

PERSPECTIVES

A recent commercial newspaper review of Oliver Stone's new film about killers on the loose uses the word "controversial" no less than three times; this seems to be one of the most popular buzz-words, and connotes a tendency toward dangerously independent thinking, attitudes, etc. As if the USA had not been founded by "controversial" types like Jefferson and Paine...

If anyone has illusions about the Clinton administration, they have surely been stripped away by their Cuba policy, worse than that of the Republicans. Clinton blatantly insists that Cuba knuckle under to the "free market" system, the nature of which is surely obvious to all. Someone asked what I thought of the Cuban refugees, and if they should be allowed to come here, and I responded: "Of course, but how about U.S. citizens being allowed to visit Cuba without immigration harassment, seizure of passports, etc., not to mention allowing Cuba to buy medicine, etc.!" In a long life of observing politics, I have rarely seen more gross examples of hypocrisy and deceit.

Concerning Haiti, a *Washington Post* article by Hugh DeSantis and Kenneth J. Dillon, reprinted in the *K.C. Star* on July 17, reviews the history of U.S. involvement. The U.S. marines went in and "established order" in 1915. "In 1918, a major rebellion—the Second Cacos War—broke out, leading to the deaths of some 1,500 insurgents and 15 Marines. The U.S. soldiers put on blackface, and hunted down Charlemagne Peralte, the leader of the rebellion. They then strung up his corpse on a post, took a photograph and distributed copies throughout the country in an effort to break the spirit of resistance. This bit of psychological warfare backfired when many Haitians compared their slain leader's posture to that of Jesus Christ on the cross."

Ivan Bachur has a newsletter underway, called *The New Socialist*, which is "a forum wherein private citizens who hold opinions outside the 'mainstream' can discuss public issues. You can join this discussion by sending your comments, drawings, cartoons, photographs—or any other item of interest...Each and every item sent to this newsletter will be published." I've seen three issues, and find the approach refreshingly open. Among topics discussed and reported are current conditions in China, the possibilities of fascism in Russia, and competing definitions of socialism. "We have turned socialism into a religion," writes Bachur. "I don't believe that any one group or party has exclusive possession of the truth, so that any other party calling itself socialist must therefore be misguided or 'heretical.' I believe that Marx intended socialism to be a science, and not a dogma or catechism that must be repeated word for word." Single issues are \$1.00 each, but an annual subscription for six issues is only \$5.00—a real bargain. If you want to participate in a truly democratic discussion, contact *The New Socialist* at 8132 Farnum, Warren, Michigan 48093.



NEWS & NOTES

From Florida, Charles Willett publishes *Librarians at Liberty*, "an interactive newsletter" presently appearing semi-annually. Vol. 1, #2, January 1994 featured a long essay by Chris Atton, on "Censorship and Social Responsibility in Britain," which among other things, notes that "The Library Association may have condemned attempts to ban *The Satanic Verses*, though it did not investigate claims that its own members had banned the book from their libraries." Vol. 2, #1, June 1994 features Margaret Downey on her successful campaign to overcome censorship of *Freethought Today* in Philadelphia, Gordon Stein on "Preserving Our Freethought Heritage," and my essay on the Kansas City rare books disaster. Willett accurately defines his newsletter as aiming "to give people working in libraries and related fields an unconstrained opportunity to express professional concerns." Subscriptions are \$10 per year to CRISES Press, 1716 SW Williston Road, Gainesville, FL 32608. Willett also publishes guides to alternative publishers of books in North America, exhibits at American Library Association meetings, etc. It's encouraging to see progressive folks in the library field starting to publicize issues, and serving as an open forum.

In mid-July, some 500 people gathered for the founding convention of the Committee of Correspondence at the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago. Longtime radical entrepreneur Scott Cramer attended, selling T-shirts stating: "Lobotomies for Republicans: It's the Law." According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "there were Marxist-Leninists, Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyites," quite a heady mixture, I'd say from this distance.... We anxiously await word on how much emphasis this group will develop on "cultural questions," as we rather quaintly used to put it.