

# LETTERS

## tribute

*Marietta, Ga.*

It is a tribute to your usual wise selectivity to have printed the remarkable article by L.S. Stavrianos, "American Skepticism: The Mandarin View of China" [*The Nation*, Feb. 8]. . . . Such incisive understanding of contemporary history is rare among present-day intellectuals, most of whom are blinded by a paranoid fear of our crumbling Western society. . . .

*M.J. Mooshie*

## offshore oil

*Washington, D.C.*

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings . . . errs in "Oil & Influence: The Rush to the Sea" [*The Nation*, Jan. 18] when he charges that the federal government's plan to accelerate the sale of offshore oil and gas leases constitutes "one of the biggest potential giveaways of all time." He is also wrong when he says the proposed offshore leasing program would be carried on without environmental protection, without concern for pollution of beaches, and without a fair return to the public.

As the Senator knows, the federal government gives away nothing when it sells the right to search for oil and gas in offshore waters. If anything, these sales can be said to produce "windfall profits" for the government, because oil companies pay into the U.S. Treasury enormous amounts of cash before any drilling begins—money which may not be recovered for many years, if ever. . . .

As for environmental protection, the oil companies and the federal government follow the complex procedures prescribed by law to make certain that every possible step is taken to prevent environmental damage in connection with expanded offshore activities. A preliminary environmental programmatic statement dealing with the leasing of 10 million acres on the outer continental shelf was prepared some months ago, and hearings were slated to be held in Trenton, N.J., Santa Monica, Calif., and Anchorage, Alas., beginning early in February. In addition, specific hearings will be held in each area. . . .

The industry takes pride in its exceptional safety record. More than 18,000 wells have been drilled in U.S. offshore waters over the past quarter-century, and one could count on the fingers of one hand the number of significant oil spills. None of those spills caused permanent ecological damage. Drilling and spill-control technology are constantly moving forward.

Senator Hollings is the victim of misinformation when he charges that the oil and gas companies are deliberately holding back production from thousands of wells in the Gulf of Mexico in efforts to force higher prices. The federal agencies who are responsible for regulating such matters have investigated that recurring rumor and have announced that there is no truth in it. . . .

The Senator complains that new leases sold in 1975 could "produce no energy in the next few years when we need it," so he recommends delaying any action until the government can organize its own exploratory drilling program. . . . The oil-exporting nations have quadrupled their prices because they know we and other nations cannot get along without imports. They would be delighted to see us give up on developing our greatest potential source of energy—the offshore area which is comprised mostly of the federal outer continental shelf.

*Wilson M. Laird*

*American Petroleum Institute*

*Washington, D.C.*

The essential differences in viewpoint between Mr. Laird and myself stem, I believe, from our different approaches to predicting the consequences of a massive offshore leasing program in 1975. While Mr. Laird relies primarily on the industry's past record, I believe that a quantum leap

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# EDITORIALS

## Grasping at an Analogy

After taking five months to prepare a program, the President tossed it to the Congress in early January and, without waiting a decent interval for a considered response, took out across the country making speeches of Harry Truman 1948 vintage about a do-nothing Congress. If the President hopes that the people will sense an analogy and respond as they did to Truman, he is mistaken. The analogy is false. In 1948 the Democratic Party still carried a New Deal image. Truman had strong support from organized labor; his campaign was launched at a massive labor rally in Cadillac Square in Detroit, where Ford would hesitate to show his face today. Also, Truman had an established political base; he had been elected Vice President over Wallace and had campaigned with Roosevelt. The economic scene in 1948 was not at all comparable to the present economic scene. Ford represents the party of big business. He has no labor support; even the Teamsters denounce him. And his program can hardly be called "progressive."

That the President should have opted for the Truman strategy is not merely a reflection on his political judgment: it confirms the impression that he presented a program which he knew Congress would not accept without major modifications. But the public is in no mood for "confrontation" politics; it wants strong national leadership, not politics as usual. In much the same way, Ford's nervous denials of recent reports that he might not seek re-election in 1976 lacked credibility because they coincided with his lowest ratings in the polls. It would have been better politics, in the circumstances, if he had ignored the reports and acted as though he were concentrating his attention on the nation's problems, with no thought to 1976. In these and other ways Mr. Ford continues to enhance his growing reputation as a political bungler.

At the New York Republican ceremony honoring the Vice President, the President again sought to stress the Truman analogy. As though we had not fought two wars in the interval, he appealed for bipartisan foreign policy support of the kind associated with the memory of Arthur H. Vandenberg. But again the analogy is false. Roosevelt skillfully cultivated Vandenberg's support because he wanted to insure ratification of the U.N. Charter, thereby avoiding the mistake Wilson had made in not lining up Republican support for the covenant of the League of Nations. The so-called bipartisan foreign policy was designed as a temporary tactic to meet a specific problem, but with the rapid onset of the cold war the temporary alliance for a limited objective became the absurd dogma that "politics stops at the water's edge." Actually, the American party system grew in part out of a dispute over foreign policy; debates on foreign policy had, in fact, been a staple of our politics until the cold war froze, for the better part of two decades, whatever critical intelligence remained in the Senate. Even now Democratic opposition to aspects of the Administration's foreign policy does not question the underlying cold-war assumptions; in most instances Democratic criticism has been advanced belatedly,

reluctantly and almost apologetically, as in the current temporizing debate on aid to Vietnam.

In challenging Congress to give him the same support that Senator Vandenberg sought and got for Truman, the President is barking up the wrong tree. Not only is the analogy misleading but in retrospect it should be clear that the unnatural extension of the Vandenberg-Truman accord was largely responsible for the worst of the cold-war debacles, including Vietnam. In appealing for a renewal of an uncritical bipartisan consensus the President probably arouses more apprehension than enthusiasm. Coming when it did, Truman's death naturally invited comparison of his record with Nixon's wretched performance and, for the moment, arrested the steadily downward adjustment of Truman's reputation in the field of foreign policy. But even now it is not a record that a shrewd politician would want to latch onto uncritically.

## Waiting for Reagan

The national conference of conservatives—meaning the ideologically committed right-wing elements of both parties—sponsored by Young Americans for Freedom and the American Conservative Union, adjourned after setting up a thirteen-member committee to study conservative alternatives. The conference resolution made no direct reference to a third party, but that was the alternative most of the delegates preferred. A consensus of sorts emerged on these points:

(1) Conservatives have "no stake in Ford"—not a kind word was said for him—and they hate Rockefeller. If Ford were to drop Rockefeller, the delegates would probably not support him; with Rockefeller on the ticket, support is unthinkable.

(2) They will challenge Ford's nomination if Ronald Reagan can be induced to enter the lists. But they are aware that Republicans have little tolerance for insurgent movements and the chances are that Ford can be nominated, along with Rockefeller, if he decides to run. But if Ford should step aside, then, of course, liberal Republicans would be challenged for control of the party. So for the time being, the third-party alternative will be studied as a means of keeping the pressure on Ford, but it cannot be launched just now.

(3) The third-party option would hinge on whether Reagan was willing to risk it; it would also imply the need to place George Wallace on the ticket to ensnare blue-collar and Southern voters. Should the Democrats nominate some other Southerner, either for President or Vice President, that might induce Wallace to join in a third-party gamble. On the other hand, if the third-party option is closed and Ford and Rockefeller are nominated, the conservative true believers would stay home and sulk. And that is a real possibility, since the delegates were split between intellectuals and operators, on the one hand, and officeholders, such as Senators Buckley, Helms and Thurmond, on the other. Officeholders much prefer to work "within the system," and the authentic conservatives of the party—those without right-wing ideological commitments—would not be inclined to support a third party.

As the number of self-identified Republicans drops in

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# THE NATION

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the polls, the number of independents steadily rises. The right-wing ideologues fondly imagine that if they could capture control of the GOP they could arrest this erosion of strength. To them their brand of conservatism is some kind of wave of the future. But if Ford and Rockefeller are nominated, then, from their point of view, they must launch a third party almost as a condition of political survival. What they really want is a third party of their own to treasure and play with. But will their favorite standard-bearer be available? Will Reagan brave it? As a measure of the self-delusion that prevails in these circles, Senator Buckley referred to Reagan as "the Rembrandt of American conservatism," which is a measure of the collapse—the bankruptcy—of anything that might justifiably be termed an authentic conservative movement in the 1970s. But Reagan may not relish the role of a right-wing Henry Wallace. His speech, rather short on those familiar punchy one-liners and larded with ambiguous rhetoric, left many delegates uneasy and disappointed. One Congressional aide described it as "another placebo." So the delegates left Washington unhappy with Ford, loathing Rockefeller, waiting for Reagan, and not quite sure whether they can or should test those icy cold third-party waters.

## A Break with the Past

By providing bail and thereby winning a reprieve for seventeen illegal aliens employed in the garment industry of Southern California (*The New York Times*, February 15), the ILGWU has shown the labor movement the direction it should take in its current attempts to cope with the flood of illegal aliens who, at a time of mounting unemployment, are undercutting wage and working conditions in industry after industry (see article by Paul Shinoff, p. 240). Historically, organized labor has taken the position that illegal aliens should be rounded up and deported and that border restrictions should be tightened. But it must be clear by now that there is no practical way to police the Mexican-American border effectively, nor is it feasible to round up and expel all illegal aliens. The cost would be prohibitive and the likelihood is that many would return sooner or later.

And the Mexican-American border is simply an illustration of the fact that in today's world few borders are airtight. This country, along with other industrial nations, is caught up in a new version of the age-old quest for cheap labor. Labor "migrates" only in response to well-known "push" and "pull" factors. When industry is booming, migrants are attracted from the large pools of unemployed or underemployed in the nonindustrial nations; often they are formally recruited (as in Western Europe) or simply attracted by word-of-mouth reports about the availability of jobs. As long as work is available for all, domestic organized labor does not object too vehemently; but once the cycle dips, pressure invariably rises to deport those who have entered illegally or return those who have been legally recruited. The industrial nations of Western Europe are beset by the latter problem at this moment, with no solutions at hand.

In this country, the issue is more complex because it relates almost entirely to illegal aliens. No one knows the total, for it constantly fluctuates, but it is very large.

Congress is now considering, as it has in the past, legislation which would make it unlawful for employers to hire illegal aliens. But, if experience is a guide, such legislation will be circumvented.

The ILGWU is on the right track: organize all workers, control the labor market. The "illegals" are part of a new international, mobile proletariat, moving across national boundaries, periodically rounded up for interrogation and possible deportation, living in constant fear of apprehension, and not daring to object to what are often abominable working conditions. But they are decent people, desperate for work. Not to organize them is to pit them against organized workers who are often from the same ethnic, religious and national backgrounds. A \$1-million drive is underway to organize workers, including illegal aliens, in nonunion hospitals. And reports indicate that the United Farm Workers are beginning to move in the same direction. Unions cannot protect the gains they have won for their members unless such action is taken. And it happens to be a sound and socially enlightened approach to the general problem. The best way to stop the eternal quest for "cheap labor" is to organize labor markets.

## Gun Crazy

For the first time in several years there appears to be a real possibility that the Congress will enact comprehensive gun control legislation. Rep. John Conyers Jr. (D., Mich.), chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on crime, has opened hearings on the subject. "I represent a constituency that is fed up with killing and needless tragedy," he said earlier. "By now, no one can legitimately argue that there is any justification for allowing the slaughter on our city streets to continue."

Congress has let that slaughter continue—despite polls showing more than 70 per cent of the American people favor gun control—primarily because of the power of the National Rifle Association to generate perhaps 500,000 letters on signal. But there are signs that the NRA's ability to veto gun control legislation is eroding. Murder rates rose to an estimated one in 10,000 in 1974. The year before, the last for which there are definitive figures, two-thirds of those murdered were killed with firearms, more than half with handguns. As Conyers has pointed out, the American homicide rate is the highest in the world.

Since the passage in 1968 of the fatally inadequate Gun Control Act, patterns of murder have taken a horrifying turn. What Prof. Franklin Zimring of the University of Chicago calls "recreational murders" have been occurring with increasing frequency. Says Joe DiLeonardi, head of the Chicago police homicide section: "Our greatest concern is the young person killing on the street for a thrill. Killing for the fun of it." Senseless murders, too, are becoming more widespread. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, one Chicagoan recently killed his brother, complaining, "He didn't say happy birthday to me." That is but one example of many. The nation's capital was recently struck by the murder of a 22-year-old man, Dennis Banks, who was shot after trying to stop a gang holdup of a city bus driver. Like more than half of the American murder victims in 1973, Banks was black. Eleven days

after the slaying, D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy introduced legislation to ban handguns.

The consensus for gun control legislation is growing. Big city mayors, members of Congress and police chiefs have spoken out. Writing last month in *The Washington Post*, former Chief Jerry V. Wilson, considered a staunch member of the law'n order camp, asked "... what do all those handguns contribute to our society to justify the deaths and crimes of which they are instruments?" According to Zimring's estimates, assault with a gun is five times as likely to kill the victim as assault with a knife. The case for comprehensive gun control was documented years ago and has never been substantially challenged.

The new Congress, missing several of the traditional gun lobby agents, should and can make control of handguns a top priority. The newly formed National Council to Control Handguns should be aided in its efforts to organize heretofore quiet and isolated advocates of gun control. Women's groups, whose members too often have to bear the consequences of sometimes fatal male *machismo*, should actively participate in forging any new legislation. According to *The Christian Science Monitor*, a crime is committed with a gun in America every two minutes. That is something television can constructively show.

Despite a seemingly more favorable atmosphere on Capitol Hill, an extraordinary effort still will be required to push through adequate gun control legislation: "Nothing is likely to happen," Wilson says, "so long as handgun lovers write to their legislators, while handgun control advocates answer pollsters' inquiries and are otherwise silent."

If Congress is not to strike out once again it must aim at legislation which imposes a ban against ownership and possession of handguns (with a few narrowly defined exceptions), provides for a period within which these guns can be surrendered in exchange for a stipulated schedule of payments (thereafter illegal possession of a handgun would constitute a criminal offense), and regulates the sale of ammunition for such guns. Even with legislation that meets these specifications, it will take a long time to reduce substantially the number of handguns.

## The Shorter Work-Week

Government planners in Washington are preparing legislation that would give at least some federal workers a choice of variants to the conventional five-day work-week. Although experimental, the program could point the way to one partial solution to the crisis of the jobless, and it just might lead to needed redefinitions of work and leisure in our contracting economy.

For at least twenty years, the idea of a four-day or shortened work-week has been occasionally suggested and, less frequently, tried. [See Edward Ziegler's "The Inevitable 4 Day Week," *The Nation*, August 20, 1959.] It still may be inevitable—and welcome—if experimental implementation takes into account practical pitfalls as well as theoretical promise. In the past, the four-day week has generally meant no more than a reshuffling of hours, as four ten-hour days being substituted for five eight-hour shifts. Many workers disliked that experiment; overtime was sometimes lost and moonlighting became difficult.

When actual work-time has been cut, wages have been trimmed accordingly. That, too, has been understandably unpopular among those on the short end of the cutbacks.

Rarely tried has been the *shorter* work-week—without reduced pay—which would spread work rather than salaries among the labor force and provide enough free time for employee enrichment through productive leisure alternatives that have yet to be fully explored. The idea has never been more appropriate in the post-World War II era. Without remedial action, automation, seen as a major threat to working people as early as the 1950s, may turn out to be the bane of the 1970s. In the current depressed economy, management will probably use the spreading "temporary" layoff periods to plan for and install machinery designed to increase what management measures as productivity. If and when demand returns to earlier levels, it is likely that fewer and fewer hours of work will be required to meet it. A shorter work-week could provide a check against long-term unemployment.

Perhaps just as compellingly, a shorter work-week, or periodic sabbaticals for workers, could engender a more educated and competent work force, if the increased leisure time were used for financially accessible training and enrichment. The burden of alienated work could be substantially lifted if workers were given an opportunity for job-related education, and followed up such training with demands for greater involvement with their work. Furthermore, there is no just reason why workers should be denied the kind of general enrichment now available only to those with the time and money to pursue it. Many states discourage unemployed workers from seeking specialized or general training; unemployment compensation is in some cases denied those enrolled in educational institutions.

A restructuring of work schedules could involve other fruitful variants. In addition to simply reducing work-time or offering sabbaticals, educational time and programs could be incorporated directly into the job experience with, say, fifteen of the forty hours of the conventional week set aside for personal development. Further study and experimentation promise a wide range of possibilities.

Far from being utopian, the shorter work-week is becoming a practical necessity, a vital alternative to the recurrent unemployment explosion and plain inability of the economy to provide sufficient, let alone meaningful, work. As a not insubstantial side effect, the extension of productive leisure time would give the suffering education industry a much-needed tonic. Labor fears about past efforts at work sharing could be alleviated by union and governmental prohibition of accompanying wage sharing. This would insure that the limits to growth, whether sought or encountered, are no limits to human development.

## Bank Handout

With the federal deficit zooming, Sen. William Proxmire (D., Wis.) has introduced legislation that would end a \$400-million-a-year giveaway by requiring banks to pay interest on federal deposits they now hold interest-free.

For years the excuse for the interest-free accounts has been that the banks provide compensatory administrative services, but Proxmire notes that at the current high interest rates, these government deposits have become very

profitable items. More than 80 per cent of federal revenues flow through these accounts, he says, with the majority being withholding taxes taken from wage earners' paychecks. His bill would require banks to pay 1 per cent less interest than the going federal funds, or inter-bank loan, rate—the 1 per cent being compensation for any administrative services rendered.

## NATURAL GAS

# HOW TO PAY MORE TO GET LESS

SEN. JAMES ABOUREZK

*Washington*

As a solution to one aspect of the current energy crisis, the merit of the Ford Administration's proposal to repeal present regulatory control over natural gas sales is less than self-evident. It requires no doctorate in economics or psychology to know that a shortage in an essential commodity tempts sellers to exact excessive profits from their captive buyers.

Nonetheless, the industry's long campaign for decontrol—two earlier attempts were vetoed by, respectively, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower—as well as its efforts to draw sustenance from the present shortage, suggest the desirability of taking a close look at the arguments assembled by the oil industry and the Administration in support of decontrol. First, we are told, regulation of the prices at which producers sell natural gas at the wellhead does not work; by holding prices "artificially low," regulation discourages the producers, thus limiting exploration and development. Second, while conceding that deregulation will raise the consumer's gas bill, the proponents of decontrol contend that higher prices are essential if the supply of natural gas is to be increased. Third, the argument runs, present shortages are intolerable, and deregulation is the only hope. None of these arguments has merit.

The claim that regulation has not worked is a rewriting of history that assumes the public to have a very short memory indeed. From the advent of federal regulation in 1954 until 1969, the volume of natural gas sold in interstate commerce increased dramatically—from 5 trillion cubic feet in 1954 to 14 trillion cubic feet in 1969—and the largest portion of this growth occurred during 1961-69, when the wellhead price was relatively stable, at approximately 17¢ per 1,000 cubic feet (Mcf). Though it is often forgotten now, natural gas was in oversupply as recently as the mid-1960s, after a decade of federal regulation. Thus for at least fifteen years, until 1969, regulation of natural gas prices by the Federal Power Commission did work to assure the nation an adequate supply of this basic energy source at a reasonable price.

But while there is no basis for the claim that regulation has not worked, there may, unfortunately, be some basis for the charge that it is not working now. Beginning in 1970, the Nixon appointees on the commis-

The bill deserves Congressional support. For years, the General Accounting Office has complained that the government was not being adequately paid for use of its deposits. Proxmire has a reputation as a watchdog over federal waste. Now that he is head of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, he can promote legislation like this which would do something about it.

sion accepted the oil industry's premise that the way to avoid impending shortages of natural gas was to allow higher prices; and when these higher prices led not to increased supplies but to even greater shortages, the commission responded with still higher prices. Admittedly, federal "regulation," as it is now being implemented by the FPC, is not working and cannot be expected to work, but that is hardly the fault of the regulatory statute, and is no argument for its repeal.

The fact that the FPC has adopted a policy of allowing the industry repeated price hikes, as long as it can maintain a shortage, while unfortunate on substantive grounds, does at least provide a performance record for evaluating the second argument—that higher prices will end the gas shortage. That is precisely the theory that the FPC has, at the oil industry's urging, followed for the past five years, and it has led to *higher prices, but no more gas*. In 1971, the commission raised the price for new supplies from 19¢ to 26¢ per Mcf, on the strength of the industry's representation that adequate supplies would be forthcoming at 26¢. When the shortage persisted, the commission in 1972 and 1973 devised a series of exceptions to permit new sales in the 35¢-to-45¢ range; when these techniques, of dubious legality, failed to increase supply, the commission, in June 1974, raised the price for all new and much old gas to 50¢ per Mcf; and in December 1974 it increased the level to 58¢—*three times the level in effect in 1971!* And each increase has been granted without any examination of the profits being made by the industry prior to the increase!

The reason exorbitant prices, with concomitant exorbitant profits for the industry, have not and will not end the gas shortage is simple enough. The same handful of companies which account for the vast majority of natural gas sales and control the majority of gas reserves—Exxon, Mobil, Texaco, Gulf, Shell, Standard of Indiana, Continental, Phillips—also control every competing energy source, including oil and coal. Thus, if the gas shortage forces an industry in Indiana or a university in New Jersey to switch from gas to oil, the same producers reap the large additional profits guaranteed by the Administration's policy of permitting the price of domestically produced oil to be fixed not by free market forces but by the OPEC cartel.

While the gas shortage is indeed intolerable, a feeling that we should "do something" should not lead

*Sen. James Abourezk is junior Senator from South Dakota.*

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