

# Our Little Secret

## SOMETHING ABOUT AL

As Congress pores over one of the most obsessive accounts of human behavior—Starr's narrative of the Bill/Monica encounters—since the Spanish Inquisition, Al Gore more than ever recedes into the political equivalent of Jasper Johns "White on White." In his effort to shun the limelight, he's reached a stage of total transparency. One imagines his Secret Service body guards frantically trying to locate his impalpable essence, as he flits about his Vice-Presidential quarters at the Naval Observatory. Let us therefore evoke some more vivid images of Al Gore as he assailed the eyes of a BLM ranger at the bottom of the Grand Canyon a couple of summers ago.

As plump a cargo of family values as has ever taken to the waters of the Colorado River, Al, Tipper, the Gore children, their friends, the Secret Service detail, plus river guides embarked. As the Gore flotilla floated downstream it met a BLM ranger who has confided his subsequent observations to CounterPunch. The Gores and their retinue alighted at a sandbar and

lazed in the pleasant Arizona sun. Even the Secret Service men relaxed. At this torpid moment, two stunt planes shattered the peace of the canyon, diving low over the river and skimming only a few hundred feet above the Gore party. Apparently his innumerable speeches on the menace of international terrorism sprang to the mind of the startled Gore and he barked frantically at the Secret Service men to chase down the intruders. Twenty minutes later an Air Force plane summoned by the Secret Service showed up, but by that time the stunt planes had vanished over the horizon.

The flotilla took to the water again. Gone was the mood of pleasant lassitude. The Secret Service had their guns at the ready and the Vice President himself eyed every inlet with trepid vigilance. Half an hour later our BLM friend headed his own raft downstream. As he rounded a bend, the following scene met his gaze. The Vice-President was standing in the back of his own raft, pissing into the Colorado, still keeping a wary eye out for terrorist onslaught. On seeing the BLM his hand flew to his golf shorts, tugging fiercely at the zipper with, it appeared to our BLM friend, painful results. Displeased, the Vice-President dispatched the Secret Service agents to question the ranger. Later, not content with this interrogation, Gore himself advised the BLM ranger that in the future he should give full and fair warning of his movements on the river.

## SOUTH OF THE BORDER

In its last issue before it closed its doors, the National News Reporter published a revealing account of a conference recently held in Chicago for American companies wanting to relocate to Mexico. One of the chief speakers at the affair—which was co-sponsored by the US-Mexico Chamber of Commerce and Chihuahua Now!, a development arm of the Mexican government—was Federico Barrios, head of a Mexican construction firm called Lintel.

"First off", Barrios explained to his rapt audience of about 100 American business executives, "the basic reason that companies come to Mexico is labor: the low-cost, very productive labor you will find in Mexico." Low, indeed. According

to Barrios, "fully-loaded" per person labor costs, including attendance bonuses and other benefits mandated by Mexican law, come to between \$1.50 and \$2 per hour.

Of course, everything's relative, Barrios conceded. "Wages in China are a fraction of what they are in Mexico," but if factors such as access to the US market are calculated, Mexico offers "that combination that will allow you to compete very successfully in the world market."

Also addressing the crowd was Hugo Dubovoy, a partner at the international law firm of Baker and McKenzie. Dubovoy explained that the real point of NAFTA was to fully incorporate Mexico into the American economy, since the trade deal basically ensures that Mexico maintain forever the "free-market" policies so beloved in Washington. "[NAFTA] takes away the freedom of the parties of changing their laws," he said. "If there were any changes in Mexican law that contradicted NAFTA, they would not apply. NAFTA would prevail."

Roger Kerson, who infiltrated the conference and wrote the story, says that his other major discovery at the event was that "businessmen are really, really boring. They passed out their notes, they displayed their notes on a computer-driven overhead projector, and then they read to us verbatim from those same notes."

## OIL AND FEATHERS

Anyone innocent of the complex relationship nourished by America's leading environmental organizations might suppose that there are few entities more antipathetic to each other than oil companies and organizations dedicated to the protection of birds. Not so. For many years now, to take one bracing example, the National Audubon Society has rejoiced its revenue stream from the oil wells located within Rainey Wildlife Preserve in Louisiana.

And now CounterPunch can offer further entertaining examples of the fraternal ties between the oil giants and the bird people. It comes in the form of the board of directors of the Audubon Society. Mustered here are: Reid Hughes, a resident of Daytona, former president of Hughes Oil Company who has been honored with the highest award from the American Petroleum Institute. Hughes has now entered another profession not normally associated with the protection of birds, the real estate development business.

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Audubon is John Whitmire of Houston, Texas. Until 1996 he was executive vice president of the Phillips Petroleum Corporation for exploration and production. He now serves as chairman and CEO of the Union Texas Petroleum Company. In addition to board duties for the Audubon Society, Whitmire finds time in his busy schedule to sit on the board of what is generally thought to be one of the environmentalists' most rabid antagonists, the American Petroleum Institute.

Those mourning the cranes, herons and cormorants killed by oil spills would no doubt be interested to examine the minutes of the API board sessions to see whether Mr. Whitmire is taking a properly pro-bird position as the API pushes for the opening of Alaska's Arctic plain for oil exploration, one of the last great bird habitats in the world.

### KNOW THY ASYMMETRY

During the Cold War, the military-industrial complex needed only to point to the Soviet Union and Congress would immediately sign over a check to cover yet another Pentagon boondoggle. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Pentagon and the arms became eager to line up a new "threat".

The situation has grown desperate. Russia has collapsed. Other candidates for Public Enemy No. 1 - especially China and "rogue nations" such as North Korea — have failed to galvanize the public. Most recently, the Pentagon has begun alluding to the hideous danger posed by "asymmetric niche competitors". This could be an ethnic tribe, a drug lord or army, organized crime or a terrorist group. Hence, the US needs to maintain dominance across the military spectrum in order to assure that the enemy has no Achilles Heel to exploit.

Lieut. Gen. Jay Garner, who until the summer of 1997 was assistant vice chief of staff of the U.S. Army, laid out the core of the emerging theory in a 1997 issue of Phalanx: The Bulletin of Military Operations Research. Garner alluded to a number of horrifying threats to national security, including the always handy menace posed by long-range missiles, but his chief concern is an opponent's use of "asymmetric strategies and tactics". For example, the enemy might well locate its command and control headquarters in a retirement home or use refugees as human shields on weapons platforms. This,

warned Garner, could "significantly reduce our technological overmatch and "render U.S. military superiority impotent".

Garner believes it is imperative that the Pentagon not "fall prey to reliance on a one-dimensional panacea to meet the multidimensional threats of asymmetric niche warfare". Translation: full speed ahead with every nutty idea dreamed up by the defense industry.

Incidentally, upon retiring Garner took up the post of president at a California-based defense contractor called SY Technology. His job will be to increase "the

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Company's defense related commercial and international business."

### THE PRINCE OF DULLNESS

Anyone fired by Mort Zuckerman can't be all bad, but James Fallows' recent dismissal as editor of US News should not be interpreted as a blow against independent journalism, as the Fallows clique claimed. On this account, Fallows was canned because he doggedly refused to cover fluff like the death of Princess Di. Instead, he fought for meatier and more mature coverage, thereby earning Zuckerman's wrath.

In fact, the Fallows crew produced some of the dullest issues in the history of news magazines. Of particular note was a cover story on volunteerism written by Steve Waldman, a subject that is still too painful to discuss for some US News staffers. The issue sold only 18,000 copies at newsstands, about one-third of the normal rate.

One would have thought that the issue's flop would have been a lesson for Fallows and Waldman. Instead, the two were soon excitedly planning a special issue on volunteerism! Fortunately, the idea was ultimately discarded on the ash heap of history.

### NEW GITLIN PERIL

US Army Chemical Units in full protective clothing moved through US Postal Service sorting centers and magazine

warehouses late this summer, seizing copies of Time magazine and shipping them west for destruction at the US government facility in Utah. Prompting the emergency action was what an Army spokeswoman described as, "Extremely dangerous Gitlin releases".

The scare began when fellow workers noticed Ezzard Charles, Jr., Post Office sorting clerk in New York, flipping through an issue of Time that had come free of its bundle. "Then his hand went to his throat", said Shirley Helmslow. "He gave a sort of strangled gasping sound. He slumped across the sorting table." After a minute, Charles briefly revived enough to mumble what Helmslow identified as "A sound like...Gitlin." "We had been warned about Gitlin outbreaks", sorting room supervisor Bob Mandrake adds. "So we looked to see what Ezzard had been reading, and there it was."

A Time story in late August contained the following sentence: "There is no sign the media are ready to give up their preoccupation with sexual conduct...New York University professor Todd Gitlin predicts the issue will arise long before the primaries, when protocandidates are trying to make themselves look viable. 'If the candidates can make merry with comparison with Clinton', Gitlin says, 'this is probably very bad news for a potential candidate.'"

On the Gitlin meter this rated as a "significant" toxic emission, but not one requiring full emergency procedures. But then a horrified Mandrake found another page from Time that Charles had apparently tried to tear out and incinerate in a courageous effort to save his colleagues.

"'This whole thing is terrible,' says Todd Gitlin, a professor of culture, journalism and sociology at New York University. 'I'm full of disgust with what has become of this country and I hold the media crucially responsible. What has happened is that in the glee, sometimes even the guilty glee, of enthusiasm for this story, the press has sent a very clear signal to the public that it lives in a different world than the world of a self-governing democracy.'"

"As soon as I saw that", says Mandrake, "I knew we had a full-blown crisis on our hands, and so we went straight to a Status One procedure." Status One, a standing court order signed by a federal district court judge, permits seizure of Gitlin-contaminated material. ■

## The Trouble With Harry

# Anslinger and the Racist Roots of the Drug War

Over the course of its obscure existence, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, FBN, which rarely numbered more than 300 agents, conducted one of the most aggressive law enforcement endeavors of all time. Indeed, from 1930 through 1968, FBN agents put more bodies in federal prison than any other federal agency.

But there was danger. In making complex conspiracy cases against a slew of international drug smugglers, FBN agents were always on the verge of uncovering governmental ties to crime. And the only thing that kept this unsavory fact from becoming a public relations disaster was Harry J. Anslinger, the FBN's commissioner from 1930 to 1962.

Having married the niece of Andrew Mellon, Anslinger had tremendous prestige with the press corps and the Washington elites. His expertise in national security affairs (gained as a State Department foreign officer) and law enforcement (he was a captain in the Pennsylvania Railroad police) made him a highly regarded figure both in Congress and in the "community" of diplomats, spies, corporate executives and judges.

There is many a stain on Anslinger's mystique. As Commissioner of Narcotics, he orchestrated policies and law enforcement practices that did grievous harm to black America. He falsely linked pot smoking with heroin addiction; he cast drug addiction as a crime not a medical problem; and his rogues gallery of addicts featured "Negro" sex fiends, high on cocaine, overwhelming white women.

In the 1930s and 1940s, such agitprop fanned the hatred and ignorance that made lynchings a fact of life in the South. These Anslinger-made policies and attitudes still exist and are as dangerous and unjust today as they were in the past. Now several former FBN agents have decided to relate their personal experience from the 1950s and 1960s, so that the public can better understand how the drug wars developed and how they became a conscious but cleverly concealed effort to enforce racial segregation.

Racial segregation pervaded American society well past World War II. For example, it was not until 1950 that black doctors were allowed to practice in Washing-

ton, DC hospitals. This change came about only after Oscar Ewing, the director of the Federal Security Agency noted that black children were not getting enough medicine to meet their needs. Although fiercely opposed by the American Medical Association and dubbed "Mr. Welfare State Himself," Ewing called for comprehensive pre-paid health coverage, financed through Social Security. Included in this coverage would be treatment, financed by the government, of drug addiction as a medical problem.

Ewing's approach was soon undermined by Anslinger and his allies, who successfully promoted the notion of drug addiction as a matter for law enforcement.

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This issue, of course, has been used to pursue a racist agenda against American blacks. Ironically, as a function of racial segregation, it even hurt black FBN agents.

"I always wanted to be a federal agent," recalls William Davis, a graduate of Rutgers University. "I applied to the FBN and was hired in the summer of 1951. But I soon found out there was an unwritten rule that black agents could not hold positions of respect. They could not become group leaders, nor could they manage or give direction to whites. We few black agents, maybe eight in the whole country at any one time, had indignities heaped upon us."

As an example he cites Wade McCree, a pharmacist and chemist who, while working as an FBN agent in the 1930s, developed Mother McCree's Goose Grease. McCree had written a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt complaining about Southern prosecutors, who insisted on calling him "nigger". After learning of McCree's letter, Anslinger's legal staff charged McCree with using the FBN's lab to create his patent medicine.

McCree was fired.

"We went through hell," says Davis. "The stress was tremendous. We wanted to be accepted as full-fledged agents, not just blacks doing the bidding of whites. But even though in many cases we were better educated, and could write better and testify better, we weren't. They'd come by and say, 'I want to use him today.' They'd have us make undercover buys, and try to cover us, then they would take the evidence so they could mark it up and get credit. And if we complained, we got harrassed."

The black agents had to survive the heaviest stress "We had to watch our backs not just from the crooks, but from the white agents who didn't want us moving out of our place," Davis continues. "And we were held to a higher standard."

"We had an interrogation room in New York with a two way mirror," Davis recalls. "I was standing outside, looking in. An agent I'll call Mr. Tex had a man stripped naked and was calling him nigger. I went in and asked Mr. Tex to step outside. Then I asked why he was abusing the man. He said, 'If they won't come up to my level, then I have to go down to theirs.' I told Mr Tex not to use the word nigger again, and that if he used it around me, I wouldn't let it drop. But he wouldn't speak to me again. Then everyone started saying I was too thin-skinned."

Harry Anslinger's role in fostering these practices is clear, as a few former white agents have detailed. George Corcoran, for example, joined the FBN in 1955 and began working in Philadelphia. Corcoran's supervisor was an old prohibition agent and as Corcoran recalls, "Bransky would take me and another older agent with him to Washington to socialize with Anslinger. These old guys would drink bourbon and talk about putting the black agents, whom they called 'niggers', on the merry-go-round."

The merry-go-round's rationale was that black agents, who worked exclusively undercover, became too well known in any particular city after a year or two, and had to be rotated. The dirty little secret, of course, was that in the process they were never in one office long enough to exert any concerted influence.