair and looked up at his massive desk.

“Don’t ask me what I’m doing,” said Denham, scribbling away at something. “But what’s a good adjective for when something is written in a way that has to



“Good book?”

It was Toole. I closed the file drawer

do with self-help stuff.” He looked bashful. “See, I’m writing this card to my brother about a book I read, and it was pretty good, it’s just that it wasn’t written—well, conservatively. Not like the usual kind of thing I’d read.”

“How about psycho-babble, Ken.”

He laughed. “Hey, I like that. But not a word I’d use. You know, something more conservative.”

“How about sensitive, consciousness-raising, holistic, New-Age, human potential...” I rattled off a lot of words he wasn’t familiar with.

He shook his head. “No, those are words that describe how you feel.” He thought for awhile. “I’ve got it! Flowery!”

I stood up. “Listen Ken, would you sign my Temporary Time Card?” He clicked his gold Cross pen and signed it without checking the hours.”

“Back Monday?”

“No.” He looked a little hurt.

“Why not?”

“I just do this for money, Ken, when I have to. I want to do something more interesting.”

He nodded. “Yeah, this gets pretty boring. What else do you do?” First

sign of interest.

“I’m a writer. Freelance journalist. Almost.” Denham looked me up and down.

“Huh. You know, the thing that gets me about women journalists is they always dress sexy for interviews, you know. They use their sexiness to have some power when they can’t be tough.”

I gave him a tough look. “That’s not my style, Ken.”

He assumed a mentor air. “No, you’re too cute. You know, the way I treat a woman depends exactly on the way she dresses. Dress like a woman, and I treat you like a woman. Wear a suit, and I’ll take you seriously. You know, maybe you should wear something a little more masculine.”

I shrugged my shoulders, breathing in for a retort. His phone rang, and he checked the clock. Four-thirty-six. “Why don’t you go on home, Kelly.”

I didn’t say thank-you.

*...The supervisor at the company where I was working told my temp agency supervisor that when his company needed more temporaries, she wanted them to be “just like Kelly—maybe even her clone.”*





# Sweet

In an extraordinary world, her day was the most ordinary possible. She walked to work, passing shops, offices, and galleries, each evenly-lit inside and restrained and symmetrical on the outside in the modern style. Her own work building said "Gresham" on the outside and the inside was made of white tile and wallboard and partitions. This was early morning in the city, when the light was golden and hesitant; it did not yet stretch curvaceously around tall buildings the way it did in late afternoon, the time of long shadows and, for office workers, stupor.

The thing is, she thought to herself while hanging up her coat and moving to the office coffee pot, you've got to get your mind more active—take a class or something, if you can bear sitting in a classroom for three hours after sitting for eight at a typewriter. She thought this often. Behind a fog, other secretaries were making their sporadic dull morning-talk. But what kind of class? She had never gotten past this question.

Limousines gliding down the avenue outside her window might have been strange black water birds, with an occasional white swan...but inside, the proud and the powerful sit, she thought, catching a glimpse of a hand holding a

telephone receiver inside one of the murky windows. She smiled slightly, her attention drawn back to the swan image: there was nothing very angry or willful about her. She loved what could take her away from the world.

Rolling paper in the platen, she began to think idly: weight, weight, you've got to lose some weight...running it like a chant through her head. After typing lists of stock numbers and prices for an hour or so, she vaguely began to think about the thing, hoping it would not come over her but it did. This kind of antsiness in her stomach was not hunger, but it made her rise like a robot and walk to the vending machines down the hall. This urge is hopeless to fight, she thought, once it comes on. It blew in like a squall from the lonely spaces in her brain and while eating, in the hall or in the bathroom away from co-workers, she stared straight ahead, vacantly and it was pleasant.

Well, that's it, she thought, swallowing the last of the three candy bars and crumpling the wrappers. Now the argument-with-self would ensue: No, no, no, I told you not to eat that crap! But it's so awful here, no one even talks to me, and I'm wasting my life! How can you deny yourself this trifling pleasure when this

room and your whole daytime existence is so sour? Well, isn't your nighttime existence a zero deal too? And do you know why? Because you're such a blimp! Oh c'mon! Is that a real reason or just an excuse?

During the argument, her face was smooth; she bit her lip the tiniest bit, but that could have indicated concentration over the paperwork which she was now taking to task.

Lunchtime was better; it was with Lucinda, a co-worker who had lots of children at home who wore her out. Oh, they throw themselves on me from the moment I get home till the time I fall asleep, she was saying as they sat on the park bench not 20 feet from the noisy avenue. Lucinda laughed a lot and her exhaustion was not evident. Her long black hair got into her sandwich and they both laughed. Then they had to go back inside for the next half of the day, which was always the worst.

She had forgotten about the other thing that happened sometimes when she felt in lighter spirits, like after a nice lunch. It drove her crazy. Surely it

won't keep me from work, she thought, but then it started. A huge feeling of horniness leapt upon her. It made her feel her nipples against her blouse and the creases behind her knees. It made her want to laugh insanely at the office—the absurd, stultifying cubicles, alphabetical files, and all the silly people with pointy shoes and impeccable grooming.

If only to dash out the door and into the little park, she thought. If only to strike up a conversation with someone there, something simple about feeding pigeons! Someone out there who doesn't have a boring existence like this, someone who could tell me what daytime is really like!

Asking if anyone would like anything from the deli, she ran out quickly and brought back a soda pop for the receptionist and cookies for herself. She wolfed them down while shuffling through the papers. Afterwards, through the greasy, stuffed feeling, she felt the thick beating of her heart. The thing had returned, and she began to rock very slightly and slowly back and



## WHATEVER-I-FEEL-LIKE COMIX

by Ace Backwards ©2024



forth in her chair, one foot tucked under her, typing all the while. Sweat rose to her forehead; the rest of the office was a clicking machine far away behind a blue fog. She got up and went into the bathroom. But I don't have to go to the bathroom, she thought, sitting there.

Oh damn you! Why do you have to get so out of line! Why? What if somebody saw that? Then you're really gonna be in trouble...you'll have to

exciting: Do you *know* where you are and *what* you're doing? Oh, if those nags even *knew*! You're crazy you cunt, cunt...cunt!

For a full minute she drooped limply there on the toilet, then suddenly gasping as if she'd heard terrible news, she got up quickly and went to her cubicle.

Now it was 3:30 and there was no more stalling to do, no more change for the vending machines. You better do some exercising, you slob, she thought vaguely, feeling tired. Maybe I need a shrink...it's some kind of compulsive condition. No one had looked at her at all when she had come back into the room. Who cares what they think...why do I have these grotesque urges?

Outside, she could see shadows growing long and the sky began to glow purple and red behind dark cigar-shaped clouds. Dusk was coming and the city would churn away into the night. Somewhere out there, life was going on.

What should I have for dinner?

—by Jake



quit! You're completely unhinged, you idiot! I can see it now...dropped out of the workforce at age 22 due to uncontrollable masturbation...oh god, what is *wrong* with you?

But as she argued with herself, her anxious fingers began tugging and digging and massaging. She was afraid someone would come in. If I could just get rid of this tension and get rid of it fast, she thought. Then work would be easier...to concentrate on. Each rising and falling breath was shortened and then the outlandish became the





Whenever I see “Carmen” I am reminded of the factory-like, New York office where I worked in the summer of 1965. Like Bizet’s tobacco factory, it was hot (there was a drought and air conditioning usage was rationed to save water, the city’s slogan was “Don’t flush for everything”), the workers were all female, and life was startlingly real outside the doors we would rush through at 4:45 in the afternoon.

Johnson was president, the war in Vietnam was “escalating,” and the Olin Mathiesson Chemical Corporation, a major gun powder producer, hired me, through the Olsten temp agency, to tear carbon papers from bills of lading and stuff envelopes seven hours a day, at \$1.35 a hour (\$.10 above the minimum wage).

I was 18 and had just finished my freshman year of college. In those days young women were called girls, and I was very much a girl. I was not in love, I do not think I thought about love. A stranger to passion, but not to the joys of making out in the back seats of big American cars, my disappointments were not deep, my faith in my future infinite.

Back then jobs were plentiful and rents were cheap. It took me one day to find work, one week to find a three-room, furnished apartment on West 20th Street, two subway stops from Greenwich Village, for \$80.00 a month. I shared the apartment with Terry, another college girl in New York for the summer. Terry knew how to type and found a job as a secretary. started in her office as a temp, but her boss decided to hire her full time without paying the agency fee. That meant she could not receive any phone calls at the office. One never knew when the agency would be calling to see if she was there.

Every morning, dressed in a skirt and blouse or dress and wearing nylons, despite the heat, I would take the subway to Columbus Circle and walk west on 57th Street to 10th Avenue to an immense four-story loft building where Olin had its billing department on the third floor. The first two floors were a Thom McAnn shoe warehouse.

The modular office had not yet been invented. I worked in a completely enclosed room in the middle of the floor that, except for its size, might have been a broom closet. I had never been in

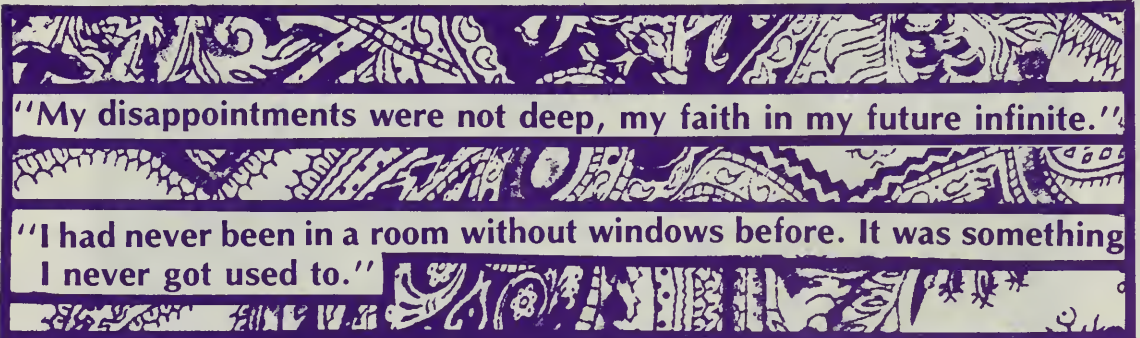
a room without windows before. It was something I never got used to. How often did I raise my eyes from my work and instinctively search the walls for sunlight!

As you entered this room you saw two rows of desks, all facing the door. On the right, where I sat at the last desk, were the five carbon-tearers. We were all between the ages of 18 and 20. Our job was to separate the carbons from a white original and three multi-colored copies. The blue copies went in one pile, the greens in another, and the yellows in a third. The whites we folded and stuffed into envelopes. When we had a respectable number of stacks of paper in front of us, we would bring them to baskets on a table near the supervisor's desk and pick up some more forms to be separated. I do not know what happened to them next.

The five desks in the left row supported comptometer machines which

only for a few months, but what about the others? I don't remember anyone ever complaining. Three of the five carbon tearers lived at home, were engaged to be married or had serious boyfriends, and would, presumably, quit on marriage or childbirth. The fourth was a college-student temp like myself. The comptometer operators, on the other hand, were in their twenties and thirties and mostly married. (The husbands all worked in blue-collar jobs, which were common at the time but low status in those status-conscious years.)

New York is a profoundly ethnic city. Ethnic identity is as important there as public school affiliation is to the English upper-class. Ethnically, we were quite a mix. Our supervisor, Miss Glenda Briggs, was a very thin, white, southern lady of about 40. The comptometer operators: one Yugoslav, one German, a New York black, a Jamaican black, and a Puerto Rican. The carbon tearers: two



looked like a cross between an electric typewriter and a cash register. In those early days of office automation, they were a kind of "dedicated" bill processor. The women who operated these machines were the professionals to whom we unskilled carbon-tearers always deferred.

The supervisor's desk was on the wall next to the door, facing the workers, like a school teacher facing a classroom.

It seems incredible to me now, eleven women in one room, seven hours a day, five days a week, five of us doing totally mindless work, five of us having to concentrate on our work, and one watching. All in that closed space.

It seemed incredible to me then, too. I could tolerate the job because it was

Jews, two Germans, one Puerto Rican.

Socially, as a group, we had nothing in common. I had discovered "pot" that summer, and Terry and I spent most of our time hanging out in the Village. We both went to school in Michigan and friends from out-of-town were forever crashing in our apartment. Everybody played the guitar that year and real life started after 5pm. Monday mornings I would take a capsule of deximil before leaving the apartment. On speed, mindless, repetitive work can almost be satisfying. I never discussed my home life at the office.

But we talked a lot at work. Kelly, one of the comptrollers was pregnant. She had already had one miscarriage, so the talk had to do with her health and what

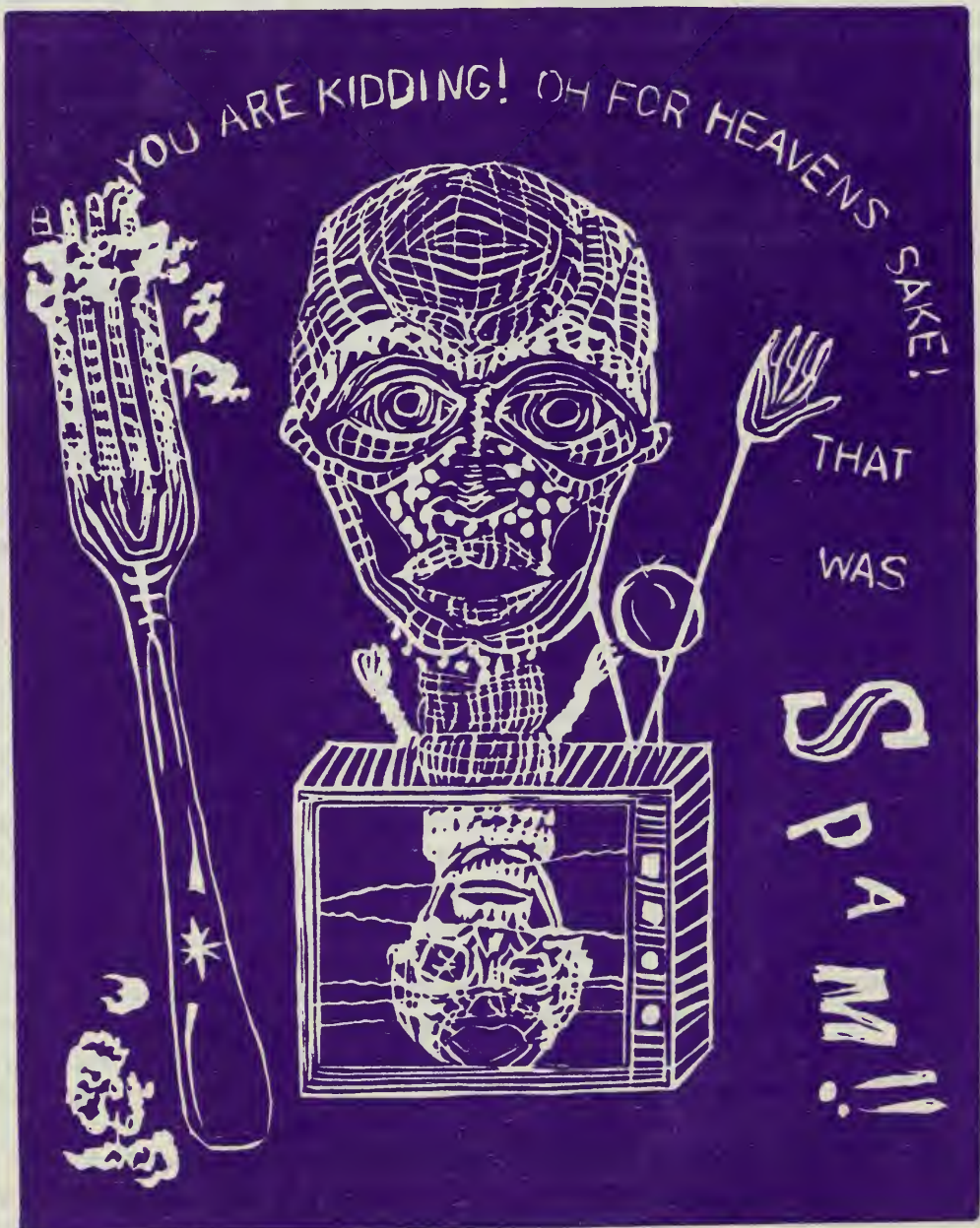
the doctor had said. I listened hard to the secrets of womanhood.

Mostly the talk was about what each had cooked for dinner last night and what they would make this evening. Having no interest in food, this was very boring and depressing for me. Then it came about that I invited some friends for dinner, and I didn't know how to cook. I explained my problem to the women at work, and Marie, the Yugoslav, gave me a recipe for meatloaf (ground beef, bread crumbs, onions, eggs, and tomato sauce) that I still use.

The other major topic was television.

Since we didn't have a TV, I couldn't participate in those conversations either.

The images come back, after twenty years, incompletely. But I remember these women better than any others I have worked with since. I remember that Janet, the Jamaican, always had a perfectly coiffed bouffant. One day I complimented her for it, and she laughed and said it was a wig. I remember that Gretchen, one of the Germanic carbon-tearers, was tall, pale, and flat, and had very thick ankles. She was also stupid and mean. Arrogance in



S/P Spam!

Bonita Louise 1985



was always the same: what are you doing, what do you have for homework, I'll make chicken (or beef, or stew) for supper. How I pitied that child, how sad I was for the mother whose life revolved around him. (Now I, like Marie, call my son every afternoon, to affirm my existence, my real life, that has nothing to do with the work at hand.)

Karen, the other temp, was something of an enigma. She was the first person I had ever met who could only speak in clichés. She talked a lot, was friendly, but never said anything. Once I asked her what her agency was paying, and she answered, "I never discuss money." She had told us that she had been going to a college up-state but had had to move back home after her married sister had died. "But how did she die?" I finally asked. "Well," she drawled in her sing-song voice, "she went shopping for some panties at



studying business administration, and she had dropped out to make some money so they could marry. But since she had taken an academic course in high school, she didn't have any marketable skills. We used to talk about what we read in the newspaper and play gin rummy during our breaks and lunch hours.

Glenda, our supervisor, sticks in my mind in her navy suits and white blouses and her prematurely white hair always perfectly curled. She had moved



Gimbels, and she had just had a baby, and nobody knows what was going on in her mind, but she jumped in front of a BMT train."

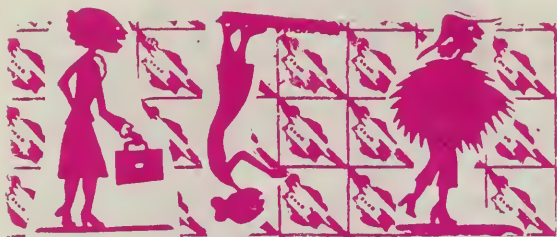
Inez, the carbon-tearer with the most seniority, was my only real friend on the job. She was a 19-year-old Puerto Rican woman who didn't speak Spanish. She had suffered for this, she confided, because her teacher thought she was cheating by being in Spanish I. Inez had gone to City College for one year and had majored in history. But she was now engaged to Robert, who was

with the company from down South and lived with her mother, whom she had brought with her. In my eyes she had the strange power of tragic gentility and spinsterhood.

When a comptometer operator left her job, presumably for marriage or motherhood, the policy had been to train the carbon-tearer with the most seniority to replace her. The last woman to move up in the ranks this way was Carol a street-smart black woman whose sharp tongue belied the women's sewing circle politeness that usually prevailed. But, as soon as she was trained, Carol gave notice. She was moving on to a better paying job with another firm.

Management's response to Carol's ingratitude was worthy of a modern,





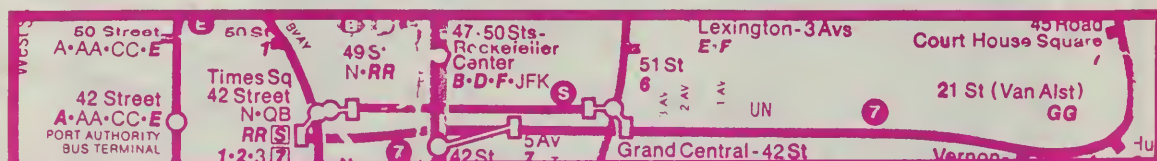
capitalist Soloman. Henceforth there would be no more on the job training; all future openings for comptometer operators would be filled from the outside. This was devastating for Inez who was next in line to be promoted, and everyone in the office, including Glenda, expressed their regrets.

Carol was replaced by Dorothy. Dorothy dressed like a beatnik—pierced ears, wide skirts—and was very unhappy with whatever it was that had fated her to this job. She bragged about her weekends at Cape Cod to women who had never heard of the place but knew she was bragging. She was

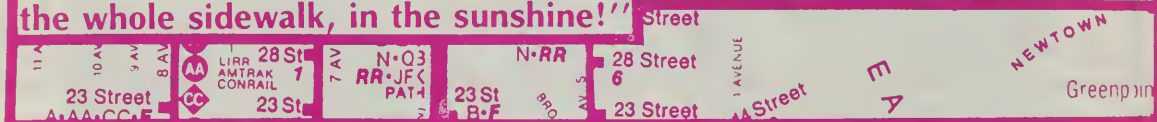
extremely unpopular. Even I, who sympathized with her aspirations, was afraid to talk to her lest I became contaminated in the eyes of the others. Besides, I was the lowliest and youngest of temps, and she did not look to me for help.

Glenda, who was a very diplomatic boss who could act like one of the girls without ever forgetting who she was, also knew how to put people down. She had no use for Carol, or later Dorothy, the office rebels, and used sarcasm to turn everyone against them. It all seemed dreadfully unfair.

But the strongest image is of female comraderie and the giggling, the tensions, the occasional outburst of emotion. Normally we ate our sandwiches in the employees' cafeteria, but on paydays the 45-minute lunch break was extended to one hour, so we could cash our checks. Then (and also when it was someone's birthday) we would all



**"How lovely it was to go out together in a group, laughing, taking up the whole sidewalk, in the sunshine!"**



her (in everybody?) was a display of a limited mind.

Marie called her 12-year-old son up every afternoon from the phone on the supervisor's desk. The conversation

go to lunch together at an Italian restaurant and even have a cocktail. How lovely it was to go out together in a group, laughing, taking up the whole sidewalk, in the sunshine!

—by Ana Logue

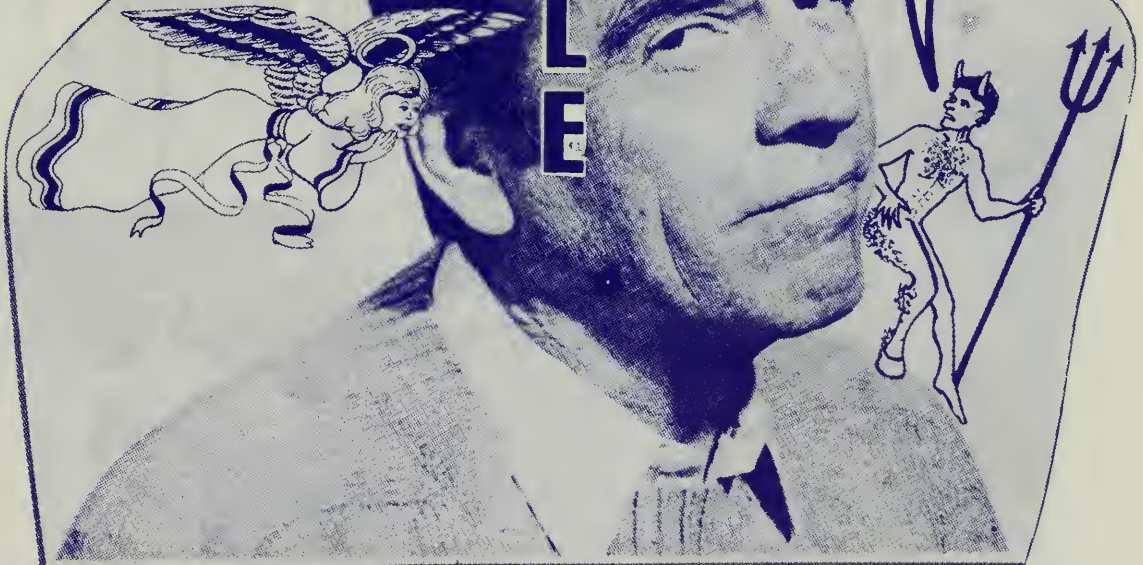


# THE OPPRESSED

## M I D D L E

The tragedy of the executive comes in his attempt to... make of men a machine that will benefit mankind... He is a man of economics who makes a tragedy of his life because he so desires to economize his time that he believes he cannot afford to think."

"...those who participate in the use of men are prohibited by their own need for self-preservation from considering the meaning of their work."



**SCENES FROM CORPORATE LIFE:**  
*The Politics of Middle Management* by Earl Shorris, 1981, Penguin Books. Reviewed by Lucius Cabins.

During my time as a temp in downtown San Francisco I worked for many different managers. I never became particularly friendly with them, but I did find ways to "manage" my managers. Mostly they left me alone as long as they got the work they wanted out of me.

Though I never was close to any managers, it was obvious that most of them suffered the same intimidation and hassles that I faced as their peon. But if bosses were as oppressed as I was, I reasoned, why were they so willing,

even eager, to carry out the ridiculous dictates of the company? How had they turned into complacent embodiments of corporate policies? Why were they so ready to enforce completely arbitrary policies which oppressed them as much as me? It couldn't just be the money, or could it?

"*Scenes From Corporate Life*", a detailed exploration of the corporate manager's life, is an attempt to answer these questions. The book, which originally had the same title as this review, depicts the duplicity, shallowness, manipulations, and general stupidity that prevail among managers. The portrait will be familiar to anyone who has labored in the office world. Earl Shorris

cont'd. on page 36

## EMPLOYEE OF THE WEEK

Week by week  
day by day  
employee of the week  
gets a raise in pay.

Drop your money  
in the pot  
think you'll save?

Campbell soup  
will keep hunger  
away, working up  
a sweat, to lay  
in the hay!

Never had it good,  
never been an educated fool,  
outstanding employee  
obey the rules.

Late at night  
my skin begins  
to bite, haven't  
had my taste of  
workers paradise!

Eight to five  
just to survive  
punching the keys  
to the CRT.

Dreaming someday  
of living in peace.  
Wall Street Journal  
magician, stocks

## WHY I CALLED THE EDITOR AN ASSHOLE

he told me I could learn to be more civil  
I can't argue with logic  
they've taught apes sign language  
the average American can cast a vote  
rats will run through a maze  
for cheese or away from pain  
boys can be taught to kill anything  
and men to kill boys and girls

surely I could learn to be civil

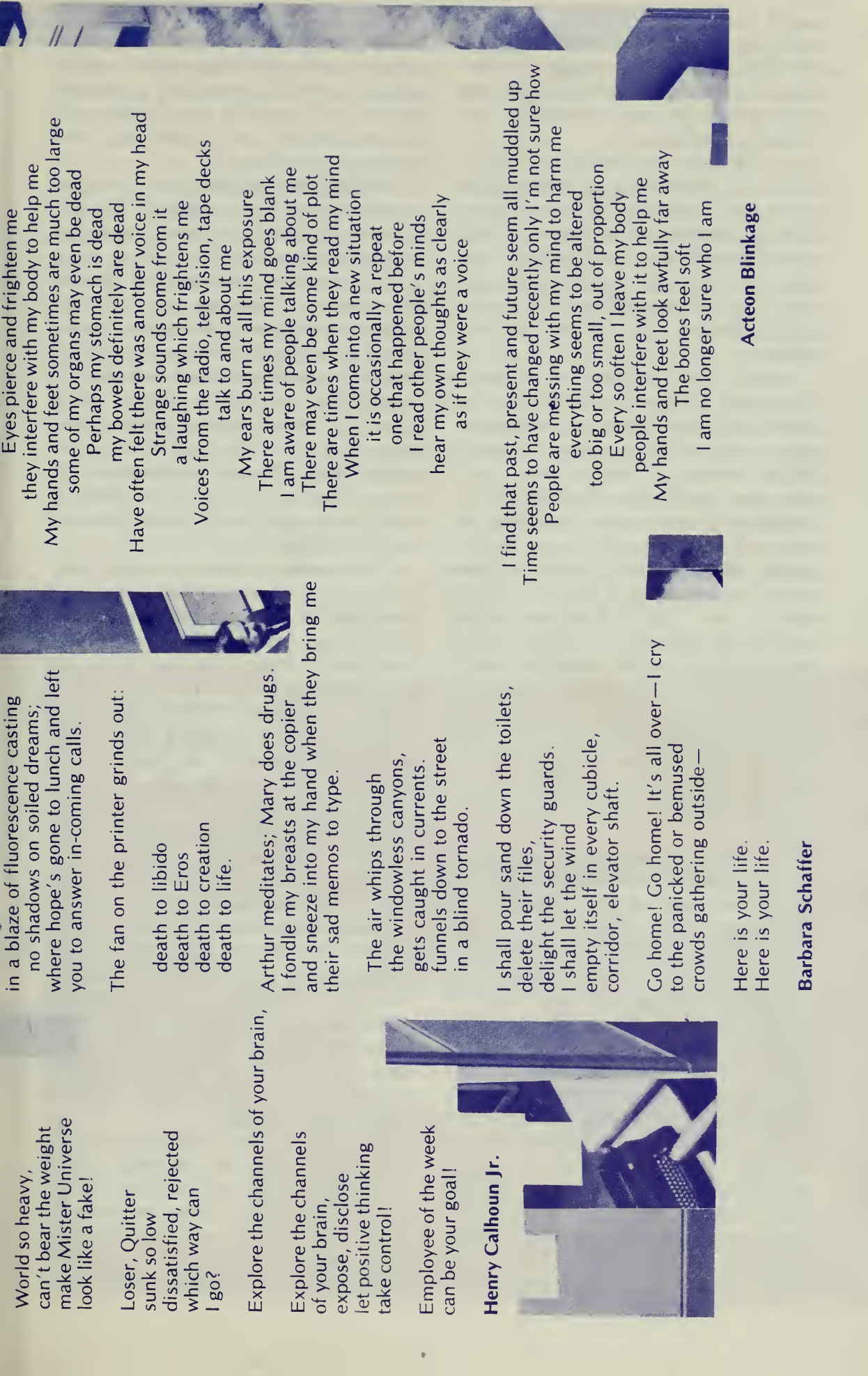
## Ligi

## IDENTIKIT CRISIS

My world has become timeless  
Sometimes it is very dim as I look at it  
People's faces pulsate as I watch them  
When I read the words begin to look funny  
they move around, grow faint  
Sometimes the world becomes very bright as I look at it  
objects pulsate as I look at them  
The world seems **very** unreal  
Now and then when I look in the mirror  
my face changes and seems different  
I feel rays of energy upon me  
Often I see sparks or spots of light  
floating before me

## REALITY IS NO EXCUSE





in a blaze of fluorescence casting no shadows on soiled dreams; where hope's gone to lunch and left you to answer in-coming calls.

The fan on the printer grinds out:

- death to libido
- death to Eros
- death to creation
- death to life.

Arthur meditates; Mary does drugs. I fondle my breasts at the copier and sneeze into my hand when they bring me their sad memos to type.

The air whips through the windowless canyons, gets caught in currents, funnels down to the street in a blind tornado.

I shall pour sand down the toilets, delete their files, delight the security guards. I shall let the wind empty itself in every cubicle, corridor, elevator shaft.

Go home! Go home! It's all over—I cry to the panicked or bemused crowds gathering outside—

Here is your life.  
Here is your life.

**Barbara Schaffer**

Eyes pierce and frighten me they interfere with my body to help me My hands and feet sometimes are much too large some of my organs may even be dead Perhaps my stomach is dead my bowels definitely are dead Have often felt there was another voice in my head Strange sounds come from it a laughing which frightens me Voices from the radio, television, tape decks talk to and about me

My ears burn at all this exposure There are times my mind goes blank I am aware of people talking about me There may even be some kind of plot There are times when they read my mind When I come into a new situation it is occasionally a repeat one that happened before I read other people's minds hear my own thoughts as clearly as if they were a voice

I find that past, present and future seem all muddled up Time seems to have changed recently only I'm not sure how People are messing with my mind to harm me everything seems to be altered too big or too small, out of proportion Every so often I leave my body people interfere with it to help me My hands and feet look awfully far away The bones feel soft I am no longer sure who I am

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World so heavy, can't bear the weight make Mister Universe look like a fake!

Loser, Quitter sunk so low dissatisfied, rejected which way can I go?

Explore the channels of your brain,

Explore the channels of your brain, expose, disclose let positive thinking take control!

Employee of the week can be your goal!

**Henry Calhoun Jr.**



**Acteon Blinkage**

cont'd. from page 33

(who was a long-time middle manager himself) argues convincingly that common business practices produce corporations which are essentially totalitarian institutions.

For Shorris, totalitarianism is the process of destroying autonomy. Corporate totalitarianism idolizes efficiency in its bureaucracies and takes its ideology from industrial psychology, management textbooks, and classes. The result is a microworld where the autonomy of human beings is systematically thwarted.

Among his vignettes he describes techniques effective in intimidating and controlling both managers and knowledge workers. For example, the annual bonus system is used almost as a piece-rate kind of motivation for the middle-level employees. And yet, because of the company's need to keep people off guard and unsure of themselves the awarding of bonuses is often arbitrary and out of line with actual events. The ubiquitous "secret" salary works to keep people separate and to compete more intently with what they think the other is getting, rather than banding together to get the same higher pay. *"To make atoms of the mass, corporations have no more obvious device than the keeping secret of men's earnings."*

But "men do not merely acquiesce, they choose to live under totalitarian conditions... out of fear, mistaking its effect upon them because they do not think of the meaning of their actions." Managers have accepted an externally-imposed definition of happiness (i.e. material wealth, career advancement) provided by *The Organization* and its leaders. In so doing they have ceded their autonomy as free human beings to an abstract end and reduced themselves to mere means. In sacrifices "for the company" Shorris identifies the essential ingredient of a totalitarian society: human beings actively, even willingly, participating in self-delusion and renunciation of their own freedom, in exchange for a false sense of security.

*"In the modern world a delusion about work and happiness enables people not only to endure oppression but to seek it and to believe that they are happier because of the very work that oppresses them."*

A rather dry philosophical analysis of totalitarianism and corporate life prefaces the bulk of the book, which features 40-odd vignettes of typical managerial dilemmas, followed by Shorris' observations. Some of the scenes involve very high-level executives, others involve first-line supervisors. Together, they illustrate the pathetic dark side of a manager's worklife: isolation, loneliness, the "need" to avoid seeing their oppression, the "desire" to obey corporate mores. The author inadvertently reveals himself in many of his observations as an example of the very dynamics he criticizes.

- An executive who's working overtime to redo an error-filled report by a sales analyst, has an hysterical internal monologue of desperation and frustration. Shorris notes that loneliness has less to do with solitude than it does with social atomization. *"The loneliness that destroys men by atomizing them comes when they are among the familiar faces of strangers... At the heart of the loneliness of business one finds the essence of the notion of property: competition... Loneliness, terrible, impenetrable, and as fearsome as death, incites men to cede themselves to some unifying force: the party, the state, the corporation. All lonely creatures are frightened; to be included provides the delusion of safety, to cede oneself masks the terror of loneliness, to abandon autonomy avoids the risk of beginnings."* Aren't these the same reasons people join cults and various "extremist" groups?

- A middle-class manager who grew up to stories of his mother bringing food to his father at the factory where he was in a sit-down strike... has come to blame unions for inflation, and the US's sagging position in the world market. During a strike he crosses a picket line

to jeers of "Scab\*!" and has a crisis of the will. He nearly becomes catatonic when he gets into his office. The point here is that the manager, unlike the striking workers, has no social support system. This manager knows it since he grew up in a militant union household.

• A public relations man and his friend, an engineer, have fights through the years about the way different processes or products are described to the public; the engineer wants more technically precise language, the PR man wants to make an impact by keeping things simple. The author notes the use Nazi Germany made of simplifications (and could also have put in some analysis of how Reagan and Co. do the same). What emerges is an insightful glimpse of language: "*Simplifications are perfectly opaque... simplifications impose 'one-track thinking' upon the listener;*

*they cannot be considered... In its use as propaganda, language passes from the human sphere to that of technology. Like technology... it does not recognize the right to autonomous existence of any person but the speaker. To disagree with the language of the technological will is to disobey."* But one can, and Shorris does, disagree with and disobey the language of the technological-propagandistic will.

The power of totalitarian thinking, according to Shorris, is a belief in the ultimate perfectability of the world, a resolution into certainty that will provide happiness for all forever. This pursuit of perfection reminds me of the engineer's pursuit of complete automation, or the biologist's pursuit of "better" life forms through genetic engineering. The goal is to eliminate contingency, uncertainty, freedom. "To-

## WHY I CAN'T COME TO WORK TODAY...



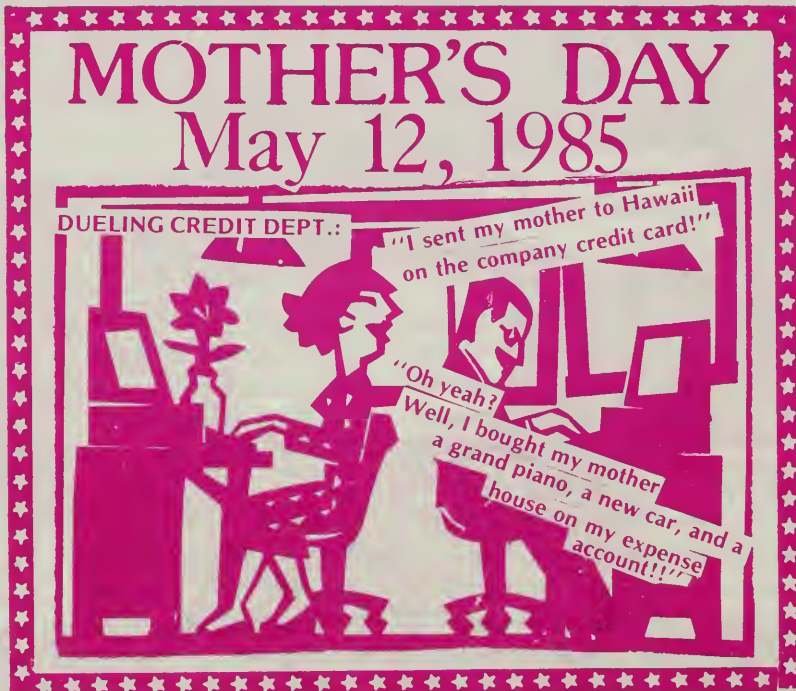
talitarianism begins with a concept greater than man, and even though this concept is his perfection, the use of man as a means robs him of his dignity. To raise man up to perfection by debasing him is a contradiction: totalitarian goals of perfection are logically impossible."

Against totalitarianism "*stands the beckoning of human autonomy, with its promise of the joy of beginnings and the adventure of contingency... All rational men know that no matter how they choose they cannot eliminate unhappiness or achieve perfection in the world.*" One of Shorris' key points is that human society is inevitably imperfect because it is intrinsically complex, unpredictable, full of ambiguities. He rejects all systems or utopias, whether that of Rousseau, Plato, or Marx, on the grounds that such goals reduce human life to a means toward the abstract ends found in the philosophers' minds.

But Shorris, perhaps over-involved, exaggerates the power and control of the "system." For example, he thinks the totalitarian system has become so efficient and dominant that it no longer depends on hysteria, war, murder or hate to enforce its power. Yet he real-

izes that total efficiency is an impossible pursuit doomed to ultimate failure. In fact, totalitarian thinking *is* hysterical and *does* depend on hate, war and murder (look at the US campaign against Nicaragua). Totalitarian governments or executives depend on these emotional bulwarks. Without hate, war and fear, their power would erode rapidly.

Because he overestimates its power Shorris is too pessimistic about resistance to the system. His claims that "The sudden and apparently unprovoked dismissal of a few people or even of one person makes the rest docile..." or "Only those who can put aside thought and misconstrue experience survive" are obviously not always true. Otherwise how did Shorris survive? Many of us with experience in the corporate office world have despaired when co-workers go along with the most absurd demands and expectations with barely a peep, but we have also seen people question and revolt against what enslaves them. Individuals retain their autonomy, in spite of the best efforts of bosses to intimidate it out of existence.





*The Manager's Bias*

Shorris writes from a distinctly managerial perspective. For example, he thinks we live in a materially-glutted world. Although there is certainly a lot of waste and ostentatious wealth, there are many places in the world where there is "not enough" for basic, intelligent survival. The real glut in most people's lives is one of twisted images not goods.

Despite his narrow view of economic reality it leads Shorris to an important perception: "...economic necessity... demands the creation of Sisyphean tasks: nothing comes to have as much value as something..." In particular, the 'nothing' of value is information. Too many people are engaged in the production and circulation of utterly useless information. And from this perception, he draws conclusions about the general uselessness of most office work. The computer also stands naked: "*The computer has not led to a revolution in any area but records retention and retrieval in a society that already suffers from the retention and retrieval of too much useless information... The major effect of these time-saving devices has been the necessity of finding ways to waste time.*"

From within the decision making structures that have produced the rationalization of work processes, Shorris comments on the motivations of efficiency experts. Most workers assume management experts are consciously hostile to the workers' well-being, and there are certainly individuals who have been. But Shorris defends industrial psychologists and management theorists as being honest fellows trying to improve company operations, but *inadvertently* leading to oppressive conditions for workers. Evil or not, the hostility toward workers is built into their jobs. If you work for them, you realize their honesty or dishonesty isn't the point. It's *what they do*.

Himself distant from the shop-floor realities of the factory, Shorris romanticizes the blue-collar worker's life and

the reality of the modern trade union as well. Underlying this romanticization is his notion of 'alienation.' Since he rejects materialist philosophy, he also rejects Marxist analysis of alienation. In *Capital* alienation stems from the division between the individual and the products of his or her labor, and from the chasm between the individual and the system of social reproduction. For Shorris, alienation is a feeling, the essential component of human consciousness: "*It is man's capacity to feel alienated that makes him human... Alienation as part of man's consciousness always leads him toward freedom and improvement of the material conditions of his life... he enjoys the inevitable discontent of consciousness, for he can compare his life to his infinite imagination.*"

Shorris contends that this feeling of alienation is precisely the autonomous subjectivity that the totalitarian corporation attacks. Since the 19th century, work has been rationalized repeatedly, but only in the white-collar world has that process has been extended to the *workers themselves*. Factory work has involved rationalization of the workers, too, but Shorris' roots in the office prevent his seeing this as clearly.

Shorris believes that, contrasted to office workers, blue collar workers are dignified and relatively free. He claims that trade unions have provided a buffer between factory workers and company goals for rationalizing work and ultimately the workers. For Shorris, unions are basically democratic, flexible institutions which have adapted very successfully to the modern capitalist economy. In so doing, they have insulated the factory worker from fear, which is the crucial element in the rationalization of men.

In his enthusiasm for his analysis of unions and alienation, Shorris goes overboard. For example, "*Such business tactics as multinational manufacturing, 'Sunbelt strategy,' mergers and acquisitions, or diversification have less and less effect on industrial plants and*

*workers as unions learn to defend their members from the threats to wages and stability arising from new business situations.*” This is patently ridiculous. A brief look at the steel industry and the Rust Bowl of Ohio-Pennsylvania or the copper industry of Arizona belies this silly claim.

These assertions are reminiscent of the wistful longing for something better that is more typically associated with the frustrated low-level employee. In this case, however, it is the voice of an oppressed manager looking back down the social hierarchy for what seems to him to be a relatively idyllic life. It would be bad enough if he stopped at those comments, but he doesn't. Because so many factory workers with whom he has talked define their “real” lives according to what they do outside the wage-labor arena, Shorris concludes the union worker is *“a man very much like the creature dreamed of in Marx's German Ideology: he does one thing today and another tomorrow... he is human and free, paying but one fifth of his life to enjoy the rest of his days, and doing so for only twenty-five or thirty years until he retires... the life... for the worker in communism is beginning to be real for many blue collar workers. Leisure exists, and the blue collar worker enjoys his leisure without real or symbolic constraints.”* Huh?!! Sound like any blue collar workers you know?

#### *Human Thought: Seed of Revolt?*

Ultimately, Shorris pinpoints human oppression not in social institutions but in human nature itself, and concludes that *“...the primary task of freedom is no less than for man to overcome his own nature, to do his business in a way befitting a creature capable of transcending himself.”*

His strong point is the analysis of why people go along with the absurdity of modern corporate life. More than most, he has described in detail the mechanisms of domination and control. But in typical liberal and “idealistic”

fashion, he sees the solution in simply thinking:

*“Only in thinking can man recognize his own life. In that alienated moment he is the subject who knows his own subjectivity... Only the thinking subject, who cannot be a means, can know when he has been made a means in spite of himself...”*

When it comes to solutions or recommendations, the only specific suggestion he makes is that managers should see their subordinates as equals in order to see themselves as the equals of their superiors. *“...it requires that a man see himself and all others as subjects, creatures who began the world when they came into it and continue to be potential beginners.”*

But no mention is made of the social system, part of which he has so assiduously taken apart during the book. It's as if he himself cannot identify his own oppressor: *“Without knowledge of their oppressors, men cannot rebel; they float, unable to find anything against which to rebel, incapable of understanding that they are oppressed by the very organization that keeps them afloat.”* We hear nothing of capitalism, wage-labor, the state, or existing social institutions in general, as being at the root of the problems. Instead, he ultimately seeks to explain totalitarianism and corporate life in terms of individual psychology.

Shorris hopes for a world of subjects freely contesting among themselves. This “human condition” is one of constant change and interpersonal conflict. While I agree that perfection in human society is an unattainable and oppressive goal, I think he takes far too fatalistic an attitude about human possibilities. Whereas we might be able to create a society of great material abundance and a lot more fun, with far less work and virtually no coercion, if we can get together enough to organize it, Shorris settles for the discontented, alienated thoughts of the lone thinker.

Changing minds is essential, but changing life takes collective action.

# GRAFFITI

GRAFFITI TATTOOS A CITY  
GIVES ITS RESIDENTS  
BOTH ABOVE AND BELOW  
GROUND A GRAPHIC  
GLIMPSE OF THEMSELVES  
AND EACH OTHER.  
IN THIS LAND IT  
WOULD APPEAR

headlines and advertisements have a constitutional right to clutter the visual environment; they send off whatever signals they can afford, not having to answer for taste or manipulation. Surely with that case, the sidewalks and walls around town—even the state-sanctioned message areas—are at the mercy of we **seeing** passersby.

Not to respond is submission. Scratch the cement while it is wet or you'll have to take a chisel to it later. Why go mad as hell when you can speak your peace on a prime-time bit of sidewalk or billboard?

Postliterate unite! you've only to use your brains.

—by Acteon Blinkage



*"Wer kampf, kann verlieren; Wer nicht kampf, nat schon verloven"*  
 (He who fights may lose; but he who doesn't fight has already lost)  
 Hamburg, W. Germany



*"Pornography is watching"*  
 Red light district, Amsterdam



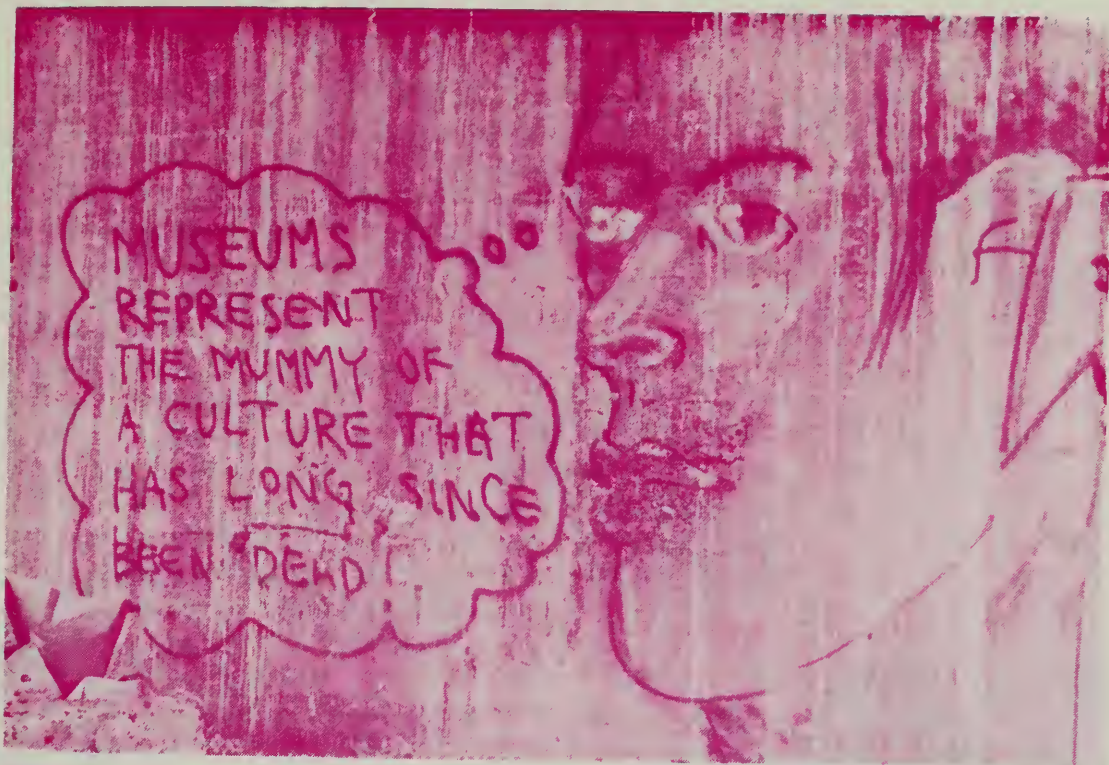
**"You Done Them Chickens  
 WRONG!"**

**CITY CORPSE CENTER**  
 ONE BARBONS STREET  
**CITY  
 CORPSE**

*"Les Syndicats sont flics du patronat"*  
 (The unions are the bosses' pigs)  
 Brussels, Belgium

*"Todt den computerspezialisten"*  
 (Death to computer specialists)  
 Hamburg





*"Selective Service Registration: It's quick, it's easy, and it's a trap for assholes!"*

Berkeley, California

*"Kill Sectarianism, Not Workers"*  
Falls Road, Belfast, N. Ireland

ASSALTE  
BATTERY

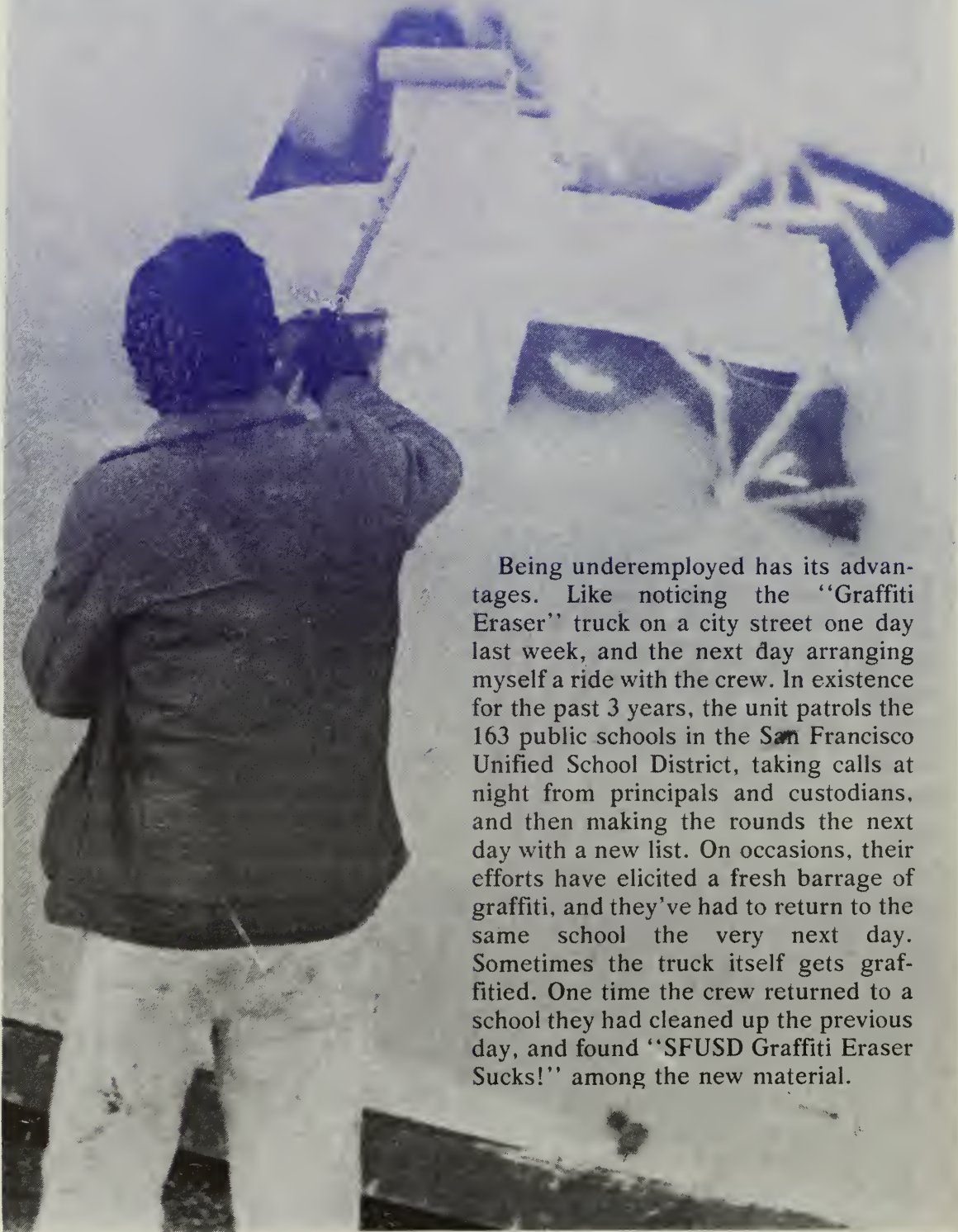
*"La policia con Franco no moria"*  
(The police didn't die with Franco)  
Barcelona, Spain

*It is part of the widespread vandalism,  
the mood to destroy,  
the brutalism that is everywhere.*

—Dr. Frederick Wertham,  
quoted in *The Faith of Grafitti*,  
by Norman Mailer

Vandalism  
is  
destructive

# THE WAR ON GRAFFITI...



Being underemployed has its advantages. Like noticing the "Graffiti Eraser" truck on a city street one day last week, and the next day arranging myself a ride with the crew. In existence for the past 3 years, the unit patrols the 163 public schools in the San Francisco Unified School District, taking calls at night from principals and custodians, and then making the rounds the next day with a new list. On occasions, their efforts have elicited a fresh barrage of graffiti, and they've had to return to the same school the very next day. Sometimes the truck itself gets graffitied. One time the crew returned to a school they had cleaned up the previous day, and found "SFUSD Graffiti Eraser Sucks!" among the new material.

The crew is small; just Cory and Clay. Cory told me I was lucky to get a chance to cruise the city with them. He said that the Dept. of Public Works, with a work crew of 150 and 3 trucks, would never allow it. SFUSD has a total crew of 8 painters and plasterers, and only one truck.

The truck carries a sandblaster, and a myriad of rollers, brushes, ladders and 5-gallon cans of paint of various standard colors to roughly match the colors of most school walls. Spray paint disappears rather easily under a desired color, although white spray paint is the hardest to cover, as it tends to show through. Permanent magic markers are the biggest nightmare for a graffiti eraser; they show through any kind of paint, and require a primary coat of pigmented shellack which must then dry before the wall can be painted. Lacquer thinner and alcohol work to remove graffiti from metal and glass, and a product called Brulin Graffiti Remover is also used. It works like paint and varnish remover, and sometimes turns plexiglass white. Although bare concrete walls and sidewalks are sandblasted to get rid of graffiti, smart graffiti bandits seal their graffiti with a

silicon gel; especially effective on porous concrete surfaces, like sidewalks; to make the surface hard like glass, and resist sandblasting. The silicon gel is also effective for sealing graffiti on glass and metal surfaces. I asked about a special urethane varnish recently developed, celebrated for its ability to make walls graffiti-resistant. It creates a clear plastic coating like formica, and graffiti washes right off. Clay told me it's true that the graffiti washes off, but it requires substantial effort and the coating wears off after about two years.

"Graffiti erasing is a perpetual job," Clay says, and graffiti in the public schools is on the rise. They used to have a list of about 35 schools that they would patrol once a week, but now the situation has gotten so bad that they're swamped with calls everyday and no longer have time to patrol. When I asked why they thought that schoolkids do so much graffiti, Clay responded that they do so out of a need for some form of expression, and agreed that kids are denied that opportunity in other aspects of school experience.

—Zoe Noe



# Mind Games



Graphic by Joe Schwind



The world of artificial intelligence research can be divided up a lot of different ways, but the most obvious split is between researchers interested in being god and researchers interested in being rich. The members of the first group, the AI "scientists," lend the discipline its special charm. They want to study intelligence, both human and "pure" by simulating it on machines. But it's the ethos of the second group, the "engineers," that dominates today's AI establishment. It's their accomplishments that have allowed AI to shed its reputation as a "scientific con game" (*Business Week*) and to become as it was recently described in *Fortune* magazine, "the biggest technology craze since genetic engineering."

The engineers like to bask in the reflected glory of the AI scientists, but they tend to be practical men, well-schooled in the priorities of economic society. They too worship at the church of machine intelligence, but only on Sundays. During the week, they work the rich lodes of "expert systems" technology, building systems without claims to consciousness, but able to simulate human skills in economically significant knowledge-based occupations. (The AI market is now expected to reach \$2.8 billion by 1990. AI stocks are growing at an annual rate of 30%.)

### "Expert" Systems

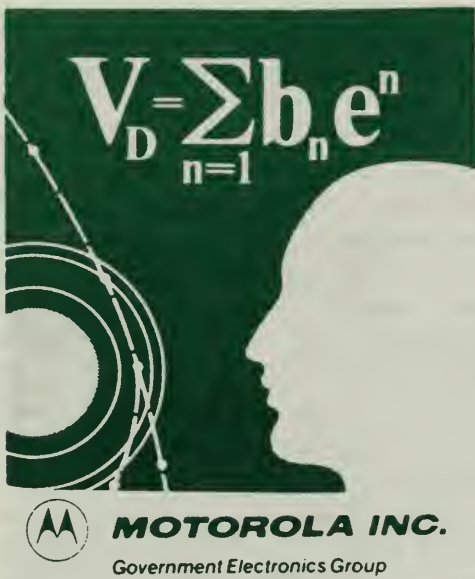
Occupying the attention of both AI engineers and profit-minded entrepreneurs are the so-called "expert systems." (An expert is a person with a mature, practiced knowledge of some limited aspect of the world. Expert systems, computer programs with no social experience, cannot really be expert at anything; they can have no mature, practiced knowledge. But in the anthropomorphized language of AI, where words like "expert," "understanding," and "intelligence" are used with astounding—and self-serving—naivete, accuracy will not do. Mystification is good for business.)

Expert systems typically consist of two parts: the "knowledge base" or "rule base," which describes some little corner of the world—some "domain" or "microworld"; and the "inference engine," which climbs around in the knowledge base looking for connections and correspondences. "The primary source of power...is informal reasoning based on extensive knowledge painstakingly culled from human experts," explained Doug Lenat in an article that appeared in *Scientific American* in Sept. '84. "In most of the programs the knowledge is encoded in the forms of hundreds of if-then rules of thumb, or heuristics. The rules constrain search by guiding the program's attention towards the most likely solutions. Moreover...expert systems are able to explain all their inferences in terms a human will accept. The explanation can be provided because decisions are based on rules taught by human experts rather than the abstract rules of formal logic."

The excitement about expert systems (and the venture capital) is rooted in the economic significance of these "structural selection problems." Expert systems are creatures of microworlds, and the hope is that they'll soon negotiate these microworlds well enough to effectively replace human beings.

Some recent expert systems, and their areas or expertise, are CADUCEUS II (medical diagnosis), PROSPECTOR (geological analysis), CATS-1 (locomotive trouble shooting), DIPMETER adviser (sample oil well analysis), and R1/XCON-XSEL (computer system sales support and configuration.) Note that the kinds of things they do are all highly technical, involve lots of facts, and are clearly isolated from the ambiguities of the social world.

Such isolation is the key. If our sloppy social universe can be "rationalized" into piles of predictable little microworlds, then it will be amenable to knowledge-based computerization. Like automated teller machines, expert systems may soon be everywhere:



- In financial services like personal financial planning, insurance underwriting, and investment portfolio analysis. (This is an area where yuppie jobs may soon be under direct threat.)

- In medicine, as doctors get used to using systems like HELP and CADUCEUS II as interactive encyclopedias and diagnostic aids. These systems will also be a great boon to lawyers specializing in malpractice suits.

- In equipment maintenance and diagnosis. "Expert [systems] are great at diagnosis," said one GE engineer. In addition to locomotives, susceptible systems include printed circuit boards, telephone cables, jet engines, and cars.

- In manufacturing. "Expert systems can help plan, schedule, and control the production process, monitor and replenish inventories..., diagnose malfunctions and alert proper parties about the problem." (*Infosystems*, Aug. '83).

- In military and counterintelligence, especially as aids for harried technicians trying to cope with information overload.

### But Do They Work?

If these systems work, or if they can be made to work, then we might be willing to agree with the AI hype that the "second computer revolution" may indeed be the "important one." But do

they work, and, if so, in what sense?

Many expert systems have turned out to be quite fallible. "The majority of AI programs existing today don't work," a Silicon Valley hacker told me flatly, "and the majority of people engaged in AI research are hucksters. They're not serious people. They've got a nice wagon and they're gonna ride it. They're not even seriously interested in the programs anymore."

*Fortune* magazine is generally more supportive, though it troubles itself, in its latest AI article, published last August, to backpeddle on some of its own inflated claims of several years ago. Referring to PROSPECTOR, one of the six or so expert systems always cited as evidence that human expertise can be successfully codified in sets of rules, *Fortune* asserted that PROSPECTOR's achievements aren't all they've been cracked up to be: "In fact, the initial discovery of molybdenum [touted as PROSPECTOR's greatest feat] was made by humans, though PROSPECTOR later found more ore."

Still, despite scattered discouraging words from expert critics, the AI engineers are steaming full speed ahead. Human Edge software in Palo Alto is already marketing "life-strategy" aids for insecure moderns: NEGOTIATION EDGE to help you psych out your opponent on the corporate battlefield, SALES EDGE to help you close that big deal, MANAGEMENT EDGE to help you manipulate your employees. All are based on something called "human factors analysis."

And beyond the horizon, there's the blue sky. Listen to Ronald J. Brachman, head of knowledge representation and reasoning research at Fairchild Camera and Instrument Corporation: "Wouldn't it be nice if...instead of writing ideas down I spoke into my little tape recorder...It thinks for a few minutes, then it realizes that I've had the same thought a couple of times in the past few months. It says, 'Maybe you're on to something.'" One won-

ders what the head of knowledge engineering at one of the biggest military contractors in Silicon Valley might be on to. But I suppose that's besides the point, which is to show the dreams of AI "engineers" fading off into the myths of the AI "scientists"—those who would be rich regarding those who would be god. Mr. Brachman's little assistant is no mere expert system; it not only speaks natural English, it understands that English well enough to recognize two utterances as being about the same thing even when spoken in different contexts. And it can classify and cross-classify new thoughts, thoughts which it can **itself** recognize as interesting and original. Perhaps, unlike Mr. Brachman, it'll someday wonder what it's doing at Fairchild.

### Machines Can't Talk

The Artificial Intelligence program at UC Berkeley is trying to teach computers to do things like recognizing a face in a crowd, or carrying on a coherent conversation in a "natural" language like English or Japanese. Without such everyday abilities—abilities so basic we take them completely for granted—how could we be said to be intelligent at all? Likewise machines?

The culture of AI encourages a firm, even snide, conviction that it's just a matter of time. It thrives on exaggeration, and refuses to examine its own failures. Yet there are plenty. Take the understanding of "natural languages" (as opposed to formal languages like FORTRAN or PASCAL.) Humans do it effortlessly, but AI programs still can't—even after thirty years of hacking. Overconfident pronouncements that "natural language understanding is just around the corner" were common in the 50's, but repeated failure led to declines in funding, accusations of fraud, and widespread disillusionment.

((Today's AI businessmen are again claiming an imminent solution. In the November issue of **Datamation**, directly across from an excellent article entitled

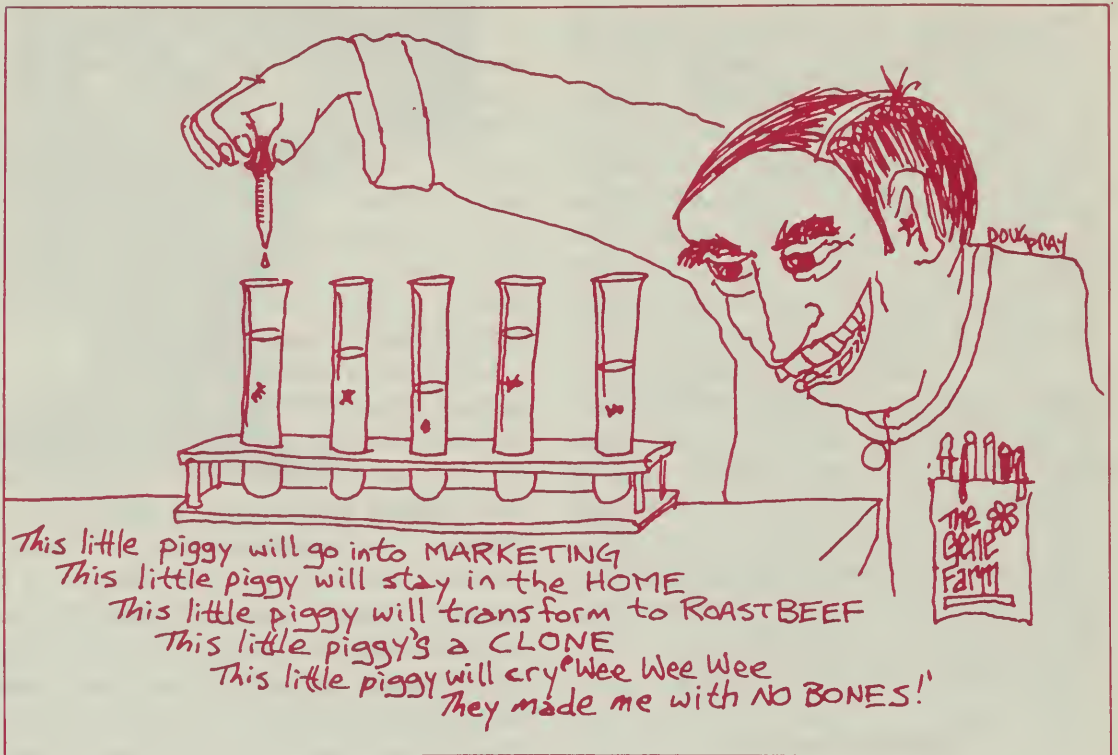
"The Overselling of Expert Systems," lies a full page ad for a microcomputer-based system that "speaks English." Oh? One wonders, then, what Stanford will be doing with all the megabucks it just received to study "situated language" [language in context]. With all the money to be made of AI hype, there's a real chance of an embarrassing history repeating itself.)

Machine translation floundered because natural language is **essentially**—not incidentally—ambiguous; meaning always depends on context. My favorite example is the classic, "I like her cooking," a statement likely to be understood differently if the speaker is a cannibal rather than a middle American. Everyday language is pervaded by unconscious metaphor, as when one says, 'I lost two hours trying to get my meaning across.' Virtually every word has an open-ended field of meanings that shade gradually from those that seem utterly literal to those that are clearly metaphorical." In order to translate a text, the computer must first "understand" it.

### TA For Computers

Obviously AI scientists have a long way to go, but most see no intrinsic limits to machine understanding. UCB proceeds by giving programs "knowledge" about situations which they can





then use to “understand” texts of various kinds.

Yale students have built a number of “story understanding systems,” the most striking of which is “IPP,” a system which uses knowledge of terrorism to read news stories, learn from them, and answer questions about them. It can even make generalizations: Italian terrorists tend to kidnap businessmen; IRA terrorists are more likely to send letter bombs.

How much can we expect a program like IPP to learn? How long will it be before its “understanding” can be “generalized” from the microworld of terrorism to human life as a whole? In what sense can it be said to understand terrorism at all, if it cannot also understand misery, violence, and the politics of frustration? If it isn’t really understanding anything, then what exactly is it doing, and what would it mean for it to do it better? Difficult questions these.

The foundation stone of this ‘IPP’ school of AI is the “script.” Remember the script? Remember that particularly mechanistic pop psychology called “Transactional Analysis”? It too was based upon the notion of scripts, and

the similarity is more than metaphorical.

In TA, a “script” is a series of habitual stereotyped responses that we unconsciously “run” like tapes as we stumble through life. Thus if someone we know acts helpless and hurt, we might want to “rescue” them because we have been “programmed” by our life experience to do so.

In the AI universe the word “script” is used in virtually the same way, to denote a standard set of expectations about a stereotyped situation that we use to guide our perceptions and responses. When we enter a restaurant we unconsciously refer to a restaurant script, which tells us what to do—sit down and wait for a waiter, order, eat, pay before leaving, etc. The restaurant is treated as a microworld, and the script guides the interpretation of events within it; once a script has been locked in, then the context is known, and the ambiguity tamed.

But while behavior in a restaurant may be more or less a matter of routine, what about deciding which restaurant to go to? Or whether to go to a restaurant at all? Or recognizing a restaurant when

you see one? These problems aren't always easy for humans, and their solution requires more than the use of scripts. In fact, the research going on at Berkeley is specifically aimed at going beyond script-bound systems, by constructing programs that have "goals" and make "plans" to achieve those goals. Grad students even torture their programs by giving them multiple conflicting goals, and hacking at them until they can satisfy them all.

### Anti-AI

The academic zone of AI is called "cognitive studies." At UC Berkeley, however, cognitive studies is **not** just AI; the program is interdisciplinary and includes philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists, and linguists. (The neurophysiologists, I was told, have their own problems.) Specifically, it includes Hubert Dreyfus and John Searle, two of the most persistent critics of the whole AI enterprise. If Cal hasn't yet made it onto the AI map (and it hasn't), it's probably fair to say that it's still the capital of the anti-AI forces, a status it first earned in 1972 with the publication of Dreyfus's **What Computers Can't Do**.

Dreyfus thinks he's winning. In the revised edition of his book, published in 1979, he claimed that "there is now general agreement that...intelligence requires understanding, and understanding requires giving the computer the background of common sense that adult human beings have by virtue of having bodies, interacting skillfully in the material world, and being trained into a culture."

In the real world of AI, Dreyfus's notion of being "trained into a culture" is so far beyond the horizon as to be inconceivable. Far from having societies, and thus learning from each other, today's AI programs rarely even learn for themselves. There may finally be some exceptions, like Doug Lenart's EURISKO, but most program start from scratch, with only what the programmers and knowledge engineers have

given them, each time they're turned on.

Few AI scientists would accept Dreyfus's claim that real machine intelligence requires not only learning, but bodies and culture as well. Most of them agree, in principle if not in prose, with their high priest, MIT's Marvin Minsky. Minsky believes that the body is "a tele-operator for the brain," and the brain, in turn, a "meat machine."

### The Dark Side of AI

"Technical people rely upon their ties with power because it is access to that power, with its huge resources, that allows them to dream, the assumption of that power that encourages them to dream in an expansive fashion, and the reality of that power that brings their dreams to life."

—David Noble,  
**The Forces of Production**

As fascinating as the debates within AI have become in recent years, one can't help but notice the small role they allocate to social considerations. Formal methods have come under attack, but generally in an abstract fashion. That the prestige of these methods might exemplify some imbalance in our relationship to science, some dark side of science itself, or even some large social malevolence—these are thoughts rarely heard even among the critics of scientific arrogance.

For that reason, we must now drop from the atmospherics of AI research to the charred fields of earth. The abruptness of the transition can't be avoided: science cloaks itself in wonder, indeed it provides its own mythology, yet behind that mythology are always the prosaic realities of social life.

When the first industrial revolution was still picking up steam, Fredrick Taylor invented "time/motion" study, a discipline predicated on the realization that skill-based manufacturing could be redesigned to eliminate the skill—and with it the autonomy—of the

worker. The current AI expert systems' insight that much of human skill can be extracted by knowledge engineers, codified into rules and heuristics, and immortalized on magnetic disks is essentially the same.

Once manufacturing could be "rationalized," automation became not only possible, but in the eyes of the faithful, necessary. It also turned out to be terrifically difficult, for reality was more complex than the visions of the engineers. Workers, it turned out, had lots of "implicit skills" that the time/motion men hadn't taken into account. Think of these skills as the ones managers and engineers can't see. They're not in the formal job description, yet without them the wheels would grind to a halt. And they've constituted an important barrier to total automation: there must be a human machinist around to ease the pressure on the lathe when an anomalous cast comes down the line, to "work around" the unevenness of nature; bosses must have secretaries, to correct their English if for no other reason.

Today's latest automation craze, "adaptive control," is intended to continue the quest for the engineer's grail—the total elimination of human labor. To that end the designers of factory automation systems are trying to substitute delicate feedback mechanisms, sophisticated sensors, and even AI for the human skills that remain in the work process.

Looking back on industrial automation, David Nobel remarked that "Men behaving like machines paved the way for machines without men." By that measure, we must assume ourselves well on the way to a highly automated society. By and large, work will resist total automation—in spite of the theological ideal of a totally automated factory, some humans will remain—but there's no good reason to doubt that the trend towards mechanization will continue. Among the professions, automation will sometimes be hard to see, hidden within the increasing sophistica-

tion of tools still nominally wielded by men and women. But paradoxically, the automation of mental labor may, in many cases, turn out to be easier than the automation of manual labor. Computers are, after all, ideally suited to the manipulation of symbols, far more suited than one of today's primitive robots to the manipulation of things. The top tier of our emerging two-tier society may eventually turn out to be a lot smaller than many imagine.

As AI comes to be the basis of a new wave of automation, a wave that will sweep the professionals up with the manual workers, we're likely to see new kinds of resistance developing. We know that there's already been some, for DEC (Digital Equipment Corporation), a company with an active program of internal AI-based automation, has been strangely public about the problems it has encountered. Arnold Kraft, head of corporate AI marketing at DEC: "I fought resistance to our VAX-configuration project tooth and nail every day. Other individuals in the company will look at AI and be scared of it. They say, 'AI is going to take my job. Where am I? I am not going to use this. Go away!' Literally, they say 'Go Away!'" (**Computer Decisions**, August 1984.)

Professionals rarely have such foresight, though we may hope to see this change in the years ahead. Frederick Hayes-Roth, chief scientist at Teknowledge, a Palo Alto-based firm, with a reputation for preaching the true gospel of AI, put it this way: "The first sign of machine displacement of human professionals is standardization of the professional's methodology. Professional work generally resists standardization and integration. Over time, however, standard methods of adequate efficiency often emerge." More specifically: "Design, diagnosis, process control, and flying are tasks that seem most susceptible to the current capabilities of knowledge systems. They are composed largely of sensor interpretation (excepting design), of symbolic reasoning, and

of heuristic planning—all within the purview of knowledge systems. The major obstacles to automation involving these jobs will probably be the lack of standardized notations and instrumentation, and, particularly, in the case of pilots, professional resistance.” Hayes-Roth is, of course, paid to be optimistic, but still, he predicts “fully automated air-traffic control” by 1990-2000. Too bad about PATCO.

### Automating The Military

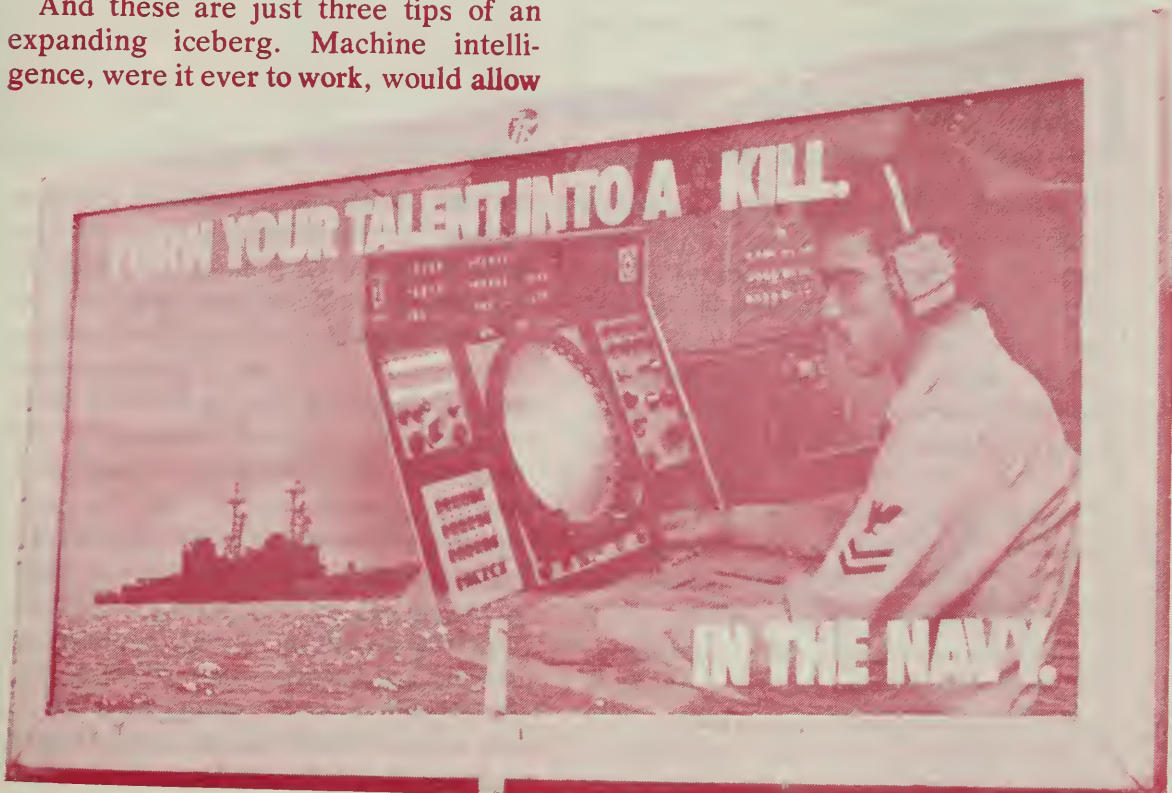
On October 28, 1983, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) announced the **Strategic Computing Initiative** (SCI), launching a five-year, \$600-million program to harness AI to military purposes. The immediate goals of the program are “autonomous tanks” (killer robots for the Army, a “pilot’s associate” for the Air Force, and “intelligent battle management systems” for the Navy. If things go according to plan, all will be built with the new gallium arsenide technology, which, unlike silicon, is radiation resistant. The better to fight a protracted nuclear war with, my dear.

And these are just three tips of an expanding iceberg. Machine intelligence, were it ever to work, would allow

the military to switch over to autonomous and semi-autonomous systems capable of managing the ever-increasing speed and complexity of “modern” warfare. **Defense Electronics** recently quoted Robert Kahn, director of information processing technology at DARPA, as saying that “within five years, we will see the services start clamoring for AI.”

High on the list of military programs slated to benefit from the SCI is Reagan’s proposed “Star Wars” system, a ballistic missile “defense” apparatus which would require highly automated, virtually autonomous military satellites able to act quickly enough to knock out Soviet missiles in their “boost” phase, before they release their warheads. Such a system would be equivalent to automated launch-on-warning; its use would be an act of war.

Would the military boys be dumb enough to hand over control to a computer? Well, consider this excerpt from a congressional hearing on Star Wars, as quoted in the LA Times on April 26, 1984:



At that, Sen. Paul Tsongas exploded: "Perhaps we should run R2-D2 for President in the 1990s. At least he'd be on line all the time."

"Has anyone told the President that he's out of the decision making process?" Tsongas demanded.

"I certainly haven't, Kenworth (Reagan science advisor) said.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden pressed the issue over whether an error might provoke the Soviets to launch a real attack. "Let's assume the President himself were to make a mistake..." he said.

"Why?" interrupted Cooper [head of DARPA]. "We might have the technology so he couldn't make a mistake."

"OK," said Biden. "You've convinced me. You've convinced me that I don't want you running this program."

But his replacement, were Cooper to lose his job, would more than likely worship at the same church. His faith in the perfectability of machine intelligence is a common canon of AI. This is not the hard-headed realism of sober military men, compelled by harsh reality to extreme measures. It is rather the dangerous fantasy of powerful men

overcome by their own mythologies, mythologies which flourish in the super-heated rhetoric of the AI culture.

The military is a bureaucracy like any other, so it's not surprising to find that its top level planners suffer the same engineer's ideology of technical perfectability as do their civilian counterparts. Likewise, we can expect resistance to AI-based automation from military middle-management. Already there are signs of it. Gary Martins, a military AI specialist, from an interview in **Defense Electronics** (Jan. '83): "Machines that appear to threaten the autonomy and integrity of commanders cannot expect easy acceptance; it would be disastrous to introduce them by fiat. We should be studying how to design military management systems that reinforce, rather than undermine, the status and functionality of their middle-level users."

One noteworthy thing about some "user interfaces": Each time the system refers to its knowledge-base it uses the idiom "you taught me" to alert the operator. This device was developed for the MYCIN system, an expert on infectious diseases, in order to overcome resistance from doctors. It reappears unchanged, in a system designed for tank warfare management in Europe. A fine example of what political scientist Harold Laski had in mind when he noted that "in the new warfare the engineering factory is a unit of the Army, and the worker may be in uniform without being aware of it."

Overdesigned and unreliable technologies, when used for manufacturing, can lead to serious social and economic problems. But such "baroque" technologies, integrated into nuclear war fighting systems, would be absurdly dangerous. For this reason, Computer Professionals For Social Responsibility has stressed the "inherent limits of computer reliability" in its attacks on the SCI. The authors of **Strategic Computing, an Assessment**, assert, "In terms of their fundamental limitations, AI systems are no different than other





## CAREFREE Mind-Liners

For those daze when too much  
**STRESS**  
causes breakthrough Thinking!!

CAREFREE  
FREE



computer systems... The hope that AI could cope with uncertainty is understandable, since there is no doubt that they are more flexible than traditional computer systems. It is understandable, but it is wrong."

Unfortunately, all indications are that, given the narrowing time-frames of modern warfare, the interplay between technological and bureaucratic competition, and the penetration of the engineers' ideology into the military ranks, we can expect the Pentagon to increasingly rely on high technology, including AI, as a "force and intelligence multiplier." The TERCOM guidance system in Cruise Missiles, for example, is based directly on AI pattern

matching techniques. The end result will likely be an incredibly complex, poorly tested, hair-trigger amalgamation of over-advertised computer technology and overkill nuclear arsenals. Unfortunately, the warheads themselves, unlike the systems within which they will be embedded, can be counted upon to work.

And the whole military AI program is only a subset of a truly massive thrust for military computation of all sorts: a study by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment found that in 1983 the Defense Dept. accounted for 69% of the basic research in electrical engineering and 54.8% of research in computer science. The DOD's domi-

nance was even greater in applied research, in which it paid for 90.5% of research in electrical engineering and 86.7% of research in computer sciences.

### Defensive Rationalizations

There are many liberals, even left-liberals, in the AI community, but few of them have rebelled against the SCI. Why? To some degree because of the Big Lie of "national defense," but there are other reasons given as well:

- Many of them don't really think this stuff will work anyway.
- Some of them will only do basic research, which "will be useful to civilians as well."
- Most of them believe that the military will get whatever it wants anyway.
- All of them need jobs.

The first reason seems peculiar to AI, but perhaps I'm naive. Consider, though, the second. Bob Wilinsky, a professor at UC Berkeley: "DOD money comes in different flavors. I have 6.1 money... it's really pure research. It goes all the way up to 6.13, which is, like, procurement for bombs. Now Strategic Computing is technically listed as a 6.2 activity [applied research], but what'll happen is, there'll be people in the business world that'll say 'OK, killer robots, we don't care,' and there'll be people in industry that say, 'OK, I want to make a LISP machine that's 100 times faster than the ones we have today. I'm not gonna make one special for tanks or anything.' So the work tends to get divided up."

Actually, it sounds more like a cooperative effort. The liberal scientists draw the line at basic research; they won't work on tanks, but they're willing to help provide what the anti-military physicist Bruno Vitale calls a "rich technological menu," a menu immediately scanned by the iron men of the Pentagon.

Anti-military scientists have few choices. They can restrict themselves to basic research, and even indulge the

illusion that they no longer contribute to the war machine. Or they can grasp for the straws of socially useful applications: AI assisted medicine, space research, etc. Whatever they choose, they have not escaped the web that binds science to the military. The military fate of the space shuttle program demonstrates this well enough. In a time when the military has come to control so much of the resources of civil society, the only way for a scientist to opt out is by quitting the priesthood altogether, and this is no easy decision.

But let's assume, for the sake of conversation, that we don't have to worry about militarism, or unemployment, or industrial automation. Are we then free to return to our technological delirium?

Unfortunately, there's another problem, a problem for which AI itself is almost the best metaphor. Think of the images it invokes, of the blurring of the line between humanity and machinery from which the idea of AI derives its evocative power. Think of yourself as a machine. Or better, think of society as a machine—fixed, programmed, rigid.

WHY DO YOU  
SUPPOSE  
THE ...

TOMAHAWK

CRUISE MISSILE  
PROGRAM HAS SELECTED  
BREEZE-ILLINOIS CABLES  
FOR ITS ELECTRICAL  
INTERCONNECTIONS?

The second problem is bureaucracy, the programmed society, the computer state, 1984.

Of course, not everyone's worried. The dystopia of 1984 is balanced, in the popular mind, by the utopia of flexible, decentralized, and now intelligent computers. The unexamined view that micro-computers will automatically lead to "electronic democracy" is so common that it's hard to cross the street without stepping in it. And most computer scientists tend to agree, at least in principle. Bob Wilinsky, for example, believes that the old nightmare of the computer state is rooted in an archaic technology, and that "as computers get more intelligent we'll be able to have a more flexible bureaucracy as opposed to a more rigid bureaucracy..."

Utopian may not be the right word for such attitudes. The utopians were well-meaning and generally powerless; the spokesmen of progress are neither. Scientists like Wilinsky are well-funded and often quoted, and if the information age has a dark side, they have a special responsibility to bring it out. It is through them that we encounter these new machines, and the stories they choose to tell us will deeply color our images of the future. Their optimism is too convenient; we have the right to ask for a deeper examination.

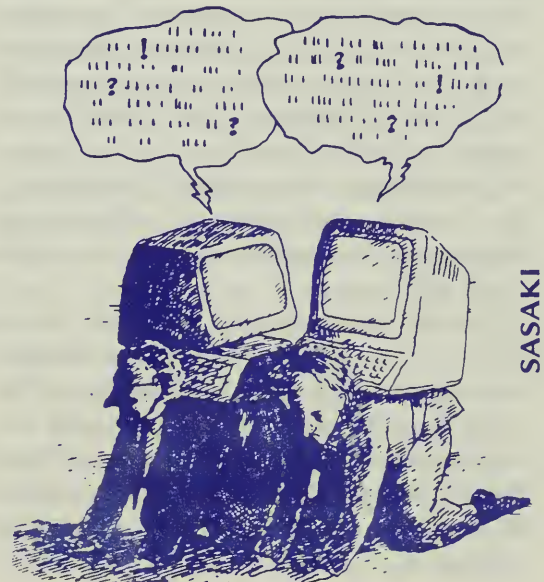
### Machine Society

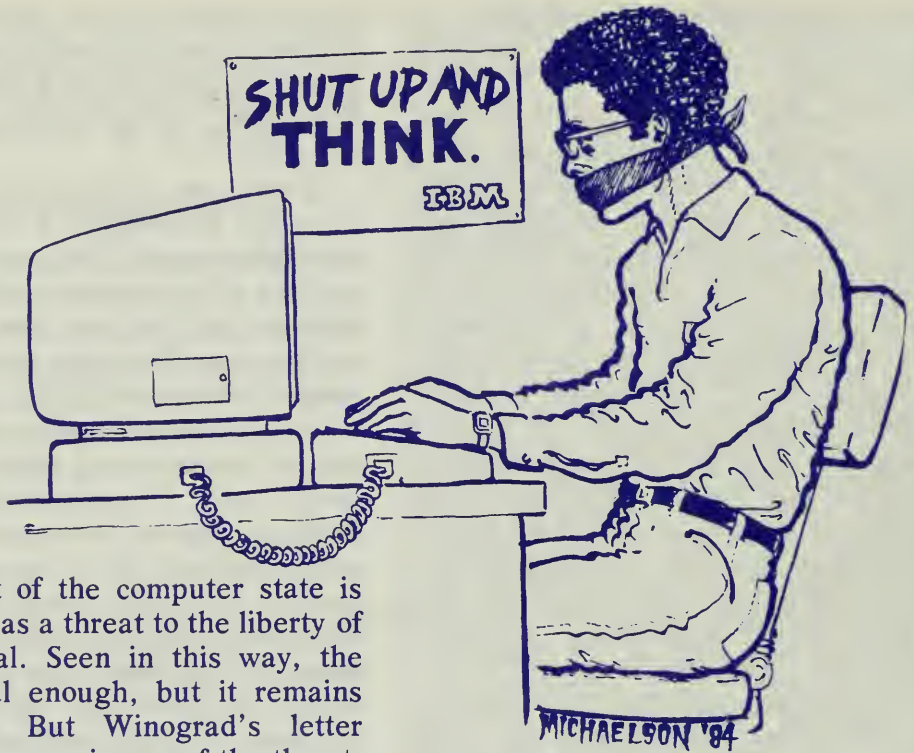
Imagine yourself at a bank, frustrated, up against some arbitrary rule or procedure. Told that "the computer can't do it," you will likely give up. "What's happened here is a shifting of the sense of who is responsible for policy, who is responsible for decisions, away from some person or group of people who actually are responsible in the social sense, to some inanimate object in which their decisions have been embodied." Or as Emerson put it, "things are in the saddle, and ride men."

Now consider the bureaucracy of the future, where regulation books have

been replaced by an integrated information system, a system that has been given language. Terry Winograd, an AI researcher, quotes from a letter he received:

"From my point of view natural language processing is unethical, for one main reason. It plays on the central position which language holds in human behavior. I suggest that the deep involvement Weizenbaum found some people have with ELIZA [a program which imitates a Rogerian therapist] is due to the intensity with which most people react to language in any form. When a person receives a linguistic utterance in any form, the person reacts much as a dog reacts to an odor. We are creatures of language. Since this is so, it is my feeling that baiting people with strings of characters, clearly intended by someone to be interpreted as symbols, is as much a misrepresentation as would be your attempt to sell me property for which you had a false deed. In both cases an attempt is being made to encourage someone to believe that something is a thing other than what it is, and only one party in the interaction is aware of the deception. I will put it a lot stronger: from my point of view, encouraging people to regard machine generated strings of tokens as linguistic utterances, is criminal, and should be treated as criminal activity."





The threat of the computer state is usually seen as a threat to the liberty of the individual. Seen in this way, the threat is real enough, but it remains manageable. But Winograd's letter describes a deeper image of the threat. Think of it not as the vulnerability of individuals, but rather as a decisive shift in social power from individuals to institutions. The shift began long ago, with the rise of hierarchy and class. It was formalized with the establishment of the bureaucratic capitalist state, and now we can imagine its apotheosis. Bureaucracy has always been seen as machine society; soon the machine may find its voice.

We are fascinated by AI because, like genetic engineering, it is a truly Promethean science. As such, it reveals the mythic side of all science. And the myth, in being made explicit, reveals the dismal condition of the institution of science itself. Shamelessly displaying its pretensions, the artificial intelligentia reveals as well a self-serving naivete, and an embarrassing entanglement with power.

On the surface, the myth of AI is about the joy of creation, but a deeper reading forces joy to the margins. The myth finally emerges as a myth of domination, in which we wake to find that our magnificent tools have built us an "iron cage," and that we are trapped.

Science is a flawed enterprise. It has brought us immense powers over the physical world, but is itself servile in the face of power. Wanting no limits on its freedom to dream, it shrouds itself in myth and ideology, and counsels us to use its powers unconsciously. It has not brought us wisdom.

Or perhaps the condition of science merely reflects the condition of humanity. Narrow-mindedness, arrogance, servility in the face of power—these are attributes of human beings, not of tools. And science is, after all, only a tool.

Many people, when confronted with AI, are offended. They see its goal as an insult to their human dignity, a dignity they see as bound up with human uniqueness. In fact, intelligence can be found throughout nature, and is not unique to us at all. And perhaps someday, if we're around, we'll find it can emerge from semiconductors as well as from amino acids. In the meantime we'd best seek dignity elsewhere. Getting control of our tools, and the institutions which shape them, is a good place to start.

—by Tom Athanasiou

# Once More Unto The Bridge, Dear Friends

*Apologies to W. Shakespeare*



Between Oakland and San Francisco there stretches an 8 mile long ribbon of steel and concrete called the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, or the "Bay Bridge." It has two decks—one East and one West, each of them with 5 lanes. It is well lighted, has emergency phones, railings, etc. It is my nemesis.

This is the tale of a courier, or officially an "Outside Document Handling Clerk." I'm not sure what the 'outside' refers to. I drove a Chevy van across the Bridge 5 times a day, rain or shine. Monday, Wednesday and Friday I started at 10:00 AM, the other two days at noon. With luck I could be punching out by 9:00 PM. I was salaried (about \$750 take-home), no overtime, little insurance (workman's comp), no union, no "ins" with the cops, no advancement.

The route was: Downtown SF, Port of Oakland, Hunter's Point SF, downtown SF, downtown Oakland, downtown SF, downtown Oakland, Port of Oakland, downtown SF, downtown Oakland, Port of Oakland, Downtown Oakland, South San Francisco, downtown SF, SFO (airport), Burlingame, San Leandro, downtown Oakland, downtown SF, clock out.

I worked for a company which had contracts with shipping companies and various freight brokers to move

documents around. About half of my fellow serfs were bike messengers and the rest were drivers. There were two bosses—"Glenn Hires, Harry Fires." We worked out of a basement in a brick building in the landfill area of SF's financial district. We had a set daily route; I was responsible for moving the paper of one of the largest west coast shipping lines—American President Lines. They had a contract with my boss to avoid paying in-house (union) workers. More than half of my day was spent going between the company's main offices; the port facilities, the freight cashier in SF, the warehouse, and the Hunter's Point Shipyard where they were having some of the rust-buckets refurbished (said one worker "You couldn't pay me to go out of the Bay on one of those"). At night I made a run to South San Francisco to Federal Express, and later in the night to the airport and south to Burlingame to a huge liquor warehouse and some freight types, then across the bay to the Monkey Wards warehouse, and then back to the APL stuff.

I liked: the bay and the chance to meet lots of people: clerks, teamsters, longshoremen, other drivers, airport workers, shipyard workers, secretaries, and even bosses. I also liked not having a supervisor looming over my shoulder

at unannounced intervals. The weather was lovely, as were the lights of the city. I liked being able to smoke a joint and listen to the radio (I once heard an AM radio station play John Coltrane while the sun was out!). I liked the challenge.

I didn't like: cabbies, cops, shitty drivers (lots of all of these), rain, the Bridge, Friday traffic, unreal demands on time, bitchy secretaries and truculent assholes.

It was an odd job; mostly boring—driving or waiting around for some clown. Sometimes I was frustrated; waiting for the one elevator that goes to the underworld—those basements and loading docks that most people never see, or waiting for the traffic to sort itself out. Some of it was aggravating—jerks that play games to get themselves a whole 10 feet farther ahead (look, I move stuff that has deadlines like planes departing and I don't do this shit—what's so important?). At times it was funny, like the three times I saw people run into police cars. Occasionally there were moments of sheer terror—pedestrians that appeared out of nowhere, being rear-ended on the bridge, that sort of thing.

Everybody can have a bad day, but for those of us who get to romp on the highways and byways of the U.S. a bad day can be remarkably grim. I was blown from one lane to another one night on the Bay Bridge. Just your basic "whoosh" and you're going down the road another 12 feet to your left. One of the women who worked for us had the steering wheel come off in her hand while doing an offramp in Oakland. A bike messenger tangled with a Muni bus and lost; he didn't die though, the driver felt it going over his bike and stopped. The boss saw it happen, picked him up out of the gutter, ascertained that he was unhurt, bought him a drink and fired him. He was lucky. So was Tim, who came in one day quite pale, and sat shaking for a while before explaining that his front tire had been

caught in the cablecar slot while descending California Street. He could'nt slow down much—fortunately a car saw him coming, and got out of the way! (un milagro!) Tim paused and said "You could get hurt doing this..."

It was interesting meeting other messengers—the bikers have the toughest job and the most style. The howling biker, topped with a beanie with a propeller, was one of my favorites. I always wondered about this heavysset middle aged guy in a quasi-military uniform who pedaled a three wheeler and was always unfriendly. I was later told that he had been in the USAF and had flown too high without an oxygen mask and was not so good as a pilot after that.

I got to know a few people from other companies whose schedules overlapped with mine. I fell in love with some—Mary, whom I met at the airport on Wednesday evenings, who had a bad attitude; and Claire, a pretty night supe at APL—a reasonable, friendly person. There were mail drivers and other drivers that I met daily. Most of the people that I got to know were underlings like me. Clerks, secretaries, mailroom types, drivers and guards. Most of them were OK to work with—they had job to do, knew it and weren't trying to mess you up. One exception was this fat night supervisor (Brenda at APL) who interpreted a schedule that said "No later than 9:30 pm" as meaning no earlier than 9:30 pm. I eventually got a deal worked out with the big bad Brenda which left me departing at 9:00. It was the last stop in a long day and I can assure that the personnel at EDS didn't give a rat's ass.

There were inevitable problems: mechanical breakdowns (rare); screw-ups on actually getting a vehicle, or getting one with no frills (one with windows and a radio rated very high); impossible stops jammed into your route; cab drivers (they run on oil and gas, serve money, and have to do the stupidest things);

pugnacious idiots, for whom I carried a tire iron under the front seat: I only had to wave it a couple of times.

Two incidents of idiocy stand out. In Oakland as I was to make a right turn on a crowded street this clown in a white caddy stopped at the corner ahead of me let his friend out. People honked. As he eased forward, still talking to his friend, I passed him, Flipping the Famous Finger. About four blocks later he pulled up next to me. He leaned over and shouted some shit about “You can’t talk to me like that you fuckin’ bastard” and then hurled his Coke at me: He hit the inside of his car, splashing sugary treacle shit all over his nice white caddy. The light changed and I drove on, laughing so hard that I couldn’t breathe. Dumb fucker.

The second incident was not as funny since somebody got hurt. As I was pounding down Battery one night I was delayed by this guy driving down the middle of two lanes at about 9 mph. I flashed my lights, honked, and applied cheerful anglosaxon expletives to his wretched ancestors. When I passed him he of course speeded up to prevent it. Since I didn’t drive my own car I didn’t care and jammed on past. At the next light he roared up on my left and leaned past his female friend and started cussing me. I laughed at his posturing, clownish machismo, so he pulled a knife and waved it at me. He then dropped it into the leg of his companion, who screamed. The light changed and I drove on, shaking my head at the idiot americans. Why do they act this way? I know my story—a tight schedule and an asshole boss who wouldn’t take ‘no’ for an answer; if I didn’t make it on time I’m fired. What is the problem with these gringos? Cab drivers are driven to it by their cargo; ‘civilians’ don’t have any such excuse.



There were also abuses that weren’t inevitable. Cop stupidity for one. There was a fair amount of that. Abrupt changes in my schedule were often not

welcome. If an office moved and they left the stop in your route you could be really screwed—halfway across town, one way streets, no parking. Yet all of the patrones seemed to think that everything could stay the same. They would be hurt if you questioned their wisdom. They would fire you if you persisted in questioning them.

Inevitably, we thought of ways to fight back. In a job of enforced isolation, our methods tended toward the solo. We had talked a few times about strikes, but it wouldn’t work; not if it was just our company alone. The patron would just hire temps from some other company, do some of it on his own, and to hell with us. We could be easily replaced—“Can you drive? You’re hired!” If we could get others not to replace us... But there was no easy way; too hard to make contact given the job structure and the transient nature of the workers.

We talked once about on-the-job action. The simplest would be for everybody to *obey the law*. This was driven home one day when the boss gave us a big lecture about being legal (with routes that required you to go the wrong way on one-way streets). Later I saw him in his three-piece on a moped, speeding the wrong way down a one way street. If I obeyed the speed limit, never made those quick dashes, my route would have taken twice as long. An effective slow down could still get us fired.

I found a minor release in a childish game. It started innocently enough; I had to sign for each chunk of computer output at EDS, but nobody cared unless it was checks or something. So one day I wrote “Washington Irving,” and later, for variety, “Irving Washington.” Soon I was completely out of control—I blush to admit that I signed the names of many of the best and brightest; General Wastemoreland, Lt. Calley, Elmo Zumwalt, Capt. Ernest Medina, Allen Dulles, etc. It all came to an end one day when the mailroom supe in Oakland said, “Primo, your name isn’t

McGeorge Bundy. Who is he?" A brief lesson on the roots of the Viet Nam war followed, and I was solemnly warned not to do it again. I think I convinced them that I was a little bit strange.

There was also sabotage.

Some of it was pure self-defense; papers that couldn't be found didn't have to be delivered. There was not a lot

of that. There were also cases where bikes or vehicles were incapacitated, and of course the old standards—long breaks or calling in sick. There was some thievery, but not much. Mostly we didn't carry anything worth anything to anybody. US Customs generates an enormous amount of verbal garbage.

My first act involved a shipment of

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WHY, HELLO, MRS. GREEN! NOT HAVING MUCH SUCCESS WITH YOUR DIET, ARE YOU?



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GOOD LORD, I DON'T KNOW! I'VE NEVER EVEN HEARD OF AUSTRALIAN PYGMY GLUE!



③ IF YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS, SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE...

LOOK! WHY DON'T YOU JUST BUY SOME OF THESE CLOCK RADIOS? AND SOME OF THESE MICHAEL JACKSON AIR FRESHENERS! AND, OH BOY, NO HOME IS COMPLETE WITHOUT A CASE OF GARFIELD PENCIL SHARPENERS!



④ AS YOU CLOSE THE SALE, BE SURE TO THANK THE CUSTOMER!

HEY, YOU'VE GOT \$200 IN YOUR PURSE, AND, COINCIDENTALLY, THAT'S HOW MUCH YOU OWE! THANKS A BUNCH, NOW, G'WAN, BEAT IT!





tear gas, gas guns and some training rounds being shipped to West Germany. Because I had friends in that faroff land I was kept informed of the anti-nuclear struggle and its massive absorption of CN gas. The papers were somehow lost, but all I had were duplicates of stuff; I slowed it up but I couldn't stop it. I did handle stuff everyday that I regarded as questionable: documents to the free lands of Korea, weird tariff agreements from GATT, internal documents on the stability of such countries as Iran. All these, and more, I did deliver correctly and on time. But one day I was pawing swiftly through the bundle for my airport run when my eye was caught by the destination of one pile—"Director, Servicios de Inteligencia; Ejercito de Argentina." In my hand was a fat wad of papers—original AWB (Air Way Bill), a letter of credit and extension, the customs export clearances (with State Department approval), truckers way bill (original), import documents, etc. The whole enchilada, all originals, for a microfiche machine being sent to the Army of Argentina's Intelligence Service. This was in 76-77 and the dirty war, which the mass media here only reported on years later, was in full swing. The desaparecidos, the dead and maimed, the secret jails, the suffocating terror... And the bastards wanted me to help ship them this high tech little wonder that would let them catalogue hordes of people in one convenient place. If I had had appropriately dressed friends and a truck, I could've taken the little gizmo home with me (the person who has the originals is the de-facto owner). Instead the papers somehow got lost, and I'm sure the damned thing sat on somebody's loading dock for a long time; to reissue all those papers I took, every single step would have to be retaken. They probably concluded, eventually, that it was "enemy action." Suck on it, you bloody little *momios*; a clerk who loses papers can hurt you as much as a mechanic that shorts circuits your toy.

In this modern world, without the "paperwork" the thing doesn't move; more effectively halted than if padlocked to an I-Beam.

All you paper pushers out there remember; most, if not all, of it is actually garbage and you could better spend your time in bed or in the garden, but you *can* hurt them; a little snip here and a dropped digit there...

A few years ago the Federal Reserve Bank changed the form on which the US banks' reserves were reported, and a clerk fucked up and didn't fill out one part of it for a large Eastern bank; the Fed thought the money supply had dropped and so increased the supply of US currency, which of course didn't do what it was supposed to. Enormous problems all because of a piece of paper.

The 'on-the-job' protests could only do so much; they kept some pride but couldn't really change the facts of endless job, going nowhere, with too little money for all the problems. Late one night I passed a Pinto on the bridge—I didn't notice anybody in it but there was a woman nearby at the phone on the side of the bridge. A moment of driving and the rearview mirror revealed a sheet of almost silken flames against the sky and a silhouette of a burning car that was careening past the Pinto. And then I was out of sight.

A few days later the clowns that controlled my days played a little too fast, a little too loose (too many boxes to go the wrong way on a one way street at noon hour, up a small elevator, etc.). I walked over to the phone and made a

*Chota* = US Southwest and Mexican slang for a cop; like Dan White.

*Momios*: Chilean slang for mummy.

Reagan is a *momio*.

*Patron* = Boss. You probably have one.

*Milagro* = a miracle.

*Desaparecido* = "Disappeared" person, by the police or army. Not recognized as a prisoner by the government.



call to the office; the patron wasn't in so I talked to a fellow serf. "Jim, I can't take this shit any longer. I quit. The truck is here at the Blue Cross Building, the keys are in it. Bye." He wished me luck. I took the elevator down to the basement, ignoring the outraged squawks from the head of the mail room, checked out with the guard (yeah man I quit, can't take their shit any

more, bye) and walked home. Dazed, nervous (no geld, and no recommendation from that boss; hell, he might try to have me run down). A grim feeling, but also a good one. No more, bastards! You've shafted me for the last time. I don't ever have to drive out onto that bridge again.

—by *Primitivo Morales*

### THE FOOL GOES TO WORK (for Ruven, with love)

For nine years, he clowned his way from Israel to London to the sea in Thailand where, in his mid-thirties, he learned to swim.

Tired of the hustle, enrolls in computer school, adds COBOL and BASIC to mime and juggling, a way to get through.

Jubilantly, he quits his first programming job after seven months. Next stop:

San Francisco!, where the hope was part-time program, part-time perform, but not enough pay to see a fool perform.

Enter: the Devil (disguised as Headhunter) who offers such a deal: well-paying, full-time work with benefits, two weeks paid vacation, just come to this climate-controlled office five days a week the other fifty weeks of the year, and now, set up a program so we can do accounts receivable, number of cans of carrots, peas, etc. in warehouses in Fresno and Modesto...

I watch him this morning as he forces himself from bed, dressing for the day's performance in loafers, slacks, white shirt and tie and the inevitable masque of the professional.

**David Steinberg**

# HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

## Hi-Tech Workers Network

The *Hi Tech Workers Network* (HTWN) is a group of production, maintenance, technical, and clerical workers in a variety of high tech companies who know from experience that the hi tech industry "is not what it's cracked up to be."

Centered in the Boston area, HTWN speaks to the thousands of workers in the Route 128 strip, Massachusetts' somewhat less glamorous equivalent of Silicon Valley. They believe hi tech workers should organize "to win respect, fight discrimination, and make improvements in wages and working conditions." Through their newsletter, the *HiTech Workers Monitor*, and events such as forums and filmshowings, HTWN disseminates information about hazardous substances used in the industry, encourages assertion of employee rights, and gives tips and support to workers who are organizing on the job.

Last year the HTWN won a cushy settlement for one of their members who had been fired from Digital Corporation on trumped up charges of "falsifying company records." The worker was late back from lunch a couple of times and had not recorded it on her time card, a sin usually punished by a warning notice. The real reason for her dismissal was that she had been stirring up trouble among co-workers, demanding better wages and distributing the *Monitor*.

With the help of other members of HTWN the case was taken first to the NLRB, which, true to its fashion,

dragged its heels over the issue. According to Rand Wilson, one of the Network's main movers (and a long-time labor organizer who now works for CWA), the HTWN soon decided the NLRB was "worthless" and took matters into their own hands, leaf-letting Digital workers and doing their own legal legwork. Digital soon responded with a palatable offer, and the case was settled out of court. The employee's record was cleared, she was promised good references, and awarded a sum of money that could not be publically disclosed according to the terms of the settlement. (Digital obviously didn't want other workers to get any ideas). If you would like to get in touch with the High Tech Workers Network or receive their newsletter, write to *High Tech Workers Network*, P.O. Box 441001, West Somerville, MA 02144.

Ms Meg





"Life for PW people...should be made miserable."

— Bob Black



"Red Nazis running a mini-People's Temple."

— The Last International

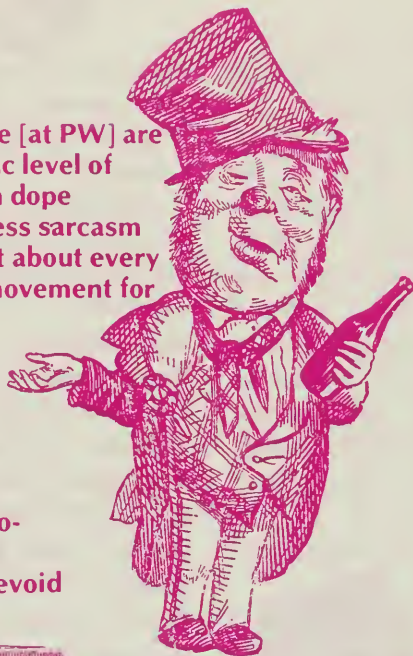
"Most of the people [at PW] are into heavy, alcoholic level of drinking, marathon dope smoking, and endless sarcasm and criticism of just about every political group or movement for social change."

— A Subscriber



"PW is not nice."

— Open Systems newsletter



"Processed What?"

— Anonymous

"PW...is...a collection of nefarious, corrupt and hypocritical individuals with a modernist scam...totally devoid of any revolutionary class politics..."

— Ted Lopez, Tampa FL



"PW is located in a financial district brothel and is run by a wealthy Leninist dominatrix."

— Anarchist Rumor Mill



"...this rabble-rousing publication pooh-poos productivity."

— Orlando Sentinel



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