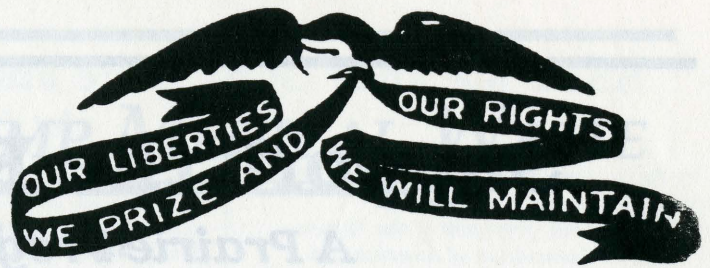


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



Fall 1990

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

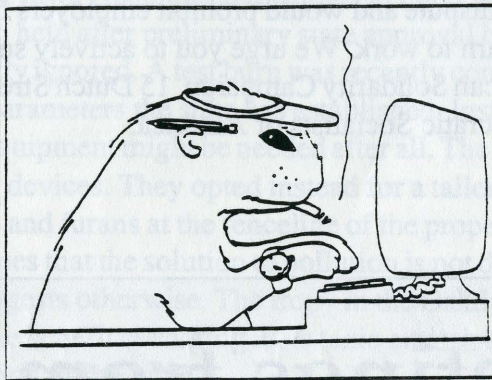
Crisis Engulfs Iowa Pols: Commentary by Prairie Dog

Prairie Dog has learned that there is no truth to the rumor that Governor Branstad has offered to exchange Cynthia Eisenhower for the Americans held hostage in Iraq.

Sources close to Saddam Hussein indicate that the devil-may-care dictator would have nixed the deal for the Department of Employment Services chief anyway. Apparently Saddam, known for his love of children, felt that Eisenhower demeaned Dr. Seuss by recommending his books as motivational tools for management. Saddam praised Eisenhower, however, for her efforts to keep her boss "out of trouble," and is reportedly sending her an autographed copy of his personal Seuss favorite, Bartholomew and the Oobleck.

Branstad and other Iowa officials seem to have been royally Saddam-ized by events in the Persian Gulf. In a burst of socialist fervor, the governor called on the federal government to control skyrocketing oil prices. Free-market fanatic Tom Tauke found himself agreeing with visiting Senator Bill Bradley that the US should dip into its 590 million barrels of strategic oil reserves.

Don Avenson, uncharacteristically subdued, missed the opportunity to concoct a ten-point state energy plan with which to flail Branstad for the rest of the campaign. As Speaker of the House, Avenson masterfully exploited every opening the Republicans gave him, but he is responding more slowly as a gubernato-



rial candidate. Avenson's image as "a tiger for ordinary Iowans" helped him win the primary; he may need to abandon some of his newly-acquired caution if he is to be equally successful against Branstad.

Meanwhile, Senator Harkin displayed his own brand of cautious statesmanship, supporting the President but criticizing the US standard-operating-procedure of cheerfully doing business with oppressive regimes. Harkin again showed his knack for coming up with creative angles on divisive issues. His suggestion to transfer \$1 billion from Star Wars to energy programs is reminiscent of his answer to the flag-desecration amendment: instead of tampering with the Constitution, institute "flag education" classes in the schools.

Representative Nagle, like most of his Democratic colleagues, has tried to be seen but not heard, perhaps because Congress appropriated \$1 billion in taxpayer-

subsidized loans to Iraq last year. This year, the meter was at \$500 million and still running before petro-politics intruded on the President's vacation. Perhaps Nagle should be forgiven for his vote in July to continue the subsidies. How was he to know that, only days later, the object of US affection would be branded as the new Hitler, the Butcher of Baghdad, and—in the LA Times — "an orangutan."

State Senator Beverly Hannon may have been the only Iowa politician to publicly question the establishment of a massive expeditionary force 7000 miles away at a cost of \$45 million a day. While the rest of the nation was adopting the slogan "Cheap Oil Through Strength," Hannon couldn't refrain from mentioning that 22% of Iowa's children live in poverty.

The US military build-up, now over 100,000 and growing, makes about as much sense as sending 31 law enforcement officers and their dogs to make a pre-dawn raid on a men's retreat in Boone County. Approval ratings are high for now, but the betting here is that history will prove this show of force — far beyond the needs of deterrence — to be another case of high-tech strutting in the Third World.

The Cold War may be over, but the US still knows only one response when its "way of life" is threatened: to throw its military weight around.

Support the Right to Strike:

A Prairie Progressive Editorial

Today, the right to strike – an economic freedom without which American workers and their unions would be powerless – is in serious jeopardy. That right has meant valuable leverage for millions of workers that has enabled employees to win such protections as union representation, higher pay, safer workplaces, collective bargaining rights and better working conditions and fringe benefits.

Employers, drawing on a 1938 Supreme Court case known as the Mackay decision, have increasingly over the past ten years hired permanent replacements during strikes or lockouts. This means that workers who go out on strike – or are forced out onto strike by employers – risk losing their jobs altogether.

We believe that this gives business an unfair advantage. We believe it's time to level the playing field.

That's why we support House of Representatives bill 3936 and Senate bill 2112 that would ban the use of permanent replacement workers in any labor dispute and would prohibit employers from offering preferential benefits to those who cross the picket line and return to work. We urge you to actively support this sorely needed legislation.

For more information contact: American Solidarity Campaign, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038, (212) 962-0390, a project of the Democratic Socialists of America.

Greetings from the Iowa City Federation of Labor AFL—CIO

The Iowa City Federation of Labor consists of 17 affiliates to the AFL—CIO. Separate locals serve the needs of their members and elect delegates to the city-fed body.

The Iowa City Federation of Labor participates in community service, labor history commemoration, labor movement advocacy, and political action.

IOWA, A PLACE TO DUMP MEDICAL WASTE

by Joe Bolkcom

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR MEDICAL WASTE IS? Over the course of the past twelve months Iowa has been inundated by private corporations interested in establishing financially lucrative, regional medical waste treatment facilities. From Davenport to Harlan to Des Moines to Riverside, and even Eldon, proposals have been made, and in all but one case, Eldon, have been rejected by well organized, local citizens not willing to accept the risks associated with burning plastic. Iowa is currently viewed as an easy target by the waste management industry looking to set up shop where few regulatory impediments exist. With the foresightful passage of a state moratorium on commercial medical waste incinerators (until July 1991), some much needed breathing room has been granted.

OAKDALE INCINERATOR UPDATE: While much commotion has surrounded incinerator citings around the state, the decision by the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics to build and operate a large incinerator has gone virtually unnoticed. A public hearing, held after preliminary state approval had been granted, was scantily attended and the comments received were mostly ignored. A test burn was recently conducted at the new facility to determine if it can operate within the pollution parameters the state has established. Inside word has it that the initial test burn has not gone well and that scrubbing equipment might be needed after all. The University was not required to employ the best available emission scrubbing devices. They opted instead for a taller stack height to meet the lifetime cancer risk of one in a million for dioxins and furans at the fenceline of the property (wherever that is). While the Iowa Department of Natural Resources argues that the solution to pollution is not dilution, the foregone scrubbing equipment for an increased stack height suggests otherwise. The irony in the Oakdale experience is not only that we each get to help pay for it, but we also get the benefit of sharing in its toxic emissions. Of course, the former is a certainty, while the latter depends on the direction of the wind.

In an effort to provide a forum for discussion and a springboard for action, Environmental Advocates, Inc. of Iowa City and the U of I Student Environmental Coalition will sponsor a two day gathering on October 5 and 6 entitled Medical Waste Management in Iowa: A Conference on Issues, Alternatives and Strategies. For more information call (319)338-2864.

THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE is edited by members of the Iowa City Local of The Democratic Socialists of America.

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Show Me Your Gun: Love and Death at the Summer Movies

by Jae Retz

"I flatly deny that we are more lenient toward violence [than sex]."

Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America and creator of its rating system for movies.

"But I got it figured out now. I'm working on a new book now that's . . . a lot more violent than Die Hard 2 ever was. Five hundred people get killed in the first chapter alone. All at once. And not nicely either."

Walter Weger, whose 58 Minutes became Die Hard 2, is confident his next book will reach the screen.

Have you ever had a desire to see every movie in town? Just to see what it does to your mind, and to the minds of so many young people who don't have much else to do these hot summer days? My chance came when a nephew from Baltimore and the summer's worst heat wave arrived simultaneously in Iowa City.

We saw in one week: Air America (0:2), Exorcist III (0:9), Flatliners (2:4), Ghost (1:3), My Blue Heaven (3:20), Presumed Innocent (3:1), The Two Jakes (1:1), and Young Guns II (1:30).

The numbers in parentheses are the results of tabulating the acts of life and death (sometimes called "sex and violence") shown in

each movie. The first number, the times that lovemaking is suggested, represents of course merely the potential for a new life, but the second is death, any way you look at it. Ours is a culture that tolerates the most graphic and inventive depictions of death on the screen, but leaves the life-affirming and creating act largely to the imagination. The scarlet fluid of life can be shown dripping, gushing or splattering, but not a drop of the milky white one dare grace the screen. And while some female nudity is a necessary economic reality in Tinseltown, the only fully nude male body that will make it past the censors is a dead one.

The final tally: Life-11, Death-70. At this rate, how long before extinction? (The numbers for Flatliners aren't kosher, since the characters don't really die. But then they don't really have sex either. And since My Blue Heaven is pure comedy, the numbers represent kisses and gunshots.)

So, in one week an Iowa City moviegoer could witness 70 deaths. And this was not a typical week. None of the Old Guns were in town. (Imagine how Die Hard II, with 264 reported deaths, would have inflated these figures.)

Aside from the quantitative survey, how did the quality of these movies stack up? Air America — never takes off. Flatliners — If

you like pulp magazine-level speculation about the afterlife and enjoy watching electroshock resuscitation, this pubescent Faustian Brat Pact without the devil is for you. Ghost — Whoopie Goldberg carries the movie, but that didn't keep its makers from assigning the color white to heaven and black to hell. My Blue Heaven — Watch Steve Martin dance the merengue. Then leave. The Two Jakes — One Jake would've been confusing enough, thank you. Exorcist III — If the movie's graphic talk were about sex instead of mutilation it would never pass the censors. Presumed Innocent — easily the best of a pretty mediocre bunch. But step back from the technical excellence and fine performances and reflect on what this movie says about women. Young Guns II — The title is a form of metaphor in which an inanimate object stands for a human being, and a part for the whole. One guess which part.

Even if sex censorship were relaxed and the "X" more readily slapped on violent films, a "W" rating should still be created to warn us of films degrading to women, always a problem in man-made movies. Total Recall's director, Paul Verhoeven, says he wants to branch out from explicit movie violence: "it would be nice to do something identical with sexuality." Nicer would be for violence to be approached with the same hesitancy, shame and guilt that our culture now reserves for sex.

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