

CIA in Australia

(From Cover)

Marchetti stated that based on his opinion after 14 years of experience as a CIA operative, his contacts in the agency and his position as Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director of the CIA, "It's highly unlikely that the CIA could run those kind of high risk, political type operations in Australia without at least the tacit approval of the host country's intelligence services. I just can't believe that the CIA is that clever and the Australian intelligence services are that stupid that the CIA could do these things without the Aussies being aware of it." Marchetti suggested that perhaps Australian intelligence agents were actively working with the CIA in attempting to neutralize the newly elected labor government of Gough Whitlam which had come to power in 1972. Whitlam had been highly critical of the CIA, and had charged that CIA agents had funded opposition political parties and that the U.S. government was hiding facts about the operation of the U.S. bases in Australia from his government.

The *Los Angeles Vanguard* in cooperation with the Australian Broadcasting Commission program "Broadband", has been investigating the CIA penetration of the Australian government. According to reliable sources uncovered during our investigation, it appears likely that CIA involvement in Australian union activity during the days preceding the ouster of the Whitlam government, may have been accomplished through the good graces of one Edward J. McHale, former labor and political officer of the U.S. State Department mission in Melbourne.

McHale was assigned to the Australian mission in November of 1973, less than one year after Whitlam came to power and after having served as labor/political officer in Johannesburg, South Africa from 1971 through 1973. He was assigned the Australian post through January 1976 just weeks after Whitlam was sacked in a constitutional crisis when the Australian parliament was dissolved and new elections ordered. McHale's tenure in Australia also directly coincided with the manipulation of Australian unions. McHale is currently serving with the United States Information Agency, which has been publicly identified in Congressional hearings as a CIA cover.

According to our sources, McHale was "absolutely a top man with the CIA." Among his numerous credits was a ten-year stint from 1951 to 1961 as Assistant Director of the Free Europe Committee, the Free Europe Committee, originally called the National Committee for a Free Europe, numbered along it's board of directors in 1951, when McHale joined them: General Lucius D. Clay, the "hero" of the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift; Allen Dulles, former CIA director; C.D. Jackson, who became President Eisenhower's psychological warfare advisor, and A.A. Berle Jr., who later participated in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

American intelligence sources including Victor Marchetti and Philip Agee, another former CIA operative, and author of "A CIA Diary", contend that with McHale's prior background and activities he would have been



one of the most likely conduits for similar "black propaganda" operations in Australia. These sources see McHale's tenure in Australia during the rise and fall of the Whitlam government the "manipulation of leadership of the unions", and the short lived shift to the left of that country's policies as something more than pure coincidence, and perfectly in keeping with his past associations. McHale denies being a CIA agent and contends he was unaware that the Free Europe Committee was a CIA funded front.

In Australia, reaction to the revelations of CIA spy activity directed against the Australians themselves may force yet another constitutional shakeup of parliament. This time the target would be the conservative Fraser government. ASIO, the Australian Secret Intelligence Organization, which is the rough equivalent of the CIA, has already been ordered to reorganize, and pressure is mounting for a full-scale parliamentary investigation similar in scope to the Watergate scandal that rocked the United States.

Boycott J.P. Stevens

The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, AFL-CIO, is organizing a nation-wide boycott of J.P. Stevens and Company, the country's second largest textile manufacturer. J.P. Stevens is a transnational (multi-national) corporation, but 63 of its 85 plants are in North and South Carolina. Stevens products are sold under a wide variety of brand-names, but its major labels include Utica, Mohawk, Simtex, Tastemaker and Gullistan.

J.P. Stevens has been often cited for violations of occupational safety and health standards. The company's Dallas, N.C., plant was found to have cotton dust at almost three times the level allowed. At this level, as many as one in three of the exposed workers are likely to come down with "brown lung" disease (byssinosis). Noise levels in some departments at the Roanoke Rapids, N.C., plants are as high as 105 decibels. Scientists predict that almost one-half of those working in this noise level will have severe loss of hearing by the time they retire.

J.P. Stevens has been repeatedly found guilty of breaking the National Labor Relations Act, and has been accused of discrimination against women and Blacks. The company's wholesale defiance of the law has lead the union to organize a boycott, since J.P. Stevens has closed every other avenue of democratic response. For more information, contact the ACTWU, 15 Union Square, New York, N.Y., 10003.

The great solar steal

Tom Thompson

Concern that Southern California utility companies are plotting to control all the solar energy potential has led consumer and environmental groups to oppose public funding of the Southern California Gas Companies "Project Sunflower".

"Project Sunflower" is the public relations name SoCal has given to an \$11-million rate increase to finance research, training and installation of solar devices on 315 homes and businesses during the next five years. According to opponents of the plan the gas company would then retain ownership of the solar devices and charge consumers for the free sun energy at the price of expensive new gas supplies.

Consumer advocate, Burt Wilson, representing CAUSE, a coalition of 24 consumer groups, warned the Public Utilities Commission during a hearing in Los Angeles April 25th, that "Project Sunflower" could better be labeled the "Great Solar Steal", which is, "an attempt to promote utility solar monopoly."

Wilson contends that, "The plan is the first step toward metering the sun, giving the utilities a solar monopoly that will insure continuing high energy prices and in fact stifle the development of solar energy. The worst part of all," Wilson indignantly stated, "is that the utilities expect consumers to foot the bill for another monopoly."

Wilson, a candidate for state assembly (see campaign story in this issue), was joined by a parade of consumer activists, solar energy manufacturers and government spokespersons who described "Project Sunflower" as far too expensive, designed to hinder solar development, and a dangerous precedent.

John Geesman, attorney for Ralph Nader's California Citizen Action group, testified that, "A utility would not knowingly assist in commercializing some-

thing which jeopardizes its other investments. Its (SoCal's) planned use of the funds displays a monopolist's typical disdain for the public treasury. The novel opportunity provided by solar technology is that it turns consumers into energy producers, and we have a long tradition of subsidizing energy producers in our society. Consumers should be the focus of our solar policy, not utilities which tell us the hardware doesn't work."

According to David L. Collins, President of Solargenics, Inc., a private solar development company in Chatsworth, "Public acceptability of solar systems does not have to be proven, it is a dollars and sense fact." Collins testified that the gas company cost for each solar installation would be over \$30,000 and added that, "Private industry can do the same job as the gas company for \$27,333 per system less. If the consumers of gas take \$2.6 million each year (the per year cost of Project

Sunflower) and buy solar hot water systems instead of giving that money to the gas company, the solar industry could install 1,700 systems. These 1,700 systems would save between 35 and 45 million cubic feet of natural gas each year. If the program continued for five years, the total savings would be between 175 and 225 million cubic feet of gas. The immediate fuel savings has a present worth of between \$245,000 and \$315,000 per year." Collins added that those savings in states using deregulated gas and LNG over five years could mount as high as \$3.5 million.

Alexander Jenkins, manager of the Solar Office of the California Energy Commission, in a written statement, opposed the SoCal scheme. "There are serious questions whether a demonstration program as described in Project Sunflower, with its associated high costs

and long duration, is the best use of the resources of SoCal ratepayers to achieve rapid and economic adoption of solar energy."

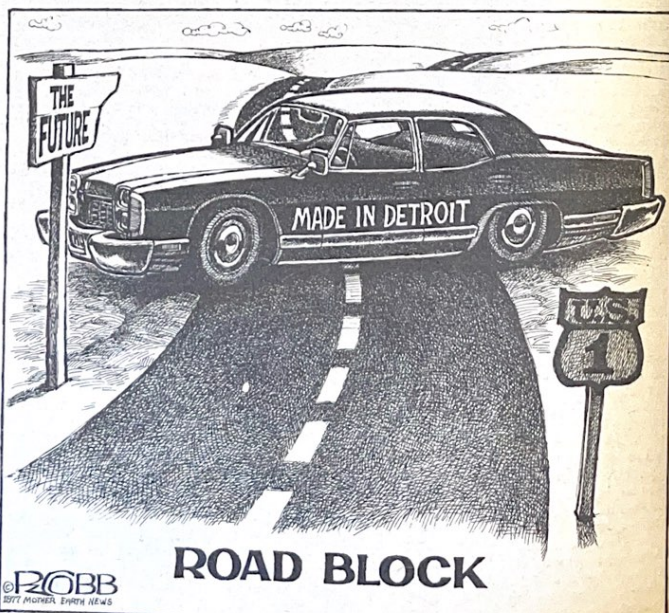
Speaking on behalf of the Campaign for Economic Democracy, Tom Hayden, noted that, "If Southern California Gas is truly interested in delivering solar to consumers at the lowest possible price, why is it asking for only \$11 million for far more expensive and dangerous LNG?...to allow utility involvement then, is to doom solar energy."

Hayden asked the PUC to consider the creation of SOLARCAL, a public solar development corporation which would have the capital necessary to create a democratic, de-centralized energy industry in every city in California.

SoCal has denied attempting to monopolize solar energy. Patrick R. Shea, Vice President, Consumer Services for SoCal, stated that SoCal's objective was to simply develop "reliable, cost effective and acceptable" systems, and to "determine SoCal's ultimate role in the solar energy industry."

SoCal spokespersons have indicated that one of the main considerations they are studying is the legal right to the use of the sun's energy, however.

PUC hearings on "Project Sunflower" will continue through the summer in California. SoCal contends that they will not pursue solar involvement unless utility rates are raised to pay the costs. Consumer groups state they are fighting the utility move to monopolize the sun in California and that the plan must be rejected now or the sun will eventually have a meter on it to insure continuing utility monopoly of energy.



TRIAL ANALYSIS

Skyhorse/Mohawk -the govt. is on trial

Dave Edelman

Jury selection has been completed in what may become the biggest courtroom debacle since the Wounded Knee in the government's ongoing effort to destroy the American Indian Movement. A trial date of May 31st has been set for two members of AIM in the Los Angeles Criminal Courts Building.

Two AIM leaders, Paul Durant Skyhorse, a Minnesota/Chippewa, and Richard Billings Mohawk, a Tuscarora/Mohawk, are on trial here charged with the murder of cab driver George Aird in October 1974.

While most trials of AIM leaders have been cause celebrations among leftists and liberals, Skyhorse and Mohawk had to go it almost alone for over a year, as Ventura County prosecutors nearly succeeded in efforts to railroad them to a conviction in what now appears to be a horrendous frame-up.

The problem was that the two second-level AIM activists were temporarily abandoned by their movement brothers and sisters on the advice of AIM "national security director" Douglass Durham -- the man who later admitted to having been a "deep cover" FBI/CIA agent provocateur.

With the discovery of Durham's role, AIM attentions were focussed on Skyhorse and Mohawk, who had been reduced to conducting their own defense, after almost being sold down the river by a public defender.

They got expert legal help (though to their credit, they have become expert attorneys by now, and continue to direct their own defense) and finally succeeded in having their trial moved to Los Angeles. This city, with the largest urban Indian population in the nation, at least makes raising of defense funds and creation of a defense committee/support group a possibility.

AIM has now thrown its full support behind the two men, with Ernie Peters, area coordinator for the movement's Southern California region, now their spiritual advisor.

A battery of movement lawyers, including Skip Glenn, Leonard Weinglass and Barbara Jordan, sits at the defense table with Skyhorse and Mohawk, and supporters usually fill up the mere ten seats made available by the judge for observers.

As jury selection proceedings continued through the month of May, the future course of the trial began to grow crystal clear.

First of all, the Ventura Superior Court assigned a reject to the case: Judge Floyd C. Dodson. Dodson was defeated last year in Ventura in his run for reelection—a feat almost unheard of. His victorious opponent had run on the platform that Dodson, the incumbent, was "temperamentally unfit" to serve. The voters, and a good portion of the Ventura bar, apparently agreed, but not the calendar judge, who assigned him to this case out of retirement—a consolation prize.

(Incidentally, it was Dodson's assignment which reportedly led California's new Chief Supreme Court Judge, Rose Bird, to announce that she would never allow assignment of de-

feated jurors to special cases.) Dodson has made his bias clear in this case countless times, by permitting the prosecution to dismiss potentially favorable jurors "with cause" while forcing the defense to waste precious "peremptory challenges" (no reason needed). They only get 40 of these.

For instance, when the defense wanted to dismiss one juror who was a career detective with the Los Angeles Police Department, they argued that his participation in 500 murder trials would lead him to side with the prosecution. Dodson disagreed. There went one of the defense's peremptories!

On the other side, the prosecution objected to seating of the only potential juror who admitted to having any significant amount of Indian blood. They argued that she would "tend to favor the defense." Dodson agreed, and they got to dismiss her "with cause."

Said Weinglass, "What we're getting is a jury of the prosecution's peers, but the Constitution says the jury is supposed to be composed of the defendant's peers." Evidently Dodson and the Ventura District Attorney don't think peers of Skyhorse and Mohawk—especially Native Americans—will swallow the government's case.

Weinglass and Peters have pointed out that Dodson virtually assured the presence of government-related individuals on the jury panel by excusing all jurors who said they could not sit through a 6 to 18-month trial (his estimate).

Since generally only civil service employees can be paid for such lengthy jury duty, this means the total jury pool is now composed almost entirely of city, county, state and federal employees—people who are more likely to trust the government.

But it's worse than that. In the police-state climate of Los Angeles, a large percentage of the total civil service employees are in law-enforcement jobs, ranging from the police to the probation department.

Of the first twelve jurors questioned, three were police detectives. One was a member of the notorious Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms force, which acted much like a gestapo force in the Nixon administration, when it was headed by G. Gordon Liddy.

Weinglass said, "Dodson's ruling eliminated almost everyone who was working class or blue-collar. It left only retired people and civil service workers."

The jury finally empaneled includes six blacks, four anglos, a chicano, and a German-Jewish immigrant, but no Native Americans, according to Lois Redelk of the Skyhorse/Mohawk offense/defense committee. "We finally managed to get twelve people who were not law enforcement employees at least," she said.

The prosecution's case is weak. Their principle witnesses are the three people arrested, covered with the victim's blood, hours after the murder, at the scene of the crime. All three have been granted complete immunity. Their names are Marvin Wayne Red Shirt, Holly



Broussard and Marcella Eagle Staff McNoise.

Other witnesses for the government are paid FBI and police informants.

Prosecutor Lewis Szymanski, has recognized the implausibility of his own case in questions he is asking the potential jurors. Typical questions he asked were:

• "Do you feel that from time to time the government frames people?"

• "If you disagreed with the way the police handled this case, would that influence your judgement?"

• "You will be hearing testimony from several persons who have been granted immunity. Would you acquit the defendants to teach the government a lesson if you thought we gave immunity to the wrong people?"

• "Do you disagree with the practice of police and the F.B.I. paying informants?"

The defense expects to shatter the government's case against the two AIM (who have been in jail, usually in solitary, for two and a half years without bail,) activists, quickly.

"Then we get to the political aspect of the trial," Weinglass explained. "We'll have to get into the question of why the prosecution got into this case in the first place."

AIM members and most observers believe the entire trial is a frame-up designed to discredit the movement by portraying two movement activists as fiendish murderers. Some believe the government took advantage of a tragic murder to frame Skyhorse and Mohawk. But others darkly

suspect that the government may have even set up the murder.

The trial, so far virtually completely ignored by Los Angeles's establishment media usually fond of courtroom drama, may prove to be devastating for the government. The prosecution has its own advantages, though. One of these is resources. The defense is critically short of funds. Support will make the difference, they say.

Those interested in helping with the Skyhorse-Mohawk Defense Committee or in contributing funds should write:

Skyhorse/Mohawk Offense Defense Committee
633 Shatto Place, Room 209

Los Angeles, CA 90005
Or call 383-1297, 626-7065 or 284-2379.

JFK probe eyes FBI, CIA

Jim Horwitz

Garnering a favorable vote on March 30th from the full membership, the House Select Committee on Assassinations, has been given the green light to continue unraveling the unanswered questions in the deaths of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, through the end of 1978—if necessary.

New information began surfacing in the JFK case before the vote was taken. Now, new disclosures are coming at a rapid rate, (and they will continue). The testimony of Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans implicating George Demohenschmidt, H.L. Hunt, Loren Hall and others along with Lee Harvey Oswald, adds more fire to the conspiracy theory. The apparent suicide of Demohenschmidt on March 29 reinforces the scenario.

Our contacts in Dallas knew Demohenschmidt well, and informed us that he had been a long-time informer for the CIA and also a very close friend of Oswald. Demohenschmidt had committed himself to a mental ward in Dallas because he was feeling extremely paranoid. He kept thinking he was being watched and having his phone tapped. The Committee had been informed from several sources that Demohenschmidt held one of the keys to Kennedy's assassination.

The Secret Service has turned over to the Committee an FBI memo dated November 23rd, 1963. In the memo two FBI agents state that pictures of Oswald leaving the Russian Embassy in Mexico City in September of 1963, were not of

Lee Oswald, and the voice on a tape recording, reportedly of Oswald calling the CIA in Mexico City in September of '63, was also not Oswald. Both Agents, members of the Dallas Bureau, were acquainted with the real Oswald.

Probably the most important piece of new evidence that the committee has, which hasn't officially been released yet, is a copy of a receipt the FBI made out when they received a "missile" (bullet) from Commander Humes at Bethesda, Maryland Hospital, November 22, 1963. Humes was the doctor who conducted the autopsy of JFK, as soon as his body arrived from Dallas. He was also known to have burned his notes from the autopsy. This document blows to 'smithereens' the Warren Commission finding of 'one bullet'.

The Select Committee as it is now constituted seems to be an extremely capable and united group of congresspersons, who are all dedicated to digging out the facts. Part of the reason for the favorable vote for the continuation of the investigations was the respect other legislators have for the panel members. One of those committee members is Yvonne Burke (D-Los Angeles). The bickering between committee members and their chief counsel ended when Henry Gonzales (D-Texas) resigned and was replaced by Lewis Stokes (D-Ohio). Stokes has shown quiet but firm leadership. It remains a mystery why Gonzales worked for ten years to get the Kennedy case reopened, only to then try to

subvert the committee.

Three obstacles had to be overcome in March, if the Assassination Committee was to get new life. First, the proposed surveillance techniques and witness monitoring procedures were under great fire from Don Edwards (D-California) and the ACLU. The committee adopted new rules and guidelines, which have now become models for any investigative committee of the congress. Edwards and the ACLU are now both satisfied. Secondly, the majority felt that a \$6.5 million yearly budget was too high. The committee has now reduced its yearly budget to \$2.8 million. Lastly, at the last minute Chief Counsel Richard Sprague resigned.

The investigative staff for the committee should be able to function without Sprague. Deputy Chief Counsels Robert Tannenbaum (Kennedy case) and Robert Lehner (King case) should be able to proceed as well. It has been rumored that Tannenbaum might take over some or all of Sprague's duties.

Observers of these investigations are united in the belief that, at the least, the committee will reveal that the FBI and the CIA withheld vast amounts of important information from the Warren Commission. It will also probably implicate both bureaus in the assassination by their failure to alert the President and the Secret Service to the dangers. The same observers feel a conspiracy will be exposed, but it will probably fall short of fingering the gunmen.

The genie is out of the bottle, no one is going to force it back!

The cowardice of Henry Miller

Ben Pleasants

Henry Miller spoke endlessly about the glory of France, a rotomontade on art, sex, bread, poetry; but when the four horsemen of the SS crossed the Rhine, Miller beat a hasty retreat from the field. In fact, he fled during the phony war in 1938. Courage was never a characteristic of H. Miller, survivor. He describes his situation in a letter to friend, Lawrence Durrell, while holed up in a hotel in Bordeaux during that year:

"I have been in a very bad state up until last night, when things looked so bad that I could begin to think of action. Sending you this by air mail, hope it will reach you before declaration of war. I am stuck here—no use returning to Paris, because city will be evacuated. Can't go anywhere from here, as I haven't the money. If an American gun boat comes along, I may have to take it."

"If I need some dough in an emergency, if I have to make a break for it somewhere, can I depend on you for anything? I won't ask, unless I'm absolutely up against the wall. I'm already on a war basis, ferreting about like an animal, not a thought in my head except to keep alive by hook or crook. The worse it gets, the keener I will be. It's the tension, the inaction, the pourparlers, that get me. Five minutes alone with Hitler and I could have solved the whole damned problem. They don't know how to deal with the guy. He's temperamental—and terribly in earnest. Somebody has to make him laugh, or we're all lost."

Miller was fond of the maxim "when I hear the word Kulchur I reach for my revolver," but when the revolver came for him (from the same source as the maxim) he was nowhere to be found.

One wonders what he would have said to Hitler. For Miller there was no Spain—that was a throwaway war. Machado and Vallejo would die in France for Spain, but that meant nothing to Miller. Alberti would be exiled, Robert Desnos would perish at the hands of the Gestapo years later when Miller was back in America begging for funds from publishers, friends etc. They must have thought it strange, all that weeping and wailing during a time of great tragedy, but Miller blended the tears of cowardice into his motif of laughter and sex.

Here is Miller weeping and wailing in the States, when he could have had a good time with the resistance, getting plenty of sunshine, maybe holding a ridge in Grenoble against a crack division of Nazis. He would have died young. He would have died a hero. He would not have worried about his future as an artist. He would not have written "The Rosy Crucifixion," his most adolescent work. Miller instead sent out a letter begging for money: "As I say in the ad, the reason I want this money is because I want to finish two

major works I have in hand. They are: 1) The Air-conditioned Nightmare; 2) The Rosy Crucifixion. If I can get the sum demanded I shall go to Mexico to live. In one year I can finish those books. Once I get to Mexico I have no fear of being able to survive. I trust the Mexicans."

"It grieves me that in a year when seventeen books of mine are being published, here and in England, I should be in this predicament. It is phenomenal to have that many books published in one year. It is even more phenomenal that the author of those seventeen volumes should be reduced to the ignominious position of a beggar. But that has been my lot always in this country. And that is why I want to flee it as soon as possible."

Of course he never went to Mexico. The idea was to pin a guilt trip on rich Americans; it's an old con. Instead he went on begging, begged his way north, wormed his way into the Big Sur community, exploited the beauty of the landscape until it could no longer be enjoyed by the hermits who inhabited it, then he turned south, wealthy, triumphant, famous, and ended up as a Southern California guru in the Pacific Palisades.

I do not deny the beauty of his work; I simply wonder why the young so emulate him. He fled several marriages. His children seemed to disappear. Who of his friends were ever paid back? Many of his closest friends, those who had helped the most, turned their backs on him, turned away not when he was poor and desperate, but when he was rich and famous.

What does it all mean? George Whitman at Shakespeare and Company says Miller wrote about women the way he did because he hated his mother. I wonder if that is enough? It seems to me Miller had the stench of the Greek archer who tagged along with Odysseus, but not the unerring accuracy. He was a destroyer.

He is the nihilist personified. He is the non-worker, the loafer, but above all, Miller is the coward. What's more, he got to believe his own myths.

Durrell wired him after reading, SEXUS: DISGRACEFULLY BAD WILL COMPLETELY RUIN REPUTATION UNLESS WITHDRAWN REVISED LARRY. Later he would back away from that bit, but he had served his purpose as a real friend. He had squared off against the pomposity of Miller. Others will not. Poor old Norman Mailer is going around calling Miller "the greatest writer living in America."

I prefer to think of Miller as the greatest coward living in America. I prefer to remember the day he ran from the Nazis when others stayed on to fight. I'm glad that it was the American servicemen who finally made Miller rich. I'm glad Grove Press turned into purveyors of blatant pornography and that Anais Nin had nothing to say about Henry when she passed on. Cowardice has its won rewards.



The fight game revisited

Thursday night at the Olympic

Miles Beller

Urine and Lysol, smells of the fight game, fermenting in the bowels of Los Angeles' Olympic Arena.

The thick porous walls, brown from evaporating blood and sweat unleashed by decades of fitful pounding of flesh—the Olympic.

Like a dying Gargantua, the great hall slumps against the Santa Monica freeway, engulfed in a sea of carbon monoxide.

Mohammed Ali does not dance on the Olympic's baby blue canvas, watched reverently by Howard Cosell and Norman Mailer. The eye of ABC does not focus on this dim arena.

"Hey you, c'mere a minute, I got something just for you." A white ticket timidly pokes out from the callers' hairy hand like a wary mouse, unsure of what awaits outside it burrow, afraid of attracting predators. "Ringside, it's yours...a \$5.50 seat for three bucks."

The ticket tries retreating, but is stopped by the seller's thumb and forefinger. "Lookit, these is a ringside seat" He repeats, madly waving the ticket against the young evening sky, knowing he must get rid of it by 8 p.m. or lose his money.

"Lookit, I'm a cop. I can go back to the car and show you my badge. I ain't lying. Ringside I'm telling you, ringside." The plea goes ignored, and the ticket disappears.

Voices hollowly resound inside the Olympic, dully echoing in the cavernous confines, expiring before reaching the arena's upper levels. No sharp edges here, no right angles. The years themselves have buffeted the interior to a worn round finish. Sounds roll and tumble, one into another in muted waves.

Even the six concession stands now seem a creation of the ages rather than an architect. Like weathered grot-

tos, they are etched into the Olympic's sides. The flaccid beings inhabiting these innocuous lairs—serving waterlogged hot dogs on oblong rubber rolls—stand like plaster manikins. Too much effort to smile, scowl, sneeze, cough or breathe. Best to do nothing. Stand by and just survive.

Survive like the people at ringside or those scattered throughout the Olympic's outer reaches. Survive like the fighters in the ring, doggedly struggling to stay conscious and make it through just one more round.

Four bouts are scheduled tonight. ("Boxing on Thursday" advertises a sign painted on the building's exterior). For 25 cents a mimeographed sheet can be brought, listing the fighters.

The first features Danny Veskovick, a 161½ lb kid against Larry Meyers, a 162 lb. older, sluggish fighter. The bout, a five-rounder, goes the distance. The crowd favors Veskovick and hollers its approval when the judges award him the win.

Ten rows back from ringside, a corpulent spectator bends over and tells the man next to him, "I used to workout in my garage...do leg presses and knee bends, but it got so hot in there I had to stop." He starts expounding on sit-ups when the bell rings and the tuxedoed announcer climbs back into the ring and introduces the next match.

This Bout pits two black fighters. Ken Crooms and Lenny Vanisi in another five-rounder. The two men are friendly and seem embarrassed about having to swing at one another. They tap gloves good naturedly between rounds. The decision in Crooms' favor also pleases the crowd.

Between fights, the arena's corridors grow with fans journeying to the men's room and concession stands.

"How much ya pay for your seat?" calls a voice. It's the scalper, now harboring a cigar

in place of the ticket. He knows the answer but wants a response from the listener.

Getting no reply he answers, "See you could have saved \$2.50...next time you'll know better."

Fight three, a six-round contest, has already begun. Two Chicanos, Oscar Muniz and Mario Chavez, circle one another, occasionally trading jabs to the crowd's bemused shouts in Spanish. The two men are short and muscular, built more like midget wrestlers than boxers. If one launched a flying knee jerk it would not be surprising.

Beer, peanuts, and Coca-Cola vendors move among the rows of wood and vinyl seats, hawking their refreshments with open boredom. Most of the upper seats are empty. So the area they cover centers around the ring—a 30 row diameter encircling the blue canvas.

The evening's last fight is a bout between Alberto Davila, a 118½ lb. Chicano, against Carlos Alcivar, a 119 lb. native of Ecuador. For this match, the Olympic spectators allegiance seems split. "Eckwah-door" chants one group as another screams "Da-Ve-La." Yet the two spar coolly, seemingly deaf to the crowd's cheers and jeers.

In the hallway, Lenny Vanisi silently stands as a trainer tells him to watch the footwork, calling his performance this evening "sloppy and uneven."

For the fighter, however, the night is history. Even the battle now going on inside is of little interest. His work is over. He stands staring dumbly at the blank wall curving in front of him as the trainer demonstrates how to shift weight from foot to foot.

Another Thursday night fight at the Olympic, where ham-and-egg battlers pummel one another in a three-quarters empty house they later will try to forget as they down late night beers.

Like anything else it's a job. And someone's got to do it.

Star Wars

Elph Charlton

Remember all those Saturday mornings spent in front of the television watching Flash Gordon? Or the comic books you saved up your allowance to buy and then read until the pages fell out? If you don't, writer-director George Lucas hopes to refresh your memory and stir up your imagination with his next film, an intergalactic dream of heroism modestly called *Star Wars*.

Lucas, who claims he wasted four years of his life cruising the kids in his first film, *American Graffiti*, says that *Star Wars* is the story of the fantasy life he experienced as a boy. "Young people today don't have a fantasy life anymore; not the way we did. All they've got is Kojak and Dirty Harry. All these kids are running around wanting to be killer cops because the films they see are movies of disasters and insecurity and realistic violence."

"I want to open up the whole realm of space. Science fiction is okay, but it got so involved with science that it forgot the sense of adventure. I want *Star Wars* to make an audience think of things that could happen. I'd like them to say, 'Gee, couldn't it be great if we could go and run around on Mars?' I wanted to make an action movie outer space. Characters with guns, running around in spaceships and shooting at each other. I knew I wanted to have a big battle in outer space, a sort of dogfight thing. I knew I wanted to make a movie about an old man and a kid. And I knew I wanted the old man to have a sort of teacher-student relationship with the kid. I wanted the old man to also be a warrior. I wanted a princess, too, but I didn't want her to be a passive damsel in distress."

All of this and more Lucas manages to incorporate into his film, which has been described as a celluloid comic book, an adventure film, a romantic space fantasy as well as a milestone in science fiction. The cast includes three new faces: Mark Hamill as the young hero, Luke Skywalker; Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia Organa; and Harrison Ford as starship pilot Han Solo; as well as two veteran British actors, Alec Guinness as the old warrior Ben Kenobi and Peter Cushing as the villainous Grand Moff Tarkin.

It can be argued, however, that the real stars of the film are the numerous robots, aliens and

fearsome creatures that roam the planets in this faraway galaxy. Not since Dorothy teamed up with the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, has an actor co-starred with so many frightening and fanciful creatures. An enthusiastic Mark Hamill talks about his fascination with the many gadgets, robots and alien creatures that populate *Star Wars*.

"There is no animation, so everything you see was actually built for the film," he explains. "The live action special effects not only look great, but many of them actually worked. The robots were just amazing. There were about nine or ten different Artoo-Detooes (R2-D2) (the spunky little computer repair and information robot). Some were radio controlled and worked by remote; some were pulled along on wires and some of them had a dwarf inside. Kenny Baker played Artoo-Detoo."

"See-Threepio (C3PO in robot-talk) is a humanoid robot and was also played by an actor, Anthony Daniels, inside this beautiful art deco suit. He looks like a giant Oscar. I loved Threepio because he was like my Man Friday. He's kind of an apple-polisher, if you know what I mean. The robots are so funny—they have a great relationship, sort of like Laurel and Hardy."

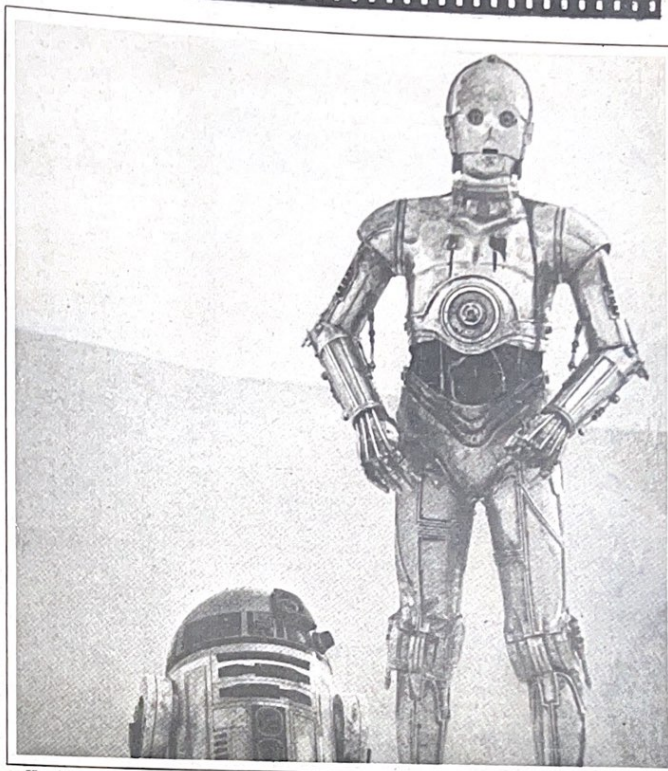
"One of the hardest things for me as an actor was learning to accept the robots, aliens and foreign terrain as my everyday life—like I was a farmboy from Kansas instead of a farmboy from Tatooine. *Star Wars* is so fanciful. George doesn't call it science fiction at all, and it might not even be in the future—it's another galaxy and Earth isn't ever mentioned. One thing for sure, it's a comedy, and it makes you feel good."

"We shot all of the scenes on my planet Tatooine in Northern Africa and you should have seen us trying to get the robots to work on the Sahara Desert! Threepio couldn't sit down in his suit, they had to build supports so he could lean against something to rest between shots. When he put his helmet on in the morning, it was like saying good-bye to him until lunch because it was so hard to get it on and off. Sometimes he'd pass out in the heat and no one would notice until it was time for his scene and he didn't respond to the call. They had a little fan they used to blow air into his hole."



Los Angeles Vanguard May-June, 1977

FILMS



Hamill describes his African adventure as a giant field trip, which is an apt description considering the film crew worked on the Chotte el Ejerid (salt lake) not too far from Tozeur, Tunisia, a volcanic canyon nearby and then moved to Matmata, a town inhabited by troglodytes, people who make their homes in caves cut from the sides of the crater-like holes in the ground. The largest of these desert dwellings, the Hotel Sidi Driss, is seen as the interior of Luke Skywalker's homestead.

After two and a half weeks' filming in Tunisia, the cast and crew moved to London, where the rest of the movie was shot on fabulous sets constructed at the EMI Elstree Studios. "One of my favorite scenes takes place in the Cantina when Ben and I hire Han Solo and his Wookiee companion Chewbacca to fly us to Alderaan to rescue the Princess. We encounter some nasty aliens and get into a fight. I did all my own stunts, and in this scene, I get thrown backwards into a table. The fourth time we shot the scene I was so convincing everyone thought I'd broken my back—I was so proud of myself—but in the movie it goes by so quickly you hardly know it's me. By the way, the aliens in the Cantina were created from drawings by cartoonist Ron Cobb, and they're really strange."

A sci-fi, fantasy and horror film freak since he first saw the original *King Kong* when he was three years old (and hid in the closet hoping when he came out, Kong would be free), it seems that Mark's whole life has been preparing him for the role of Luke Skywalker. Is he afraid of being typecast as a fantasy hero like many of his

idols (such as Buster Crabbe and Leonard Nimoy)? I tell people it doesn't bother me, but I guess it does, a little. It's scary to think I could be like George Reeves, you know, and be Superman the rest of my life,

but I don't think Luke is super-human. He's just this kid who happens, almost accidentally, to become a hero, and that's part of his charm. There's a Luke Skywalker hiding in all of us."

Funding the artists (for a change)

Joyce Lindorff

California artists will be interested in the California Arts Council's first *Guide to Programs, 1977-78*.

The council members represent a cross-section of the arts, with Peter Coyote as chairperson. The programs are geared to the idea of artists interacting and perfecting within communities.

Interested artists are being invited to apply for the programs by the June 1, 1977 deadline.

Applications are available for the following:

- **ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES.** This program intends to re-integrate the artist, community and school. Resident artists contribute creative services for a monthly salary.

- **ARTISTS IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS.** In its first year of funded operation, this is a residency program, with artists to work in prisons, welfare offices, halfway houses, or other eligible institutions. Present or former residents of the institutions are also encouraged to apply as arts workshop teachers.

- **ORGANIZATIONAL GRANTS.** Any organization with non-profit status that has

been in existence for three or more years can receive support. Crafts groups, community arts projects, and music ensembles are among those eligible. A special Incentive Award will be allocated to the most appropriate plan.

- **SPONSOR GRANTS.** Sponsors wishing to present residencies by performing artists may apply for grants. Residencies last at least 2½ working days and involve California artists in communities away from their homes.

- **SPECIAL PROJECTS.** This program "leaves breathing space for art which is challenging and unfamiliar. Artists involved in new forms or problems in art should apply."

Also described in the guide are programs in Visual Arts Assistance, Alternatives in Education, a Maestro-Apprentice Program, Dance Touring Program, Theater Tour Program, and information on new arts legislation as well as a Cultural News Service.

To receive the booklet and applications, write:

California Arts Council
115 I Street
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or call (916) 445-1530.
Information is available in Spanish.

"PETE", neglected but valuable

Book Review
Dave Lindorff

One way the system has of keeping us down is to prevent us from finding out things. This can be done through the crudest form of censorship, as in the case of the Pentagon Papers, or the prior restraint of the government in barring publication of portions of Victor Marchetti's book on the CIA.

But there is a more insidious and more commonly used device—ignoring a good book. This is what has happened in L.A., with *Pete: The Story of Peter V. Cacchione, New York's First Communist Councilman* (by Simon W. Gerson, 1976, International Publishers, Inc., New York, N.Y., \$3.50 paperback).

We found the book in a local bookshop, where it had been left off by a reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times*, who has long been supporting this particular shop by giving them copies of the books sent to him by distributors when he doesn't want to review them.

Pete was not reviewed because, quite frankly, it is a threat to the status quo.

It is the biography of a man who won three terms on New York City's city council, with successively larger margins—who became a household word in the nation's largest city from 1941 to 1948.

It was also not reviewed because Pete is about how to crack the "permanent government's" machine, which runs every major city in the country, including ours.

Councilman Cacchione was elected because of an election system he helped to create called "proportional representation." It is a system we should fight to have instituted in every city and state in the nation.

Devised by a British barrister in the 19th century, proportional representation is the most democratic way of running elections ever devised. Under the system, voters chose their candidates for an office not by voting for one and against all others, but by listing them in order of preference.

As Gerson describes it in *Pete*, "If seven candidates were running—we'll call them Baker, Cacchione, Cohen, Johnson, Jones, Roberts and Smith—the voter numbered his preference, 1,2,3, as far as he or she had any choice.

"Let's say the voter was a left-wing worker whose first choice was Cacchione. He put the figure 1 next to Cacchione's name on the ballot. The voter had one vote under proportional representation, and this voter's vote would go to help elect Cacchione if he proved to have a chance.

"But then the voter thought, 'Suppose Cacchione can't make it? What's my second choice?' Well, maybe it's Cohen, an American Laborite (a left labor party in the '30s in New York). The voter thereupon put the figure 2 next to Cohen's name. But suppose neither Cacchione nor Cohen can get enough votes to be elected (when the ballots are counted), who is the third

choice? Maybe it's Rev. Johnson, a liberal Democrat. So he put the figure 3 next to Johnson's name. And so on.

"The purpose? To give the voter a choice and not to put him in the difficult position of voting for someone he doesn't really want, but who, he feels, has a chance.

"And if, to pursue our example, both Cacchione and Cohen were eliminated (in the first round of counting), then their votes went to their next choices...In that way, the candidates closest to the voter's desire finally wins with his help."

With that kind of a system, we would have now had John Tunney for Senator instead of Hayakawa, and Tom Hayden would still have registered 1.3 million votes on the first round of counting.

Proportional representation worked so well in the New York City elections that the 8.1 per cent of the city voters who voted Communist were represented by 8.7 per cent of the seats on the city council, and each party was represented almost just as accurately. Before the system went into effect, there were 67 Democrats and 1 Republican on the council, which wasn't even fair to the Republicans!

But by 1946, when a second Communist was elected to the council with Pete Cacchione, the Wall Street establishment could stand it no longer, and they mounted a campaign, much the way Agribusiness mounted its successful campaign against Prop. 13, the Farmworker's Initiative, last year, and proportional representation was ended, except for school board elections.

It's an issue well-explained in the book, and makes it clear that all progressives should begin demanding the system for Los Angeles and for California, so we no longer have to either vote for the lesser evil or refrain from voting.

The book is important reading for another reason too, it addresses the question of how a radical works within the electoral system.

As Gerson writes in the book, "There may be no laws bearing his name, but many of the demands for which Pete fought, be it unemployment insurance, social security, or the prohibition of racist advertisements, have today become commonplace realities."

Or, "At no time did he delude people into believing that their job was done simply by electing Pete Cacchione. 'No no,' he would say over and over again, 'You've got to organize yourself and fight, and I'm here to help you fight.'"

It's a book we all should read.

A vote for D.C. Images

Roger Taus

P.J. Laska's first book of poems, *D.C. Images* (Mountain Union Books, 107 Earwood St., Beckley, W.Va. 25801; \$3.50), is a remarkable revolt against the conventional, award-winning books most of us likely think of as what poetry is about. It's therefore incredible that Laska and this book were in contention for the National Book Award in poetry, with John Ashbery, a poet who is so escapist, so mannered, so obsessed with his own neurasthenic feelings about his

static personal situation as sort of the last civilized man, that he won the award!

But so much for the fiefdoms of Literature, Inc. What is important is that P.J. Laska is a poet of and for the working class. His dad was a miner. Although Laska has traveled through the States and Canada, and taught at big universities, he never succumbed to the blandishments of researching writers dead for three hundred years, building a reputation in the right circles, reviews, and anthologies, and becoming the chairman of the English Department. Instead he teaches at the Southern Appalachian Circuit of Antioch College, helps edit *What's A Nice Hillbilly Like You*, and writes dynamite poems about real things.

What a lift to read poems that are not about somebody's particular pose within a merely literary conception of the world. Unlike most poets living under imperialism, Laska doesn't shun the day to day particularities of class existence. There are damn few poets writing today in the U.S. about whom you can say that.

Here are two of Laska's Washington D.C. poems.

XXV
Old MAN

ON LaFayette square
with his lunchbox
in a kerchief
says pardon me sir
I do labor work
but it slackened off
they don't take on
no one anymore

VII ("Meditations on a Rent Receipt")

Yesterday they were digging
outside
the window, a broken sewer-
line
At night it looked like an
open grave
in the moonlight; things
point
beyond themselves.

The latter poem reflects Laska's development of William Carlos Williams' materialist poetics, "Compose. (No ideas/but in things) Invent!" But the poems are not derivations or imitations, easy enough traps to fall into if you love and absorb Williams. They have their own economy, diction, and vision, "things pointing beyond themselves," as in these lines from "Upstate New York A.D., II Albany."

In Attica
no prison face
not scarred with pain,
no nameless dead
not long remembered.

At the State House door
a German shepherd sits,
head erect,
rags from a child's doll
in its teeth.

Many poets writing today resemble turtles. They carry their neuroses around with them from university to university, giving readings and lectures. No wonder so many of their poems are about personal stasis and depression, sometimes bordering on madness. A main alternative to this seems to be the self-as-spectacle, the poet with genitals or beer can in hand. Laska's roots and his place are with workers.

It's Laska's ease in the world, his place in it and clarity about it that makes for such ordinary and powerful poems. From "At Dallas' Love Field," there's an echo of Kenneth Rexroth's narrative poems, but without Rexroth's gratuitous and unfor-

tunate preening: "Stood around the newsstand/ studying variety/ in our time.../ There's a whole rack of books/ on Hitler./ Dallas paper puts the shooting/ of a policeman/ on the front page./ some incident over a dent/ in a car door./ The KKK in Cincinnati announces/ it will reach out to women/ and Catholics./ At the entrance gates/ airport guards/ rifle your luggage/ looking for weapons./ Under capitalism violence/ is routine./ security is hijacked/ money./ and freedom is a dream/ of empty time/ indistinguishable from death."

P.J. Laska's book is part of the movement toward a revolutionary art. He is not writing these poems in the blind, out of an elaborate mask, or for gain of any kind other than a class gain. They are not for sale.

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Fear and Loathing at Magic Mountain

Ann Holland

In the foothills on the far edge of the San Fernando Valley, just this side of the minimum security prison farm, is a signpost that seems to be a signpost of hydrocephalic building blocks. This is the signal for children in any car travelling down Highway 5 to begin screaming in unison for a four or five hour detour to Magic Mountain. The park itself can be seen lurking behind the next hill like a mechanical dragon in a neon tuxedo, beckoning the weary traveller to forsake the road and lose a few hours and his lunch riding the "Great White Knucklers."

Wondering just what's on the other side of the Mountain," the Vanguard sent this reporter to investigate. With him went Charles, 12, and Cindy, 10, as well as Sandy and Doug, both jaded adults in their twenties. We geared up for the trip by consuming enough Coke between us to float a small rowboat. Our assignment: Have fun come hell or high water. As it turned out, we had a little of both.

The first thing we noticed about Magic Mountain was its arrangement, a set-up that gives new meaning to the term "random selection." In the little square just inside the entrance was a fairytale "troll house," just a few steps away from a gingerbread bandstand where a marginally talented rock band was mangling our favorite hits. Nearby was a carousel built in 1912 (they apparently found it there and decided to build the park around it) with a music box that might have been worth hearing if it weren't for the rock band and the screaming. The screaming came from the "Great American Revolution," the park's biggest roller coaster, which is just a few feet away from the carousel. Since Magic Mountain has no "lands" or "theme areas," everything is thrown together in a carnival goulash. It's up to the visitor to find what he wants when he wants it, a task barely aided by the strange little maps distributed at the gate. The Mountain is a place where you make things as they come or you kiss them good-bye.

So the first thing we tried was the Revolution. This is a 1657-foot-long, 90-foot-high steel contraption that features the first and only 360-degree vertical coaster loop in the world. It's also the Mountain's most heavily advertised attraction. As a result, the line was long, but that gave us an opportunity to read the signs warning pregnant women and heart patients to stay away. At the head of the line there's a "Chicken's Exit," just so you know what a terrific, scary ride you're boarding. Two minutes later we were back where we started, feeling the way you do when you just miss hitting a truck — pretty scared there for a second, but it was over fast. Strangely enough, the bull thrill is not the loop — the pull of gravity makes that feel very safe — but the big hill just before it. Maybe the old Nu-Pike roller coaster was better than we thought.

As a matter of fact, a lot of the rides at Magic Mountain are very familiar. We passed new incarnations of bumper cars, ferris wheels, a "crack-the-whip," a centrifuge, and what seemed like a dozen variations on the roller coaster. It gave us a good opportunity to show the kids some old carnival rides in slicker and probably safer versions, but we were all anxious to move on to the really good stuff. This stuff was pretty old hat and after all, even a twelve-year-old can only take so many roller coasters.

After having our fill of thrill rides and washing out at the midway, we were at a loss for something to do. There was a "Children's World" of mild amusements, but the kids were too old for that kind of thing. Then Doug suggested we try "The Other Side of the Mountain," the park's newest section. There, we assumed, it would be a different story.

I think the story has something to do with a guy named Disney who built an amusement park and made a whole pile of money. Where "This Side" of Magic Mountain is the Nu-Pike and every carnival you ever saw slicked up and modernized, "The Other Side" is a cut-rate Disneyland without Huey, Dewey, or Louie. But there is a monorail, an aerial skyway, a "Grand Centennial Railroad," miniature racing cars and "bumper boats" reminiscent of Disney's defunct "flying saucers." We decided to try the boats first, but so did everyone else in the place. We were in line for ten minutes before being ushered into our diesel-powered belching bumper boats. It took a minute to figure out how to make the things move, and in another minute the ride was over. "Wet, wild and woolly action!" said the press kit hype. Would you believe frustrating, fumeey and fast-ending?

Lines are a major problem here and all over the Mountain. Because there are no ride tickets (all rides being included in the price of admission), people seem willing to wait for incredible lengths of time for rides that averaged two minutes' duration. Almost all the rides at the park are too short, and almost all the lines are too long, the worst of our visit lasting thirty minutes.

I started to worry on the skyride that I had lost my sense of child-like wonder and had been transmogrified into a cynical adult by the cold, cruel world. But then Cindy piped up and said, "This isn't nearly as good as Disneyland!" The Mountain wasn't fooling her either. Both she and Charles were noticing the shabby state things were in and the disinterested looks on the faces of the ride attendants. They had noticed that the buildings made up to look like Swiss chalets and Mexican adobes on the outside were ugly institutional green boxes inside. They knew the rides weren't half as good as the Disney rides they were copied from. The most fun they had all day was during the ride home, tearing up my road maps and dropping the pieces out the window.



It seems to me that if an amusement park doesn't amuse a reasonably agreeable ten or twelve-year-old, there must be something wrong. The people who seem to enjoy the park the most are teen-agers. Because there aren't many ride attendants, they can pretty much do what they want, riding the White Knucklers over and over and carving their initials in each other. If I had a teen-ager I didn't want to see for a few days, I'd give him \$7.50 and send him to Magic Mountain.

But for a kid (or an adult for that matter) who still enjoys fantasy and wants to go to a place that's special, Magic Mountain has little to offer. Offices and construction equipment stick out like a whole emergency ward of sore thumbs. The place has more clipped corners than a Chevy in a demolition derby. It's painfully obvious that no one involved with Magic Mountain cares about much of anything except making a buck. And that lack of caring could be the very thing that turns the home of the Great White Knucklers into a Great White Elephant.

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Los Angeles. The old saw about death and taxes doesn't apply to life insurance companies and property taxes. Recent events show that "Nothing is as evadable as an insurance company's property taxes."

Property taxes—the American Way of financing local government—are probably the most regressive form of taxation going. All across the nation, "home-owners" pay the bulk of the costs of government, while commercial and industrial establishments pay a pittance.

As one employee of the Los Angeles Assessor's Office—largest in the country—put it, "A guy might pay \$1,000 in taxes on a house he bought for \$30,000, while a company will pay \$370,000 on a 20-story office building that cost \$75 million to build, and that's used to make profits."

Since property taxes normally rise when land values go up in an area, the whole issue has become politically explosive. In an inflationary economy, speculators have found the safest place to invest capital is real estate, and this forces up property values and taxes.

This is particularly true in Los Angeles, where residential property values have been rising at the fastest rate in the nation. Some areas here have property inflation of almost 10% per month! It's hard on the average worker with a stagnant salary, on the senior citizen on

fixed income, and especially on the tenant, who doesn't even have the option of selling.

But commercial and industrial property is another story. While profits have soared, business property assessments (and of course their property taxes) have remained steady, or even declined.

If you can believe the Assessor's Office and the Assessment Appeals Board in L.A., the high-rise office building of the Crocker National Bank (part of a national holding company that just reported net quarter profits of \$12 million and an increase in assets of \$1 billion) is a losing operation. It has obtained tax reductions year after year. You'd think it was a car, the way they say it's depreciating in value.

Because of the complexity of appraising these sky-scrapers, it's hard to police what's happening to them.

Records in the L.A. Assessor's Office show, for instance, that the highest building in Los Angeles, owned principally by the Equitable Life Assurance Company of New York, cost \$78 million to build. But is appraised by the Assessor as having a market value of only \$62.7 million.

Equitable is not satisfied with this seemingly choice situation. They have an appeal of their assessment underway, and are claiming that the 62-story building is really worth only \$37 million—a good deal less than they paid for it.

In California and many other states

life insurance companies have to provide state insurance commissions with a list of their assets to demonstrate their ability to back the policies they sell. The California law requires the companies to list the value of all property, using construction costs, purchase price, or market value, whichever is less. In this case Equitable listed the building as an asset worth \$78 million.

In other words, according to Equitable the building has several values. As an asset (when it pays to have the building worth as much as possible) the building is worth \$78 million, and as a tax liability (when it pays to have it worth as little as possible) it is worth only \$37 million—less than half as much.

Apparently, the Assessor's office here has known about this practice of dual listings for years and considered it of "no consequence." They have been content to accept the lower corporate figure or, as in this case, to "split the difference."

Opposition arose in this case, however, from a local group, Tax Reform Action Coalition, that decided to take on the "double booking" practice at the tax appeal hearing on another of Equitable's buildings—a 20-story structure that Equitable told the state was worth \$27.4 million and told the county tax office was worth only \$20 million.

A coalition of groups including the New American Movement, Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, Com-

mittee for Economic Democracy, Coalition for Economic Survival and others TRAC formed in March to confront the property tax issue. Where conservative "reform" groups have argued that the way to reduce taxes is to cut human services, TRAC has insisted that the way to do it is to increase the tax on corporations who now evade their fair share.

TRAC activists demonstrated outside the hearing and packed the hearing room—usually a dull formality ignored even by the media. The appeals board, composed of realtors—listed attorneys when the Assessor's Office brought up the "newly discovered" insurance commission figures and Equitable, after first failing to have the demonstration ousted from the room, sensed what the outcome would be and asked for a one-month delay in the hearing. It will resume in mid-May.

It was a good move. Two weeks later another appeals board turned down a similar request for a \$54 million assessment reduction by the owners of a skyscraper complex currently appraised at \$174 million. The major owner of the property was the Prudential Life Insurance Company. It had argued that the value of the building was really only \$120 million, but to the state insurance commissioner, it had said the building was an asset worth \$197 million.

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