
THE CONTINUING CRISIS



• May passed and so did the Hon. Tony Coelho (D-California) and House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Texas)—both of whom were vigorously examined long ago in the pages of this easy-to-read literary review¹ and adjudged preposterous. If there be any doubts about that judgment, skeptics are directed to the Hon. Coelho's *adios* statement to bemused editors of the *New York Times*, wherein the dolt interred the first person singular seventy times for an average of 1.1 per sentence, adding this occult declamation: "I've always said I have a tremendous amount of inner peace. I do. I've developed inner peace as the result of a tremendous struggle. No one can take my inner peace from me." Official Washington promptly commenced to bawl about the imminent departure of this weird bedlamite and about the possibility that others may be departing soon, but do not think that they were not forewarned. *The American Spectator's* managing editor, Mr. Wladyslaw Pleszczynski, adumbrated Mr. Coelho's fate as long ago as April 27. On that day in the *Wall Street Journal*, Mr. Pleszczynski notified the public that "the best thing" to occur in the first 100 days of the Bush Administration was the shift of media scrutiny from the presidency to Congress, and then added: "Tony Coelho, watch out. You're next!"

• In more *American Spectator* news, the campaign to raise former President Ronald Reagan's visage to Mount Rushmore is progressing *allegro con moto*, with support for the project resounding throughout a grateful Republic. The project has boiled the blood of the so-called Liberals who had hoped that the 1980s could be erased from memory and that maybe President George Bush could be persuaded to adopt the statecraft of Governor Michael Dukakis, Mr. Walter Mondale, or President Jimmy Carter, those being the recent giants of the Democratic genius. But now the campaign to add the genial visage of former President Reagan to Mount Rushmore is reminding America that there was an alternative to Jimmy Carter and, come to

think of it, to the bankrupting of Massachusetts. The only damper on our campaign came early in May when one of the U.S. Army's Golden Knights suffered injury during a parachute landing on the Mount Rushmore Visitor Center. The visitor center on President Reagan's head will be more comfortable.

• Advocates of benightedness and general hysteria were greatly heartened when it was reported that the *Nation*, the 124-year-old left-wing weekly, had reached a contract settlement with the Newspaper Guild, assuring the magazine's employees an annual six percent pay increase for three years, presumably along with continued access to the magazine's herb garden and its Stanford University-trained juju adept. Incidentally, when the *Nation* was founded it was a Republican journal! Paraguayans elected General Andres Rodrigues president, and the first phase of a partial Soviet troop withdrawal from Eastern Europe was marred when one of the departing tanks crushed a dove under its tracks. The dove had been released as a demonstration of peace by the Hungarian-born Italian M.P., Ilona Staller, better known as porn artiste "Cicciolina." Miss Staller was unhurt and fully clothed. A retired English policeman had to run for his life after stopping to assist a rare red-crested pochard that crashed unprovoked into his automobile, causing nearly \$200 of damage. According to Mr. Paul Corney, no sooner had he stepped from his car than he noticed "a crowd of furious bird-watchers" advancing on him and waving their dread binoculars. Progressives were exultant over reports that Dr. Edward A. Wasserman, a professor of psychology at the University of Iowa, had trained eight pigeons to recognize human facial expressions, thus upsetting long-held notions that only humans have sufficiently sophisticated nervous systems for such discernment and putting any of the eight birds in line to replace U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell upon his retirement or removal from the bench.

• On May 4 Mr. Ollie North was found guilty on three charges issuing from the Iran-contra imbroglio, though by the end of the month only one of the jurors, 35-year-old Miss Tara King, had

admitted to substance abuse. According to Miss King, she maintained a weekly cocaine habit before becoming a regular on Judge Gesell's jury. There is renewed controversy over the product of Mr. Andres Serrano's kidneys. Apparently the incontinent Mr. Serrano, while posing as an artist, hoodwinked federal art boobs into giving him government monies for photographing a crucifix submerged in a jar of his own urine, and Christians are irked—which is okay, but Muslims better not get wind of Mr. Serrano's profanation; Islam views Christ as a very worthy prophet, and blasphemy as without artistic merit. In California, the Chula Vista Police Department continues to harass Mr. Richard Preclaro Vega, 27. This time they jugged him for lying by a roadside, covered with fake blood and wearing only a leopard-skin loincloth. Mr. Vega explained that he was actually Tarzan and had been bitten by a snake while in a tree canoodling with Jane—but the cops would have none of it. He was cited for being under the influence of PCP and released on his own recognition.

• One month after *The American Spectator's* exposé, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop announced his resignation, effective July 13. Other personalities in the news included Miss Danette Arrington, the drill team instructor at Houston's Northbrook Senior High School. She has been reprimanded for allegedly baring her breasts to female students to demonstrate the results of "augmentation surgery" and may face dismissal. Dr. Scott Corder, the idealistic family practitioner from Ottawa, Kansas, had his license suspended by the Kansas State Board of Healing Arts after board members became alarmed by his beliefs that those extraterrestrial creatures he has spotted traveling through the galaxies are actually angels, and that a woman in Russell, Kansas, is in constant communication with Saint Peter, who has notified her of the likelihood of an earthquake in the Kansas City area sometime this summer. In Gallatin, Tennessee, Miss Wanda Huff, 51, filed assault charges against the bluegrass virtuoso Mr. Bill Monroe for, in her own words, hitting her "right in the mouth" with the Bible. And in Jackson, Mississippi, the Mississippi Chris-

tian Knights of the Ku Klux Klan on May 12 defrocked Mr. Jordan Gollub of Poplarville, theretofore their leader, after the galoots discovered that Mr. Gollub is Jewish. According to Mr. Gollub, he was booted because his colleagues disapprove of his "background and the fact that I'm against Catholics joining the Klan." While appearing on a London television program, Mr. Yusuf Islam, formerly the pop warbler known as Mr. Cat Stevens, eschewed an effigial burning of the author Mr. Salman Rushdie, saying, "I would have hoped that it'd be the real thing." Remarked Mr. Craig R. Whitney in the May 23 *New York Times*, the statements by Mr. Islam and other participants on the program "demonstrate how divided British liberal intellectuals remain over the affair."

• China was alive with protests throughout the month despite the soothing presence of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, who renewed diplomatic relations with Peking. Peruvian police arrested Sr. Juan Cordova and Sr. José Guzman for laundering and reselling used condoms. In Goaljoi, India, Miss Sonamoni Kisku was dragged from her hut and axed to death by neighbors who suspected her of being a witch. In San Antonio, Texas, an Air Force woman who insists that she is a witch has been granted permission to observe her faith's eight holidays, including Halloween. Islamic executioners stoned to death eleven women of the night and their business managers, and in Belfast, Northern Ireland, a row has broken out over a government plan to erect a statue of two prostitutes to commemorate the city's red-light district. Canadians were shaken by a government report that they accumulate more garbage per person than the citizenry of any other leading industrial country. In Malmo, Sweden, a lady, who remains anonymous, was trapped for forty-eight hours after her deck chair enfolded her.

• Mr. Joe Valdez Caballero, creator of the "crisp taco shell," died in Dallas, Texas. Mr. Paskey Dedomenico, the Rice-a-Roni king, passed on in Seattle, Washington; and Mrs. Roseann Grecco of West Islip, New York, has been sentenced to prison for repeatedly running her automobile over her supine husband, though she still protests that he was possessed by Mickey Mouse. In

¹See "The Stuff on Wright," by Terence P. Jeffrey, *TAS*, August 1988, and "The Big Fix," by James Ring Adams, *TAS*, March 1989.

Johannesburg, South Africa, Mr. Danie du Toit, 49, had no sooner addressed the local Toastmasters Club, enjoining listeners to enjoy life to the fullest as death can come at any time, than he sat down and died. Finally,

May could well mark the beginning of a consumerist rebellion against surgical sex changes. Christine Jorgensen, one of the first surgically revised women, died at age 62, nearly seventeen years under the average life expectancy for an

American female. Miss Karen Ulane, the former Eastern Airlines pilot who had been discharged by the company for her sex change, died at 48. And Mr. Jeffrey Luiz, 23, led a protest demonstration in New York City against Blue

Cross/Blue Shield because the insurer has stopped paying his sex-change bills halfway through the process, leaving him, however, as a very promising candidate for *Ms.* magazine's Person of the Year award. —RET

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Planned Free Enterprise

"A little noticed but profound change in the relationship between government and business is taking shape," writes Irwin M. Stelzer in his article "Corporatism Ousts Reaganomics" (*TAS*, May 1989). The change, it seems, is a "trend" away from market capitalism and toward corporatism.

Unfortunately for Mr. Stelzer's analysis, this "trend" has actually enjoyed a long and often constructive history in our country. True, thanks to the likes of FDR and LBJ, American businesses today are burdened by federal regulations that cause waste and inefficiency. On the other hand, the occasional cooperation between government and business during the last two centuries has helped lead to some great American economic successes.

A brief look at our history shows that, early on, government was involved in promoting trade and mobilizing capital and labor for public enterprises. For instance:

- In our first decades, Congress developed a system of national protective tariffs (not something I favor today); laid the foundation for a federal patent system; and authorized cash subsidies for maritime interests.

- As the country expanded geographically, state and federal funds were needed for the construction of our first highways and canals, allowing for further economic expansion.

- During and after the Civil War, federal funding made the American railroad system possible, since no private companies had the enormous financial clout necessary. The railroad, in turn, gave this continent a common economic market, long before the Europeans attempted one.

Mr. Stelzer even goes as far as to say that our government's entry in the race for high definition television, superconductivity, and so on, is nothing more than the inception of a planned economy. His time would be more wisely spent training his focus on our nation's federal tax code, an obvious case of de facto industrial policy if ever there was one.

Today's free enterprise system would work better if the U.S. government removed the regulatory obstacles from its path. But this may or may not im-

prove the competitiveness of American firms abroad. They face some stiff competition in the global marketplace, from businesses that receive support from governments willing to use direct subsidies, trade barriers, tax loopholes, and flexible antitrust laws.

In the final analysis, Mr. Stelzer is right about one thing: economic decisions in this country should remain the prerogative of American entrepreneurs and businessmen. But let's not rule out the benefits that a little government support can offer in some important areas.

—Stephen V. Gold
Oakton, Virginia

Irwin M. Stelzer replies:

My disagreements with Mr. Gold are few. Clearly, there are areas in which government activity is necessary, such as the establishment of a patent system to protect property rights. But equally clearly, it is important to avoid inefficient expansion of those areas. Mr. Gold, for example, cites with apparent approval "cash subsidies for maritime interests." These have only served to make intra-U.S. ocean shipments excessively costly and to channel taxpayers' funds into the pockets of a few union members.

And I can't agree that subsidies and "flexible antitrust laws," i.e., replacement of competition by cartels, will enhance American competitiveness. In the long run, competition between suppliers results in lower costs and keener rivalry to innovate. Surely, that is the more enduring path to the development of products that can compete in the world's marketplace.

Unshrinking AIDS

Michael Fumento got a few things right in his article "The Incredible Shrinking AIDS Epidemic" (*TAS*, May 1989). For example, it is clearly ridiculous to assume that an epidemic can remain indefinitely in its exponential growth phase. Eventually, it has to level off. But unfortunately, the endpoint may be the death of all susceptible individuals in the population at risk. Fumento notes that the rate of *new* infections among homosexuals in major cities is now between zero and four percent. He finds that very encouraging, but unaccountably fails to comment on the fact

that the total infection rate in that population may be higher than 50 percent.

Outside the high-risk groups, the disease spreads much more slowly. But there is no evidence that the epidemic is "shrinking," and the statistics are not cause for complacency. Between October 1987 and March 1988, the rate of seropositivity in civilian applicants for military service was 0.12 percent or 1.2 per 1,000, not "0.02 percent or less, or 1 in 5,000," as Fumento states. In men between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine, the rate was 3.8 per 1,000. At what point will he start to worry?

The problem with all projections of this epidemic is that they are based on assumptions and sadly insufficient data. But if the CDC's totals are too high one year, the cases they predict may yet occur, just a little later.

Fumento ought not restrict his vision to New York and San Francisco. In Africa, the situation with heterosexual spread is truly alarming. In the southwest provincial capital of Masaka, Uganda, 30 percent of the adult population tests positive. Productivity in the mines in the "copper belt" of central Africa is down substantially; expatriates are refusing to work there because of the widespread disease in the mining camps. Some argue that Africa is different. But the most important difference may be the time elapsed since the appearance of the disease.

We know that sexually transmitted diseases can reach very high levels in the general population, even in the U.S. Human papilloma virus (the cause of genital warts and of cancer of the cervix) and chlamydia (a cause of pelvic inflammatory disease leading to infertility) already afflict 30 percent or more of sexually active women in some areas. So AIDS transmission is "extremely inefficient"? In one study, 82 percent of spouses of infected persons converted their blood tests in less than two years of continued, unprotected marital relations. In the same study, 17 percent of those who used condoms converted, and none of those who abstained. Other studies have shown lower rates of conversion. Would Fumento like to bet his life on which percentage is correct?

The time for containing an epidemic is in its early stages. If we want to pre-

vent sickness and death, rather than conducting an experiment to test Fumento's hypothesis, then rational fear, not wishful thinking, is clearly indicated.

—Jane M. Orient, M.D.
Tucson, Arizona

Michael Fumento's article contains some thoughtful insights into the motivations of those who have transformed the epidemic of HIV infection into a contentious political issue. While Fumento's treatment of the political gamesmanship that accompanies attempts to estimate the epidemic's scale is sobering, he is wrong to conclude that "estimates of the size of the AIDS epidemic are proving to be grossly exaggerated." A more accurate statement, I believe, is that for political reasons federal, state, and local health officials have denied themselves the information necessary to answer many of the questions raised by Fumento.

Is the epidemic really shrinking? I hope Mr. Fumento's assessment is correct. Unfortunately, it now appears that CDC has missed significant pockets of infection in the inner cities, especially among minority women, their newborn children, and the drug-free partners of intravenous drug users. While it is impossible to know exactly how many HIV positive individuals escape CDC's notice, some recent studies indicate that the underreporting is extensive.

For example, the Citizens' Committee for Children obtained the CDC's estimate of the pediatric AIDS case-load in New York City for 1988 and contrasted it with the results of its own survey of 20 of the 48 pediatric units in New York City. The results are frightening. According to CDC, New York City hospitals handled a total of 134 pediatric AIDS cases in 1988. The Citizens' Committee survey, however, found that less than half of those hospitals reported more than six times as many cases, a total of 828 children who received treatment for CDC-defined AIDS or clinically apparent HIV infection.

The Citizens' Committee survey supports the findings of other researchers. Dr. Rand L. Stoneburner reviewed the
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