

# OUR LITTLE SECRETS

And since you asked, the Peace Prize was suspended in 1939, started up again in 1944 and awarded to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The prize is given out in Swedish crowns. In 1938 it was worth 155,007 crowns, 10 million crowns today, which is a cool \$1 million.

## LEFT PROFILE

After reading our Green and Grounded item in the last newsletter, CounterPuncher Mike Friedman sends us this note:

"The article on airport harassment of Green Party members made me think... perhaps post-9/11 airport harassment of activists is more pervasive than we realize.

"Last May, I made a trip to the south to collect specimens for my Ph.D. research in biology. When I got to the check-in counter at La Guardia airport, the ticket agent pulled me up on her computer and, in an aside to a security agent, said (loudly enough for me to hear), 'this one has a profile'. The agent escorted me to an area where they thoroughly tore apart my baggage. I asked the agent why they saw fit to subject me to this extra search, and he replied that I was 'randomly chosen'.

"As a random sample, I was surprised

that the only other folks being searched in that area were Muslims, and that one of the security people doing the searching asked me if I were a Muslim myself. It might have gone worse for me, if I hadn't had official documentation regarding my collecting trip from the Museum of Natural History. As it is, I'm more than curious about what these folks have on record regarding my political activism. I did a series of Freedom of Information Act requests in the late 1980s, which drew a blank, except for a single N.Y. FBI letter stating that they couldn't release my file because it would jeopardize life or national security. I haven't been particularly active for the past few years, though, except recently. Maybe we should try to get everyone who has experienced these problems together with CCR or the ACLU and file a class action suit..."

Any other CounterPunchers been experiencing extra scrutiny or hassles at airports lately?

## EARN WHILE YOU LEARN BY WILLIAM JOHNSON

Chris Whittle, CEO of Edison Schools, is a man with problems. His company, once deemed a rising star in the education business, has fallen on tough times. Earlier this year, the SEC found that Edison had overstated its income, a revelation that came to light as Edison's share price plunged more than 85 per cent in just a matter of weeks. Edison's shares have dropped 99 per cent this year.

Falling share prices have been accompanied by the news that Edison is not living up to its obligations, particularly in the Philadelphia area, where Edison is managing 20 public schools.

These schools report that many basic supplies, such as textbooks, are not being distributed to their students. Nancy Van Meter of the American Federation of Teachers says that Philly's middle schools have been particularly hard-hit. When Edison took over, they cut staff salaries by removing non-teaching assistants from some of their schools. The loss of these adult supervisors has led to what Van Meter describes as "a series of incidents ranging from assaults on students, both verbal and physical, to assaults on teachers..."

the students are running those schools".

Besides cutting staff, and despite the fact that Edison's schools receive approximately \$25,000 more per classroom than Philadelphia's district-run schools, Edison has resorted to selling school equipment (computers, textbooks, musical instruments) for cash. But such fire sales won't solve the financial problems of a company that has lost upwards of \$300 million since it was founded in 1992. So Chris Whittle has a new idea, one that would not only save money, but provide students with invaluable, hands-on preparation for entry into the working world.

Child labor! Yes, according to Whittle, if each student in a school of 600 performed administrative work for one hour a day, they could replace 75 salaried adult administrators. And though school board officials have been loath even to discuss the plan, Whittle claims he can have this new labor-force ready for action by 2004. Whittle was once hailed as a man on capitalism's cutting edge, and so he is, proposing coerced child labor as a cost-cutting solution that would be good for schools and their students; this CEO is in charge of public schools all over this country.

## LYNCHING THEN AND NOW BY PETER RACHLEFF

200 scholars and anti-racism activists got together at Emory University in early October to view the powerful exhibit of photographs of lynchings on display at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site in Atlanta and to discuss the role of violence in racial politics in the United States. More than 130,000 people have viewed the exhibit since it went up in May, after tens of thousands had seen it in New York City in 1999-2000.

For three days we listened to papers which suggested ways to look at the photographs and other visual evidence, detailed more than twenty specific incidents, analyzed the roles of government authorities in tolerating, if not sponsoring lynchings, evaluated the effectiveness of African American leadership in the struggle to stop lynching, and assessed forms of African American resistance, including armed self-defense, civil disobedience, electoral politics, law suits, and migration out of the South. An impressive array of papers considered the use of drama, music, poetry, fiction, sculpture, and

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visual art in activists' and artists' efforts to influence and educate public opinion.

Two of the most interesting areas of argument were: (1) How to define lynching — whether it should only be applied to “mob” action outside the parameters of the legal system or whether capital punishment, police brutality, and the like should be considered as forms of lynching too (2) How central was violence to the perpetuation of the American patterns of race relations? In both of these discussions, most people gravitated to the term “domestic terrorism” as a useful characterization of the problem.

Any illusion that one can have merely an “academic” conference on racial violence was dispelled when a presenter from Springfield, Missouri, informed a session that the very day before the conference opened a young Kenyan man had been found hanging from a radio tower in her city. This tower was located only three blocks from the scene of a multiple lynching in 1906. While it was hard enough to believe our ears, we were suddenly confronted with the visual evidence of digitized pictures of the young man's body. The very air seemed to be sucked out of the room. Local authorities had left his body hanging for more than twelve hours, and they had already ruled his death a suicide, over the objections of his mother, who had urged our presenter to bring this information to the conference.

And then, the coup-de-grace — Springfield, Missouri, is not only a center of racist skinhead activism but also the hometown of Attorney General John Ashcroft! Conference participants drafted a letter to Ashcroft, which reads in part:

“The U.S. government has recently made an enormous commitment to the investigation of international terrorism; nonetheless, numerous instances of domestic terrorism continue to go ignored and uninvestigated. This conference and this young man's death have compelled us to demand that our government examine the practice of domestic terrorism.

“The death of Mr. Leonard Gakinya powerfully evokes a centuries-long history of racially-motivated murders of African Americans in the U.S. But, clearly, we cannot confine our moral outrage and witness to the past. As calls for war escalate daily, and the nation's attention is focussed on international terrorism, we must not forget the racial terrorism that

continues to plague our country... We call upon you, Attorney General Ashcroft, to exercise personal supervision of this investigation and to take as vigorous action against racially motivated domestic terrorism as you have in the pursuit and prosecution of international terrorists. Given the long, shameful history of underinvestigated and unprosecuted crimes against African Americans and other oppressed groups, it is imperative that justice be pursued today.”

This letter was mailed on October 5. Ashcroft has yet to reply.

*Peter is professor of history at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota.*

## SULLYING SAVIO'S MEMORY

Mario Savio goes down in history as the great orator of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley in the late 1960s, a galvanizing figure in the antiwar movement at that time. Mario died a few years ago and last February we happened to meet Lynn Hollander, Savio's wife. The widow Savio told us she was organizing an annual event in memory of Savio, imparting the information that the guest lecturer was to be

## ***We asked Savio's widow whether the best way to commemorate Mario the Antiwar Organizer was to whistle up the deliriously pro-war Hitchens.***

Christopher Hitchens. Startled, we asked her whether the best way to commemorate Mario the Antiwar Organizer was to whistle up the deliriously pro-war Hitchens.

Ms Hollander seemed surprised at our surprise. The months passed. Hitchens redoubled his war cries and yes, on November 21, he was scheduled by Ms Hollander and the malodorous Tides Foundation to lecture in Savio's memory on the UC campus in Berkeley. Also present on the podium will be Adam Hochschild. We wrote a note to Ms Hollander, once again deploring her choice, and she responded by defending the decision to water Savio's memory with Hitchens's “controversial views”. To us it's like getting an impenitent FBI veteran of the Hoover era to keynote an evening honoring Martin Luther King. Poor Mario.

## **THE CASE OF THE POMPOUS PROFESSOR**

*And talking of Berkeley, this just in from CounterPuncher Herm Boyd about the insufferable Todd Gitlin.*

I am not surprised by Gitlin's comments about the anti-war movement. In 1990 I participated in a broad-based movement to demand preservation of affirmative action, greater faculty diversity at UC Berkeley amongst other things. It culminated in a two-day student strike. We asked professors to cancel classes or to at least hold them off campus to support us. We ran around securing spaces at various cafes, student co-ops, dorms, and any other spaces available. A majority of professors supported us by following our request. Some didn't. One of those was Todd Gitlin.

At one point during the strike, a few of us decided to break from the picket line and challenge those professors who chose to hold class. After hitting up a few professors who tried to ignore us or spoke of their academic freedom, we stumbled onto Gitlin's class. At the time he taught a large sociology class.

Honestly, many of us were intimidated. As first and second year students how would we approach this authority on the Sixties? But we stormed in anyway.

To our surprise in an auditorium designed to hold 500 people, there were maybe 30 or 40 students. We challenged him and threw his credentials in his face. How could he, a supposed supporter of so many progressive causes 25 years ago, refuse to support these important demands. He responded that he and the other professors weren't consulted and therefore he couldn't support our strike. Here were a few freshman and sophomores challenging, in our eyes, the authority on the 60s, and all he could come up with is that he wasn't consulted?

I've read parts of his book and found it simplistic, self-serving and anti-Communist. But after witnessing his politics in action, his remarks in no way surprise me.