

THE
Libertarian Forum

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Murray N. Rothbard, Editor

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SMEAR: THE STORY OF UPDATE — PART I

by Derrick "Ed" Welles

In March 1981, a new newsletter first appeared in the homes of libertarians. In its inaugural issue, this newsletter proclaimed its *raison d'être*: "It's often difficult to separate facts from rumors and personal opinions when covering the libertarian movement, but we believe that it's in the best interest of the movement, as well as our own, to try to make these distinctions. Therefore, we intend our news items to be factual, while opinion and unsubstantiated reports, valuable and interesting as they may be, will be clearly labeled as such."

This newsletter is *Update*, a publication already lovingly referred to in previous issues of *Lib. Forum*. For the past year and a half, it has performed in the opposite manner to what it had promised its readers. It has fused rumors, personal opinions, and facts, and has incorporated unsubstantiated reports and editorial bias into articles that pose as news items. This practice has certainly been valuable to *Update's* editors, and indeed it has served their interests as they see them. Decoding the truth from *Update's* coverage has proven to be an interesting project.

Update is the unofficial organ of the Crane Machine. It is unofficially so, because nobody in *Update* has come out and admitted that their purpose is to offer readers a distorted view of the movement through Craniac lenses; instead, they pose as impartial reporters of facts. The fact, however, is that *Update* is published by the Libertarian Review Foundation, heir of the late *Libertarian Review* and publishers of the ex-Cato magazine, *Inquiry*. Its three editors (until June 1982) have been Chris Hocker, Madame Defarge Leslie Key, and Kent Guida. Ed Crane himself often writes in *Update* (the only publication, besides *Cato's Letter*, where his written work appears). In nearly every issue, libertarians who have criticized, opposed, or resisted Craniac domination of themselves or the movement are made to look uniformly like fools or incompetents, and their achievements are belittled, misrepresented, or ignored and hidden from the reader.

As a libertarian news publication with pretensions of impartial journalism, *Update* is an unqualified disaster. This does not stop it from being a success in terms of what its publishers may wish to accomplish. Since its first issue, *Update* has served the dual functions of inflating the performance and

image of those who submit to Craniac ways, and of discrediting those who refuse to submit, regardless of the actual accomplishments of each.

There is a new word coined for this occasion, for *Update's* peculiar style of journalism. It is "Updating," by which we shall mean the practice of distorting the reader's perception by either 1) omitting relevant facts; 2) creating nonexistent "facts"; 3) incorporating editorial bias into a news item; or 4) giving favorable coverage to one side of a controversy in an ostensibly impartial news report.

We should note that *Update's* biased reporting is mixed with other, generally factual and newsy articles, mostly on scholarly institutions and projects that deal with libertarian theory or which are not currently threatening or inconvenient to Craniac designs. Thus, Murray Rothbard may be praised for his theoretical contributions — not even *Update* can deny him credit for these — but is portrayed negatively wherever possible when it comes to his activist work and strategic outlook (which in many cases, as *Forum* readers well know, is very different from that of Craniacs).

This generally accurate reporting of non-controversial movement activities, of course, only makes it more difficult for the reader without an independent (i.e., non-Craniac) source of information to discern what is truth and what is smear when it comes to *Update's* coverage of the Machine's enemies. *Update* will brook no obstacles — and spare no trick of biased journalism — to advance the unfettered control of movement activism by the Crane Machine. To be a resister of Craniac views is, in *Update's* eyes, to be a nincompoop, a ranting factionalist, or (can you believe this) a sellout of libertarian principle.

We shall see why, and how, all of these statements are true about *Update* in the analysis that follows. Although thus far we have made no pretense of approaching the matter with a false air of impartial reporting, a reading of the following will be seen to be more logical and factual than what we have become used to on the pages of *Update*. We invite the reader to analyze this, and to check our statements about *Update* for himself.

1. In the Beginning

From the start *Update* was easily perceived — by trained eyes — as the organ of the Crane faction. In its very first issue, quips and snide remarks were directed at those not in association with the Crane Machine: After criticizing a *Reason* magazine article by Rees proposing the sale of passports, *Update* cracked: "In the same issue, ironically, Murray N. Rothbard makes the 'case for libertarian pessimism'; having one's own article appear in a libertarian magazine alongside Ree's would indeed tend to make one a trifle pessimistic."

It's interesting that *Update* would fault Rothbard for having his work published in such unworthy company...but, after thirteen issues, it still has never written anything about the decidedly unlibertarian comments that have aired on "Byline," Crane's Cato Institute's radio-commentary show. What's more, Murray Rothbard doesn't decide what goes into *Reason*, and in all likelihood did not even *know* the rest of the contents of the *Reason* issue prior to its publication. But Cato presumably *does* control "Byline"! This is the first instance in a long series of *Update*'s practice of pointing to (real or alleged) faults or problems in their "enemies," while ignoring similar faults and problems in their allies. If *Update* postures as keeper of libertarian principle (as we shall see over and over), then why doesn't it, in its intrepid analysis of purity in the actions and pronouncements of others, apply the same surgical knife to its own buddies?

That first issue carried summaries of the then-candidates for LP National Chair (Dallas Cooley, Kent Guida, John Mason). In its first act of "Updating," *Update* offered positive and negative comments about each candidate (it did not say *who* made these comments). For Cooley and Mason, the negative comments concerned points of substance that, if true, could affect the attractiveness of the candidate. Of Cooley, who was at the time LP National Treasurer, *Update* said, "It's hard to tell where he stands on anything," and "He hasn't watched the LNC finances very closely." Of Mason, the negative remarks were "He hasn't really done anything on the National Committee," and that he was "too tied in with the Rothbard faction." Guida (who most assuredly was and is tied in with the Craniac faction) escaped with the silly and innocuous "He's too short" and "Don't know anything about him."

Guida also received *Update*'s most positive comments: "He knows a lot about libertarian theory" (presenting him as strong in libertarian background), and "He did a great job with ballot drives and organizational work" (a quality activist, too!); while Cooley's pro side was limited to the vacuous "being very generous to the party" and "looking like a chairman," and Mason "has been a hard worker" and "has a good sense of humor." Guida got the substantial praise and the innocuous criticism; his competitors, just the opposite. Hmmm. *Update* did not endorse any candidate officially — its reporting practices took care of that.

2. Unfulfilled Promises I

In the second of many attacks on Rothbard, *Update* began "a contest" in June 1981, "Name That Author." This was to be, supposedly, "the first in its soon-to-be famous 'Occasional Contests' series." The quotation that followed was a ringing call for burying intramovement hatreds and working together for Liberty. The author turned out to be Murray Rothbard; the effect was to embarrass Rothbard for his well-known critique of the Crane Machine and the 1980 Clark for President (CFP)

campaign, of which Hocker (first *Update* editor) *et al.* were in control. It is ironic, given *Update*'s thinly-disguised partisanship, that it would publish an ecumenical passage. But then, *Update* poses as an impartial rag dedicated to the benefit of the movement as a whole.

And the "soon-to-be famous 'Occasional Contests' series"? As of this writing, that one, in June 1981, has been the only one *Update* has conducted. One is hard-pressed to avoid thinking it was devised merely to take a cheap shot at Rothbard and to ridicule the forces for principled campaigning.

3. SLS Whitewash

Update's August 1981 article on the SLS Convention claimed there was "unity" in SLS and made a point of asserting the Radical Caucus' lack of influence at the Convention. (The Radical Caucus have been acerbic critics of the pre-1982, opportunist SLS National Office faction). Half the article discussed resolutions and strategy decisions made at the Convention, giving the impression that the affair was an activist-oriented huddle dedicated to discovering how best to further the cause of Liberty in the upcoming year.

In fact only one, Sunday morning session out of the three-day affair was concerned with resolutions. The major, and quite heated, debate dealt with the internal structure of SLS in the face of drastic cuts in Koch funding. While it mentioned the Radical Caucus twice (both times in glee over the "virtual shut-out" of the Radical Caucus), the report made no mention of a third force present at the Convention which did have an effect upon the course of events. This "Non Caucus," which proposed to decentralize SLS and reduce the powers of the Craniac-dominated SLS National Office, had *more* support than the RC, but received no mention by *Update*. Nor did *Update* report on the hectic night before the debate on an SLS constitution, which Milton Mueller and friends spent bargaining with this "Non Caucus" in an attempt to head off the new opposition to their control. But it would have looked bad for *Update*'s friends who arranged the closed-door meeting, to seem like power-broking politicians. Instead, SLS' Convention was "smooth," whereas in truth it was stormy and revealed deep-seated and unresolved differences in organizational philosophy between significant sectors of the movement.

4. Updating the November LNC Meeting

The same *Update* claimed, in another article, that RC leader Bill Evers, a member of a NatComm subcommittee appointed to look into the issue of the CFP campaign's FCC complaint against NBC, had issued a report critical of CFP's actions, "with neither the knowledge or consent of the other subcommittee member, Andrea Millen Rich." This was false, since Evers had already read all the details of his report to Andrea Rich. Then, in its November 1981 issue, *Update* reported on that month's NatComm (LNC) meeting. In that article's section on the Libertarian Congressional Committee (LCC), *Update* said "A move by Murray Rothbard to replace Ross Levatter with Jorge Amador of Pa. was defeated."

What is interesting about *Update*'s reporting on LCC, in sharp contrast to its earlier report on Evers, is that Howie Rich — LCC Chair and Andrea Rich's husband — gave a report at the LNC meeting that purported to be the "LCC report." This report, as Amador has indicated, was given without knowledge or consent of other LCC members, including Amador. *Update*

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CRANE'S GRAND DESIGN FOR UPDATE

Editor's Note: To accompany our critique of *Update*, we publish the following secret September 1981 plan written by Ed Crane for the future of *Update*. In a paragraph of the memo on classified ad revenue — one that we have omitted for space reasons — Crane anticipated that by September 1982 *Update's* circulation would reach 5,000. Want to bet? An interesting thought presents itself as one reads this memo. The famous and fascinating July 26, 1982 *Fortune* article on the feud in the Koch family suggests that Charles Koch is leading David Koch astray. This memo suggests rather that it is Ed Crane who is leading David Koch astray.

September 16, 1981

Memorandum

TO: Chris Hocker, Leslie Key, David Koch,
and other Interested Parties
FROM: Ed Crane
SUBJECT: *Update*

What with all the changes going on these days I thought it would be appropriate to put down in writing some thoughts concerning the future of *Update*. To begin with, Dr. Hocker's new position as publisher of *Inquiry* probably makes it inappropriate for him to continue to be responsible for *Update*. This is true both because of the more than full-time job involved in getting *Inquiry* on its feet and headed in the right direction and because the magazine should not be directly connected to the libertarian movement (this despite the fact that it needs to become more explicitly libertarian in its editorial policy). Which means we're stuck with the lovely and vivacious Leslie Key who resides in Madison, Canada. I would recommend that she begin her responsibilities as editor of *Update* with the November issue. We could pay her, say, \$500 a month for assuming this responsibility. David Koch has indicated he will kick in \$10,000 to *Update* next year. If Leslie is very nice to him we might be able to talk him into \$5,000 more (right, David?). There should be a production manager in Washington, D.C. who will function as Leslie's assistant editor as well as being in charge of getting the newsletter and direct mail efforts physically printed and mailed. That person could be an employee of the Libertarian Review Foundation who has other responsibilities and works on *Update* one-third to one-half of the time. I'm open to suggestions as to who that person should be. Let us, then, get on with the analysis of what we want to do with *Update*...

Columns - I'd like to retain Birmingham to do one page worth of his Opening Shots (although we should probably change the title and put the column somewhere toward the back of the newsletter). Because of the nature of the newsletter he might mix real world commentary in with comments about movement activities. The thought of Birmingham on Rothbard is exhilarating [sic] to contemplate. He must, of course, be watched for his heresies and therefore should be requested to submit about 30% more items than we can run. There should be a Washington *Update* column which analyzes what's going on in Congress and the White House from an explicitly libertarian perspective. Perhaps Sheldon could write this. We should bring

back Grinder's old *Crosscurrents* column which discusses intellectual trends of relevance to the movement. Whether Walter or Tyler Cowen and his crew should write it I do not know.

Book Reviews - Libertarians are notorious book readers and we could add to the salability of *Update* if we had a page devoted to short, pithy reviews of current books. Riggensbach might be the book review editor if he could be directed away from obscure 19th Century fiction writers

The News - This has to be the main focus of the newsletter. We need hardhitting news stories about the movement (broadly interpreted to include such groups as anti-war, pro-gold, NORML, etc.). These articles should have as many direct quotes from the personalities involved as possible. The person asking the question should be intelligent and know from what perspective we want information (that means you, Leslie). For instance, someone should have interviewed me about my reaction to the national convention. A lead story could focus on the fact that there are only three Alicia Clark supporters on a 35-person national committee. This, it seems to me, is of extreme relevance to the future of the party. Articles, editorials, and columns should not appear to be pure puff pieces for the Machine. We should have some criticism of our own people and activities where it is appropriate. We must never take on the tone that *frontlines* has — it really discredits what they're trying to accomplish. On the other hand, we do have to keep the newsletter focused on our objectives and it needs to be interesting in order to get readers so we shouldn't avoid controversy and we should seek out the sexier elements of stories. There needs to be many more news stories than we are currently putting into *Update*.

Editorials - There should be one well thought out editorial in each issue. Anyone from Boaz to Hocker to Crane to Herbert to all of the geniuses that comprise our merry band of plotters could write it. Which brings up a relevant point. We should have a conference call with Leslie each month to go over what should be in the upcoming issue. The people in Washington can get together on an informal basis to come up with ideas, as well. All of us should be willing to write articles from time to time so the entire burden doesn't fall on Leslie and the production manager.

Calendar of Upcoming Events - I'd like to see an entire page devoted to upcoming libertarian events, again widely defined. . . . Remember that this is an opportunity to show up Bill Burt and his three functions in the country for the whole month trick. . . .

Political Analysis - It would be a good idea to have a article from Riggensbach or Childs or Hocker or Sheldon on some current political issues from time to time if not in each issue. We need to have *LR* type articles (only shorter) which explain the libertarian position on current major issues.

All in all I think if we follow this approach we will have an excellent newsletter which will generate a large amount of interest. . . . Comments but no criticisms are welcome. □

THE POST OFFICE AS CENSOR

by Dyanne M. Petersen

You probably never read the booklet *Stale Food vs. Fresh Food* — and you probably never will. That's because the Postal Service, in its supreme wisdom, has banned the booklet from being distributed through the U.S. mails. And when you hear the whole story you'll want to check your calendar to make sure the year isn't 1984!

In February 1981, postal inspectors busted a Mississippi man for distributing a 42-page booklet he wrote, published, and advertised which explained his theory of how fresh foods, when properly prepared, could help to keep one's arteries clean. "\$4.40 a copy plus 60 cents for postage. Makes a fine gift. Order extra copies for your friends," the ad read. Sounds pretty harmless so far, right?

Certainly not! At least according to postal authorities. Mr. Ford, our fresh food advocate, was charged with "engaging in the conduct of a scheme or device to obtain money or property through the mail by means of materially false representations in violation of 39 U.S.C. 30005." The case went to trial before one Edwin Bernstein, a Federal Administrative Law Judge, who found Mr. Ford guilty as charged. The verdict was appealed and upheld. Not on the grounds that the ad misrepresented the information provided in the booklet, but because "the representations of the booklet were contrary to the weight of informed medical and scientific opinion." As a result, Mr. Ford was forced to take his booklet — his ideas — off the market.

Maureen Salaman, President of the National Health Federation, is justifiably concerned over the Ford decision. "Those of us who are concerned with developing new, innovative and poison-free approaches to health care do so knowing that the present-day 'weight of scientific and medical opinion' see things differently," writes Ms. Salaman. "The 'weight of informed medical and scientific opinion' once held that the earth was flat, that the sun revolved around the earth, that 'bleeding' a sick person was a cure for illness.... Where new ideas have been suppressed, the growth of human knowledge has stagnated. Where free inquiry has been encouraged, progress has been made in years rather than centuries."

It's a frightening proposition that the postal service, under present legislation, can arbitrarily suppress ideas with which it does not fully agree. Their censorship, if carried to a consistent conclusion, could therefore apply to more than medical publications that dare to contradict informed opinion. Consider all the publications that resist accepted or "informed" economic, philosophical, political, and psychological opinion! You can kiss *The Libertarian Forum* goodbye. And save some kisses for anything written by people like Mises, Rand, Hayek, Nock, Chodorov, Szasz, Barnes, *ad infinitum*.

Keep the precedent established in the Ford case in your mind while you read what is now pending in Congress.

H.R. 3973, introduced in the House by Rep. Claude

("Red") Pepper (D., Fla.), and S. 1407, introduced by David Pryor (D. Ark.) in the Senate, were proposed to help stop "mail fraud." Under this guise, the bills have attracted support by 300 cosponsors in the House and 16 in the Senate. President Reagan's Office of Management and Budget has duly given these bills its support.

The bills will give new, expanded powers to the U.S. Postal Service to regulate what is being sent through the mail, allowing it to serve as prosecutor, judge, and jury in determining the guilt of the accused party. The bills would require the accused to open his business records to postal inspection or face a maximum \$10,000 per day penalty. If one is simply an employee or agent of the accused, he or she can be held in violation as well. (Employees of Laissez Faire Books, watch out!) Moreover, the bills could also forbid the shipment or transportation of the banned publication by a private vehicle or any other means of transport, as well as through the mails.

According to *Publisher's Weekly*, "an average of at least one book a year has been successfully banned by the U.S. Postal Service during the past 20 years." Publishers, needless to say, want to end this practice. The Association of American Publishers retained Ian D. Volner to testify before a House Post Office subcommittee and ask that proposed legislation to greatly expand "police powers of the Postal Service be amended to bar 'an unfortunate tradition of suppression' of books it believes to contain 'false ideas.'"

Volner charged that since 1959 "the Postal Service has attacked at least 17 books and publications outright, and has proceeded against many others." He added that there may be numerous other cases because "the sale of many other books via the mails has been interrupted by proceedings that ended in settlement or capitulation by the publishers — thus leaving little written record of the nature of the book or of the complaint against it."

Ms. Salaman believes that "this bill stands a very good chance of becoming law this year...in the name of protecting the public from false representation." She feels that the fight can be won "but it will take a maximum effort to succeed." The National Health Federation, after winning "this round in the ongoing battle for good health and freedom," will go on the offensive. They propose to "get a bill through Congress abolishing the government monopoly on postal service, so that never again will would-be Thought Police be able to come so close to eliminating freedom of choice and freedom of thought in the land of the free." Hard core!

If H.R. 3973 and S. 1407 are passed, forget about constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, ideas, and expression. The post office will let us know what we can read and which ideas are acceptable for dissemination and consumption. Orwell was right. He was just a little optimistic about the year. The Thought Police may be at our mail boxes two years early! □

THE ASSAULT ON ABORTION FREEDOM

Debating vital issues is fine and proper; but there must come a time when debate gives way to action, else there is no point to a debate to begin with. Over the years, the *Lib. Forum* has probably given more space to the pros and cons of the abortion question than has any other libertarian periodical. With all due respect to our colleagues who believe that abortion is murder and therefore unjustifiable and criminal, the time for action on the abortion issue has now arrived. We can wait no longer to attempt to convert every libertarian on this question. For the rights, the lives, the liberties, the happiness of countless women in America are now under severe assault. The right to abortion, finally recognized by the Supreme Court in 1973, is in grave danger.

After holding off his Moral Majority supporters for a year, President Reagan has now given the green light to federal attempts to stamp out abortion by law. The two major attempts are the Hatch Amendment to allow any state to outlaw abortion, and the Helms bill to declare the fetus as human with full human rights from the moment of conception. The Hatch effort, being a constitutional amendment, is not an imminent threat, since it would have to go through the drawn-out ratification process by three-quarters of the states. The Helms bill is more radical and sweeping, and can pass by a mere majority of Congress. It must be stopped.

One point that our anti-abortionists have never considered should be emphasized here, a point which the Helms bill would throw into sharp relief. The fundamental axiom of the anti-abortionists is that abortion is murder. But murder is not the only crime against human beings. If the fetus is to have full human rights, then it must be protected against more crimes than murder. There is, for example, assault. Surely, when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, or smokes cigarettes, this ingestion causes an assault against, an "insult to," the fetus. But, in that case, these are tort actions which must be declared illegal, and stoppable by injunction. And not just cigarettes and alcohol. If a pregnant woman eats an unbalanced diet, the fetus suffers. If a pregnant woman is overly emotional, this injures the fetus. But then all these actions become torts and crimes, and must be proceeded against by full majesty of the law.

Okay, pro-lifers, are you willing to accept the ineluctable consequences; that pregnant women are to be prevented by armed force from drinking, smoking, eating unbalanced meals, and becoming upset? And how many Gestapo members are you going to enlist in snooping on pregnant women, and how in blazes are you going to enforce the protection of these fetal "rights"? How are you going to accomplish all this except by putting every pregnant woman in a cage and making sure that all the proper substances and none of the improper substances are going to be injected by the fetus?

For that is the logic of the anti-abortionists: not just trying and convicting all pregnant women and their doctors who engage in abortions, but installing a totalitarian despotism over every pregnant woman. To go a step further: won't there have to be government spies in every bedroom to spot pregnancies as soon as they occur, so that the pregnant-women-in-a-cage doctrine can be put into effect the moment conception takes place? □

SMEAR (Continued from page 2)

did not say this about its friend Howie Rich, although it did not

hesitate to make a similar claim about Bill Evers, a Craniac critic.

Nor did *Update* report that Amador had been an LCC member, and had been critical of Howie Rich's failure to initiate action in seven months as LCC Chair — or to communicate with LCC members. By not reporting these facts, *Update* protected Howie Rich's reputation as a take-charge activist, and conveyed the impression that Amador was merely a last-minute, unqualified nominee by the sectarian Rothbard. Rothbard was actually only trying to reinstate Amador to a position he had held since LCC's inception, and from which he'd been kicked out by the Crane Machine. How interesting, in light of *Update*'s explicit dictum that "we present *all the facts* in a given situation so that our readers may make up their own minds" (emphasis added)! Apparently, Amador's having been an original LCC member and a critic of Howie Rich's failure did not count as relevant facts. Not only did *Update* not mention Rich's inaction with LCC, it went the other way to quote him as saying "We are a work-oriented committee" — an amazing statement for a person who, in seven months as Chair, had held a grand total of *one* meeting. (Rich was busy managing Kent Guida's campaign, a matter of much greater importance than Libertarian campaigning against statists.)

In the aforementioned story on Evers and the FCC, *Update* quoted Craniac Jule Herbert as saying that Evers' inclusion of 18 "libertarian scholars" in a letter on the CFP complaint, was a "phony argument from authority and it doesn't address the issue." On the other hand, *Update* had no qualms in listing among Kent Guida's supporters for LP National Chair (Mar.-Apr. '81): "Howie Rich, Clark National Ballot Drive Co-ordinator and Steering Committee member; Andrea Rich, National Committee member and former National Vice Chair; Cissy Webb, former Illinois party chair." Quite an impressive-looking assortment of titles and offices supporting their candidate, isn't it? So much for "arguments from authority." Among John Mason's supporters were listed "members of the 'Coalition for a Party of Principle', including David Nolan, Murray Rothbard, and *Reason* editor Robert Poole." Why didn't *Update* report Nolan's membership in the Libertarian National Committee, as it faithfully reported the most high-sounding titles for Guida's supporters — including membership in the Libertarian National Committee? Updating, my friend, that's all. *Update* wouldn't want to overextend itself blowing up the credentials of their competitor's supporters.

While we're on the subject, Craniac logician Herbert might be surprised to learn that, in refuting Evers' alleged "phony argument from authority," he himself made a phony *ad hominem* argument. He tried to discredit Evers' letter by saying that "two of these scholars have been telling people they voted for Reagan." How does *that* address the issue of whether libertarian principle was violated, oh Jule?

Speaking of David Nolan, he was the victim of another case where *Update* went out of its way to take a cheap shot at a Craniac critic. In the September-October '81 issue, an article entitled "National Committee Gears Up for '82" said that 15 candidates for the LP Judicial Committee were not elected, "including David Nolan." The reader will be left to ponder why Nolan was singled out from among the 15. Surely he wasn't the only noteworthy unsuccessful candidate, for that committee or others....

The same article referred to the possibility that the new

LNC would be factional, due to the fact that most of the members had supported one or another of the National Chair candidates. *Update* had a peculiar way of listing the factional makeup of the LNC: "just 5...supported Clark's race...; 10 supported Mason's candidacy, and the remainder either supported Guida (who is himself a member of the LNC) or did not make their positions on the Chair's race public." Why did *Update* refuse to report the number of Guida (Craniac) supporters on NatComm — so as not to reveal the true strength of the low-tax liberal, opportunist camp?

Returning to *Update*'s treatment of the November NatComm meeting, *Update* laid the blame for the factionalism that did develop, on Craniac opponents who held a caucus Saturday night, November 7. In reality a number of votes earlier that day had already revealed a deep split between the Guida and Clark-Mason camps. *Update* claimed this caucus was "closed," quoted a couple of caucus attendees as saying so, and listed several people who attended — all of whom have various degrees of independence from (or opposition to) Craniac domination. It did not say that Guida supporter Dick Randolph attended the meeting with a comprehensive list of proposals for the next day's agenda — a list which could only have been drawn up with extensive consultation with the Craniac faction; nor did *Update* report that this "closed" meeting was attended by several people who are not even members of NatComm. In its zeal to lay the blame for factionalism on its opponents, Craniac organ *Update* seems to have little problem with omitting facts and even altering them to suit its purposes.

Anti-Craniac forces were smeared another way in the same infamous article. It proudly announces that "*Update*'s research indicates that, besides Murray Rothbard,...the only NatComm member who actually works for the government is Emil Franz, who is employed by the Pima County (Arizona) government." (Franzi was a leading Alicia Clark — i.e., non-Guida — supporter in the Chair race.) This "research" turned out to be wrong on two counts. First, Rothbard's university is a private institution, and he is thus not a government employee. *Update* ran a retraction of this assertion, and printed two letters pointing to the error. The first letter printed was by Kent Guida, and was a cool, collected refutation of *Update*'s assertion. The "second" was Rothbard's letter, which in his usual hard-hitting style, stated that *Update* was "flatly, perhaps even maliciously wrong." One cannot escape wondering whether Guida's calm letter was written to order for the purpose of contrasting it with Rothbard's, and so that *Update* could issue its retraction in answer to friend Guida and not Rothbard.

Not only that: in his correction letter, Guida managed to take an irrelevant and false swipe at Rothbard as holding that *all* universities in the United States are in effect public anyway. This is in stark contrast to Rothbard's oft-repeated view that any university gaining more than 50% of its income from private sources may be held to be privately owned, and *vice versa*. Again, the impact was to take the sting out of the "retraction," and as far as possible to continue to put the blame on Rothbard for *Update*'s false statements.

Second, there was the failure to mention, as David Bergland put it in *Frontlines*, Dick Randolph's "rather substantial relationship with the government of Alaska." Randolph is close to the Crane camp, of course, so *his* governmental connections went unreported in the smear of anti-Craniacs. Or are we supposed to accept the line that Dick, as an elected representative of the people of Fairbanks, really works for "the people" and not the government??

5. Updating SLS

Elsewhere in that issue, *Update* reported that "15 new SLS chapters" had been started since Kathleen Jacob became SLS National Director in August 1981. The news item was titled "SLS Picks Up Support." In spite of *Update*'s zeal to keep readers informed of what's going on in the movement, *Update* never told its readers of the numbers of SLS chapters when these were dwindling. Specifically, *Update* did *not* say that the 15 new chapters placed the total of SLS chapters in the mid-50's, whereas *sixty-nine* chapters had been reported to be in active existence at the SLS Student Board meeting immediately prior to the SLS Convention that elected Jacob. Again, *Update* reports favorable news about its pet groups, and ignores unfavorable facts about them. But pity the poor, beleaguered reporters at *Update*! They don't *really* build bias into their articles, do they? Maybe they're just incompetent journalists, and it's simply a big coincidence that they never manage to find the unfavorable facts about their friends, but do find negative things about their enemies — and, of course, dutifully report these in the "best interest of the movement."

As a case in point of the above statement, on the same page where the article on SLS appeared there was an item reporting the decline in membership and registration of the California LP and Libertarian Council. *Update* could have handled this case the same way as it treated SLS, by reporting how many new LP registrations and Council members had joined, but instead it chose to report their *overall* decline. By contrast, *Update* reported the new SLS chapters, without stating the *overall* decline. Reason? For a possible clue to this unequal treatment, we quote *Update*: "Mike Hall is the chair of the California Libertarian Council, while Bill Evers chairs the LP of California...."

The January 1982 *Update*'s report on the Center for Libertarian Studies' Ludwig von Mises Centennial Dinner served as a forum for a Craniac, and featured more Updating. After noting that President Reagan had sent a telegram to CLS praising Mises, *Update* had Andrea Millen Rich sound off on the "vast differences" between Mises and conservatives, and complain about conservatives claiming Mises "as one of theirs." Perhaps Rich is not aware that Mises, far from being a consistent libertarian, considered Communism the greatest evil to threaten the West and, in *Human Action*, even supported the military draft to defend against the Commies. *Update* gave one of its own a soapbox, and she fell off it.

The article then went on to discuss CLS' financial problems. Anti-Craniac Rothbard is associated with CLS, so *Update* was quick to point out CLS' troubles. Coverage of CLS' problems continued with a front-page item in the February *Update*. (To its credit, *Update* did report CLS' funding growth and future plans in its September-October '81 issue.) But *Update*'s dedicated investigative reporters seemingly were ignorant of the similar—or even deeper—financial woes of SLS, which is located in their backyard in Washington, DC. In contrast to the two-article, multiple-quotation coverage given to CLS's money troubles, *Update* has kept mum about SLS's travails following the loss of 90% of their Koch funding and failure to replace it with new contributors. While SLS's troubles began in September 1981 (and loss of Koch funding was known since July or August, at the latest), *Update* did not report on this until June 1982, when there was but a brief reference to SLS's "serious and ongoing financial problems"—and *then* only presented it in a less detractive light by linking it to the more positive-looking expectation of achieving non-profit, tax-deductible status. ■

Will the *REAL* Tom Palmer Please Stand Up?

by Derrick "Ed" Welles

Taxation is one of the most important features of Statism that libertarians can assail. Not just because extorting taxes from people is one of the multifarious ways in which the State commits wide-scale aggression, or even because it's one of the most obvious and burdensome forms of oppression, but also because the continuation of many of government's other aggressive activities depend on the steady influx of funds to finance them. Thus it is fitting for, and indeed behooves, libertarians to assail the concept of taxation and to struggle against taxes.

Much to our surprise and delight, the *New York Times* ran a piece on Tax Day, April 15, attacking taxation. It was written by a libertarian — by that LP veteran and Koch-era SLS officer, Tom Palmer. Painfully aware of his previous association with the low-tax liberal forces who managed the Clark campaign, SLS, Cato and many other libertarian institutions through 1981, we were doubly pleased to read these words from Tom Palmer's pen:

While the Internal Revenue Service boasts of a 'voluntary compliance' system of tax collection, the fact is that taxation is carried out at the point of a gun. If you choose not to pay — whatever reason — armed men will seize you and forcibly take you to jail. If you resist, violence will be used against you. This is not 'voluntary compliance.' It is theft.

Bravo Tom!

Only a few weeks later, we received our copy of *Update*, the Craniac organ. Amid the routine (and silly) denunciations of everyone known to have resisted their control, and the gushy praise for anyone who does submit to their benevolent rule, was quoted another Tom Palmer statement:

...(T)here have been other negative reactions to Project Liberty's strategy (of *Libertarians' advocating repeal of the Income Tax Amendment* — Ed.). Tom Palmer...told *Update* that most voters 'perceive drives to amend the constitution as "kooky," unless they have a tremendous amount of support, as in the case of the Equal Rights Amendment or the Balanced Budget Amendment.' He said this particular drive, which was started by the Liberty Amendment Committee over fifty years ago, has 'definite right-wing connotations in the eyes of the media.'

Whew, Tom, how can we keep up with you? Just this April past you were describing taxation as theft. Now you criticize trying to abolish the income tax as having "right-wing connotations." Are we supposed to think that it's bad to address issues and call for action on them, just because they have "right-wing connotations"? Then perhaps we oughtn't talk about property rights or the free market because these, too, are

tainted with "right-wing connotations." Let's let the CIA, Selective Service, and EPA continue their fine work financed by taxation we're afraid to attack. Which is the real Tom Palmer: the public Tom Palmer who stands steadfast for libertarian principle, or the private (intra-movement) Tom Palmer who counsels his fellow libertarians to avoid "right-wing connotations"?

But maybe we're being a bit unfair to Tom. *Update* preceded his remarks by saying "there have been other negative reactions" to the income-tax repeal campaign promoted by Project Liberty (which was founded by Craniac critic David Nolan — perhaps reason enough for *Update* to reject the anti-tax strategy), whereupon Tom was quoted, presumably to illustrate one of these "negative reactions." So we read his quote accordingly. Upon closer reading, however, the statement that an issue has "right-wing connotations" doesn't necessarily imply disapproval. It's simply a sentence expressing Tom Palmer's view on what the media thinks of the issue. It needn't mean that he disapproves of taking up a "right-wing" issue. If so, our apologies go to Tom, and all our venom goes instead to *Update* for printing Tom's remarks in a misleading manner — or, at least, for once more making impressive-looking claims unfavorable to Craniac opponents ("there have been other negative reactions to Project Liberty") without a shred of substantiation. □

*That politician tops his part,
Who readily can lie with art:
The man's proficient in his trade;
His pow'r is strong, his fortune's made.*

—John Gay

*The field of politics always presents the same struggle.
There are the Right and the Left, and in the middle is the
Swamp. The Swamp is made up of the know-nothings, of
them who are without ideas, of them who are always with
the majority.*

—August Bebel

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DON'T CRY FOR IRAQ

Watch out: if Iran continues to do well in its war against Iraq, the Kept Press will complete a process already begun — the magical transformation of the Iraqi regime from Soviet puppet to free-world hero. Only a year or two ago, Iraq was supposed to be a vicious tool of the Soviet Union; now already it is becoming a free-world bulwark against Khomeini Shiite expansionism.

Before we all get swept away by the new line, what are the facts? In the first place, let's not forget that it was the Iraq regime that launched the war in September 1980. After winning spectacular victories, the Iraq army was ground to a halt. Finally, during 1982, Iran began to drive Iraq out of its territory, at the same time rejecting typical demands by the United States for a cease-fire. ("Typical" in the sense that cease-fire calls are generally a pacifist-seeming mask for leaving existing conquests intact.) In June, the expulsion process was completed, and on July 14, Iran began its retaliatory invasion of Iraq. So, on the level of who started the war, the culpability is clearly Iraq's, and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein can hardly be taken seriously now in griping about Irani expansionism. In short, Iran did not launch the war.

What of Iraq's original demands? Were they justifiable? They were border demands, breaking a 1975 agreement between the two countries on long-standing territorial disputes. Hussein's case was mixed; it is true that the agreement was forced upon him by the Shah of Iran's regime; and it is also true that three islands at the mouth of the Persian gulf are ethnically Arab and not Persian. On the other hand, the major territorial claim — of Iraq sovereignty over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway — is an arrogant attempt to "own" the entire river, whereas Iran

chose the sensible course of splitting sovereignty down the middle of the river: in effect, joint sovereignty over the river. On the whole, then, it would seem that Iraq's case scarcely justified launching the war.

Don't cry for Iraq in another sense. The Iraq regime is a despicable dictatorship under the totalitarian despotism of Saddam Hussein, whose picture graces every home and office in Iraq. Hussein rules through the socialist Ba'ath Party, which has cells and cadres in every government department, school, and neighborhood. Speech and press are curbed by the fact that no Iraqi is allowed to own a typewriter without license from the government. When Saddam Hussein launched the invasion of Iran, his controlled media hailed the conflict as "Saddam's Qadesiyya," the notable seventh century battle in which the Arabs drove the Persians out of Mesopotamia. This time, however, Saddam drove out of Mesopotamia and into Iran.

But even more important: the Khomeini regime carries with it the inspiration of Shiite fundamentalism, attempting to uproot Hussein, who is not only a secular socialist, but also the ruler of a Sunni Muslim minority over a Shiite majority in Iraq. The key, as so often in world history, is religion, and the Saddam dictatorship is minority rule of Sunni over Shiite. Hence, the Iranians might possibly be able to inspire the Shiite masses, not only in Iraq, but also on the east coast of Saudi Arabia, to rise up and try to control their own destinies. Which might mean that the feudal-slave owning oil barons of the Middle East might be toppled from their thrones: and where would U.S. oil imperialism be then? Hence the U.S. drift toward Iraq which might be coming in the next few months. □

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