

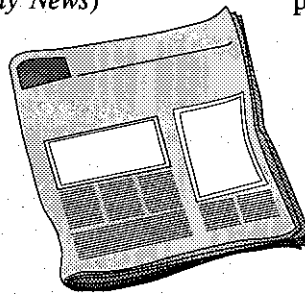
# The *Inky* and Me

*A study in market-driven journalism*

*By Edward S. Herman*

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* (*Inky*) is widely regarded as a very good newspaper. This reputation derives in part from its great superiority over its predecessor, Walter Annenberg's *Inquirer*, notorious as a partisan Republican rag and instrument of Annenberg's personal vendettas (most famously, his refusal to allow mention of the name of the liberal Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania, Milton Shapp). After the Knight system acquired the *Inky* (and the Annenberg-owned *Philadelphia Daily News*) in 1970—Knight merged with the Ridder chain in 1974 to form Knight-Ridder—it brought in professional managers, sharply upgraded the news operation, and terminated the paper's service as a personal political vehicle of the owner.

The paper's favorable reputation also rests on positive accomplishments. Knight-Ridder has had some first rate journalists like Frank Greve and Juan Tamayo, whose reports occasionally appear in the *Inky* (these reporters have been attached directly to the Knight-Ridder-owned *Miami Herald*). The *Inky* has had a fair number of in-house news articles and investigative studies of issues such as the wetlands, police abuses, local political corruption, and others that are very good journalism. Barlett and Steele's periodic multi-part investigative reports on the tax burden and income distribution, despite limitations (noted below) are worthy efforts. The paper is not closed, and publishes news articles and occasional opinion pieces that conflict with the party line the paper is supporting editorially.



Despite these positives, however, the *Inky* has always been an establishment institution that keeps news and opinion very much within the bounds of establishment parameters. It is a market-driven paper, increasingly so over the past decade, and as a result has done a very poor job of maintaining a "public sphere" within which issues important to the entire citizenry are freely discussed and debated. Its news arm has the deficiency of all mainstream commercial papers—it depends too heavily on official sources, so that it is regularly led by the nose in the direction officials desire; and where officials want silence and afford few leads, the paper fails to follow a story and allows silence to prevail. (Often, where officials want the *Inky* to go its editors want to go anyway.) One result is that the *Inky* has frequently served as a propaganda arm of the state, as in the case of its news/editorial treatment of the NAFTA debate and Mexican bailout, where the news coverage was thin and uncritical, the editorial page hugely biased and demagogic.

## *Market-Driven Journalism*

The *Inky*'s parent, Knight-Ridder (KR), is a publicly owned company traded on the New York Stock Exchange, and in consequence is under steady pressure to attend to the bottom line. This pressure sharpened over the past decade during

to expand coverage by extending the definition of employee to independent contractors." To date, this has not happened.

The ultimate challenge, says Anthony Carnavale, who headed the National Commission on Employment Policy, "is how to reconcile the need to furnish contingent workers protections in the workplace similar to those afforded permanent employees while continuing to provide employers with the work force flexibility they need to be competitive in a global economy." The commission warned that expanding contingent labor without extending labor rights promises dire results: "It is incumbent upon us to decide if, in the long-term, it is economically and socially viable for this country to sustain a large portion of the American working population in such a precarious and insecure employment status."

The commission answered its own question rather boldly, which may explain why congressional Republicans and the Clinton administration agreed to eliminate the group. "Our goal should be to provide all workers with the same level of protection to reduce the incentives to create a two-tiered labor market," the report said.

But as contingent labor proliferates, policy makers are ignoring this challenge. Only two members of Congress have proposed reforms, and both (Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, and Colorado Representative Patricia Schroeder) have opted for retirement—effectively removing contingent labor from the national policy making map. The two congressional attempts to extend legal protections to contingent workers languish in archival obscurity.

Senator Metzenbaum's "Contingent Workforce Equity Act," proposed in October 1994, remains by far the most comprehensive attempt to protect contingent workers. It proposed to "extend the protections of Federal labor and civil rights laws to part-time, temporary, and leased employees, independent contractors, and other contingent workers, and to ensure equitable treatment of such workers." Among other provisions, the bill would have made it illegal for companies to pay temporary and part-time workers less than regular employees doing similar jobs. The European Court of Justice has already taken a similar tack, ruling that unequal pay for part-time workers is discriminatory.

When Metzenbaum retired the measure was passed along to now-retiring Illinois Senator Paul Simon; it has since been forgotten. Nonetheless, the bill amply reflected attempts by advocacy groups and unions to write contingent workers into the law. The National Employment Law Project, a New York City-based group advocating for the unemployed and working poor, is urging the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to include Workfare recipients and other

contingent workers within its antidiscriminatory aegis. The aim, according to staff attorney Cathy Ruckelshaus, is to "make it clear in the definition of employee that they're covered."

The Law Project and many policy researchers urge a complete overhaul of U.S. labor law, arguing that single-issue reforms "simply encourage the development of new forms of contingent status," a coalition of worker advocacy groups told the Dunlop Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations in 1994. "Mandating fair treatment for employees...gives employers a reason not to directly hire 'employees,' but instead to hire 'temps,' 'lease' workers or engage 'independent contractors' for whom they have no responsibility."

Francois Carre and fellow labor experts Virginia duRivage and Chris Tilly, say the National Labor Relations Act needs to be re-framed to allow new forms of union association—enabling temps and other transient workers to join collective bargaining units based on their occupation or geographic location, rather than on the traditional NLRA model of employer-based unionism.

Proposals for reform pile up by the dozens at labor conferences and in congressional archives. What's missing is government will and interest in discouraging unprotected work and expanding labor protections. If the silent slaying of NCEP's report is any indicator, politicians of both parties would rather not even discuss it. And while some unions, most notably the Service Employees International Union and the United Food and Commercial Workers, have pressed hard to address the needs of part-time and contract workers, the labor movement has been slow to embrace contingent workers as the new frontier for organizing.

Even in seemingly labor-friendly circles, the legal problems of contingent workers are merely "a topic that merits further inquiry." Such was the conclusion of the Dunlop Commission, a Clinton Administration fact-finding panel that many saw as the best hope for progressive labor law reform. Contingent workers merited but 2 pages in the commission's 200-page report, which failed to promote any reforms. According to one labor union source close to the commission, chair John Dunlop, the U.S. Labor Secretary under President Gerald Ford, "just didn't want to talk about it. He didn't think contingent workers were an issue that needed to be addressed." Z

*Christopher D. Cook is a freelance writer from San Francisco who has written for The Nation, In These Times, and The San Francisco Bay Guardian.*

# THE STATE OF THE UNION...



which newspaper profits suffered from recession, high newsprint prices, and competition for advertising from cable and other rivals. John Knight, a liberal Republican with an old-fashioned respect for investigative journalism, died in 1981; the Ridder half of the combine was always more business oriented, and Tony Ridder, now the CEO, is noted for his marketing focus. Under Ridder, and his predecessor as president, James Batten, KR has pursued a number of strategies: it has tried to diversify into new media (unsuccessfully), it has engaged in union busting in Detroit, and it has tried to cut costs in all its papers by reducing personnel. This led to the departure of the *Inky's* top executive, Eugene Roberts, in 1990, and then to the resignation of executive editor James Naughton in 1995. In leaving the *Philadelphia Daily News* in 1995, editorial page editor Richard Aregood remarked that KR "was becoming a company on the standard model of corporations rather than on the Knight model." David Von Drehle, who once worked for the *Miami Herald*, stated that the recent deterioration of standards at KR led

him to conclude "that its time to pronounce the experiment of publicly traded newspapers a failure."

The other line of attack by Knight-Ridder has been a more aggressive (or sycophantic) catering to readers and advertisers. James Batten, president of KR from 1988 until his death in 1995, pioneered this new phase of market-driven journalism, and was featured in the recent books *When MBAs Rule Newsrooms* (Doug Underwood) and *Market-Driven Journalism* (John McManus). From 1988 Batten campaigned within KR for what he called "customer obsession," the word customer encompassing both readers and advertisers. The marketing underpinning of this "obsession" was clear: an intensified focus on profit margin targets, and the *Wall Street Journal* noted back in 1990 that KR seemed to be "borrowing heavily on the innovations of Gannett Co.'s *USA Today*...[with] graphics and bright colors [that] highlight stories on baby-boomer 'hot buttons,' such as divorce, personal finance, housing trends and the workplace." According to *Miami Herald* executive editor Doug Clifton, the paper should be answering

the main question asked by readers: "What does this mean to me?" Accordingly, his paper downgraded non-local news and, as a matter of policy, confined news coverage to nine areas that focus groups indicated were of primary interest to readers (the list excluded national politics and world affairs). David Remick wrote in the *New Yorker* that the *Miami Herald* was now "thin and anemic, a booster sheet."

### *Boosterism and Phony Empowerment*

The *Inky* was slower than the *Miami Herald* to succumb to the "obsession" being pushed by KR on its subsidiaries, but it took heavy cost-cutting hits and gradually adopted important features of the new order. Its boosterism was evident in its editorial support of a locally produced helicopter boondoggle ("Save the Osprey: Here's a strange-looking plane we really need," July 9, 1990). It was more dramatically illustrated at the time of death of Philadelphia-based Cardinal John Krol on March 3, 1996. For an entire week the *Inky* ran huge front-page spreads with pictures of the Cardinal, his bier, his funeral, with adulatory language—"a towering presence," "Philadelphia's [sic] Servant for 27 Years," etc.—and the inside pages full of detail and drivel. Krol, an admirer of Richard Nixon, ally of the regressive Pope John II, and a mediocrity in every respect, could be given a wholly uncritical hero's celebration only by a newspaper pandering to a bloc of readers.

The 1990 *Wall Street Journal* account of the new "reader friendly" KR noted that KR papers' editorial pages now featured "'empowerment boxes' giving names and phone numbers, so readers can take action." The *Inky* was one of those papers. Many KR papers also installed Citizens Voice programs that encourage readers to get together to exchange opinions and to have them expressed in a special part of the paper. The *Inky* has adopted this with energy and has devoted many pages to brief expressions of "citizens voices." This new "civic journalism," sometimes called "commercial populism," is basically a copout and fraud. It is a copout in that the paper abandons its own responsibility to address issues and treat them in depth; it is fraudulent in its pretended interest in ordinary people's views and in the notion that allowing controlled expressions of opinion by these citizens in any sense "empowers" them (when in fact the brevity and range of voices assures that they will have no coherence or consequences).

The *Inky* also has a reader-friendly Ombudsman, who displayed his and the *Inky's* true colors in an incident involving the publication of a front-page article on Rush Limbaugh, "The king of talk, leading

the charge" (Joe Logan, June 2, 1995), with an accompanying picture that showed Limbaugh grimacing. The article was a superficial puff-piece that quoted Rush at length. Only on the continuation page did Logan mention that Limbaugh's "no less strident" critics assert that he plays fast and loose with facts and has a mean streak. No quotes or citations were given and no mention was made of the well-publicized Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting book *The Way Things Aren't: Rush Limbaugh's Reign of Error*. Enter the Ombudsman, not to apologize for the omissions and puffery but for the photo showing Rush grimacing. And while the *Inky* also gave Limbaugh an Op Ed column, a submission detailing Limbaugh's errors by Jeff Cohen (co-author of the FAIR volume) was rejected.

This pandering to the Right has characterized the *Inky's* handling of the letters and Op Ed page for many years. These are not designed to illuminate issues or encourage in-depth debate, which might upset important constituencies. The *Inky* sees its market as mainly the affluent suburbanites of Philadelphia; the affiliated *Daily News* is for the lunch pail citizenry of the city. A recent *Inky* solicitation of advertisers asserted that the paper is read by 83 percent of Philadelphians with incomes of \$100,000 or more. The *Inky* management has long perceived that this market segment wants a generous treatment of conservative and rightwing pundits and the *Inky* has provided such treatment for decades.

During the 1980s, opponents of the Central American wars steadily protested the *Inky's* Op Ed page generosity to the war party, causing the editor, Edwin Guthman, to write two columns acknowledging that the antiwar letters were outnumbering those supporting Reagan, and literally appealing to rightwing readers to write in to correct the imbalance and presumably justify the pro-war columns (April 6, 1986). We may be sure that no *Inky* editor has ever appealed to liberals and leftists to write in to support a liberal-left position or program.

In an editorial commenting on the reception to the Barlett-Steele series in 1996, the *Inky* editor noted that letters supporting Barlett and Steele greatly outnumbered those in opposition. This once again suggests that the conservative bias of the Op Ed page and close rationing of liberal-left commentary is not justified by the voices that reach the paper, but results from the desire to provide a page that satisfies important readers and advertisers.

In an August 1990 letter to Central American protestors explaining *Inky* letters policy, the letters editor wrote that the letters column is "primarily for plain old ordinary readers first, not for groups and organizations seeking a platform to expound their beliefs." Citizens Voices for the *Inky* are not people in Central

American protest groups, but "ordinary" citizens. This is a formula for using the letters columns as a lightning rod, to give the impression of being democratic while keeping it mostly free of letters that might enlighten.

### *Pandering to the Pro-Israel Lobby*

The *Inky* makes exceptions to the policy of avoiding letters by organized groups where the groups are powerful and effectively threatening. A conspicuous case involved the pro-Israel lobby and the Specter-Yeakel senatorial election campaign of 1992. The paper is under steady pressure from this lobby, and one form of cave-in has been a very generous allotment of letter and Op Ed column space to its members. Notable has been their treatment of Morton Klein, the very aggressive, Philadelphia-based president of the Zionist Organization of America, who had seven letters and four Op Ed columns published in 1991-1992 (and many thereafter). Klein strongly favored Arlen Specter in 1992, and one *Inky* insider informed me that Klein faxed the *Inky* a message of criticism for its coverage of the election and Israeli issues every day. The lobby also besieged the *Inky* with visits; one of its members noted in a local paper that his group visited the editors, who "listened very carefully and, to their credit, took steps to redress the imbalance in subsequent editions."

One consequence of this lobbying effort was that *Inky* coverage of the Specter-Yeakel campaign was assigned mainly to reporter Nathan Gorenstein, whose pro-Specter bias was blatant. He, and other reporters as well, repeatedly referred to Yeakel's wealth and the fact that some of her own money went into her campaign, but he never mentioned the much greater sums poured into the Specter campaign by the pro-Israel lobby, and real issues and Specter's record were not covered. One of the sinister features of Specter's campaign was the claim that Yeakel's Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church was anti-Semitic, because they had had some pro-Palestinian speakers on the Middle East among a large set that included Specter (this last point was never mentioned by Gorenstein). Gorenstein's stories treated this charge of anti-Semitism as a genuine issue, not a smear tactic, and the *Inky* never explored the use of this dirty trick by Specter and his supportive lobby.

The *Inky* also supported the lobby and Specter by publishing successive letters attacking the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church by Klein, CAMERA zealot Gary Wolf, and the fanatical local rabbi Michael Goldblatt. The last was featured by the *Inky*, although full of errors that any competent editor should recognize, such as "No Jewish leader has attempted

to equate criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism," and it made ad hominem and false charges about church leaders Rev. Eugene Bay and Paul Hopkins. Hopkins's low-keyed reply to Goldblatt was refused publication by the *Inky*.

### *My Decade on the Blacklist*

I had a painful experience of my own with the pro-Israel lobby's muscle with the *Inky*. After having three successive Op Ed columns taken by the *Inky* in 1981-82, a fourth was published on state terrorism, which identified Israel (among others) as a terrorist state. This elicited flak, including some from important pro-Israel power brokers in Philadelphia. For the next decade (until 1991) I couldn't get an Op Ed into the paper, and while I have no hard evidence of cause I am pretty confident that the *Inky* was responding to a power center to which it often grovels, and that I was de facto blacklisted.

During this period I published a number of books on matters of extreme topicality, but Op Eds on these topics by a "local author" were not saleable. One proposed Op Ed, on the alleged Bulgarian-KGB plot to kill the Pope in 1991, an important propaganda ploy of the Cold War, was based on the book, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection* (written with Frank Brodhead). The *Inky* published only one Op Ed column on this subject, by rightwinger Michael Ledeen, who took the plot as already proven. The *Inky* not only rejected my offering, they also turned down an opinion piece on the subject by Diana Johnstone, the well-informed *In These Times* correspondent from Paris, which I submitted on her behalf. In its news columns, also, the *Inky*'s reporters never once departed from the party line; its "specialist" was completely uninterested in pursuing counter-evidence that I pointed out to him. When the case against the Bulgarians collapsed in an Italian Court in 1986, the *Inky* offered no reassessment; nor did it review the issue in 1991 when former CIA official Melvin Goodman told congress during the Gates confirmation hearings that the CIA professionals knew the case against the Bulgarians was fraudulent because, for one reason, they had penetrated the Bulgarian secret services. In short, in this major propaganda exercise the *Inky* was a gullible instrument of misinformation.

Several of my rejected columns during the blacklist years were on the Central America wars. One was based on the book *Demonstration Elections*, also written with Frank Brodhead, that tried to show that the 1982 Salvadoran election met none of the conditions of a genuine free election, but was a public relations gambit designed to prove to the U.S. public

that our intervention was justified, thereby allowing the war to continue. (At the same time, both here and in El Salvador it was claimed that the election was a means of terminating the fighting.) The only Op Ed column in the *Inky* during the 1984 Salvadoran election period was by James Kilpatrick, who, of course, found it a wonderfully democratic exercise. The *Inky* was editorially "against the war," but interestingly this did not cause their editorials to challenge the demonstration elections as fraudulent, nor, in the case of Nicaragua, did they expose the Reagan peace plans as cynical and call the contra war state-sponsored terrorism. No—they regularly lauded the good intentions of the terrorist sponsors, agreed that Nicaragua had a "dictatorship," and that their hot pursuit of contras into Honduras was reprehensible, etc. So, in the case of the Salvadoran elections of 1982 and 1984, with the news department following the official lead, and the editorials weakly critical, the *Inky* on balance supported the war policy.

The same conclusion was arrived at later by the Media Committee of the Philadelphia Pledge of Resistance, in two detailed and excellent studies of the *Inky's* coverage of Central America for 1989-1990, showing (among many other things, and with solid data) that the *Inky* was "twice as likely to use [derogatory] labels" for "enemies" than U.S. allies; that it depended excessively on U.S. official sources and "rarely quoted or interviewed" civilians or victims; that its photo selection policy supported State Department policy (no photos of civilian victims in El Salvador or Panama); and that it rarely covered Salvadoran military killings and almost never mentioned its responsibility for the vast majority of civilian deaths. As U.S. officials ignored Guatemala, so did the *Inky*, and it gave "very limited coverage to the unprecedented upsurge in U.S. national and local demonstrations/civil disobedience against U.S. policy and intervention." The paper's bias as regards each country in the region was substantial and supportive of U.S. intervention.

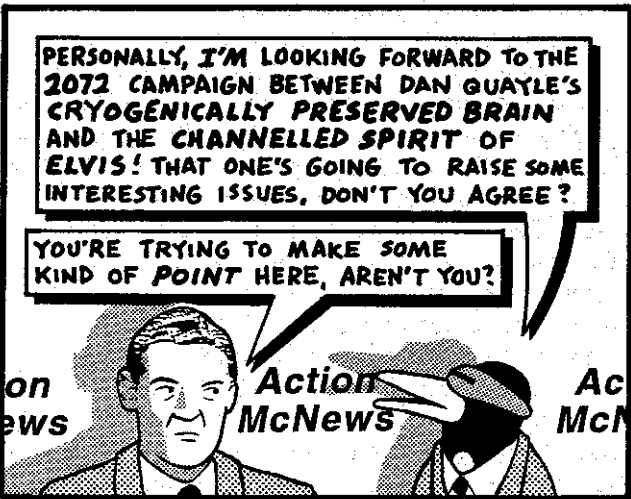
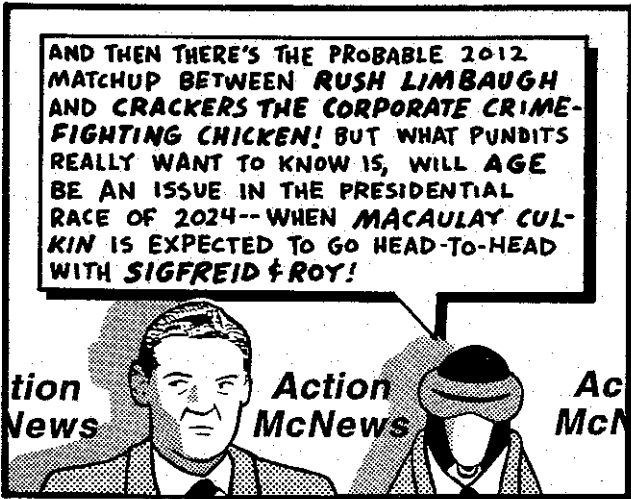
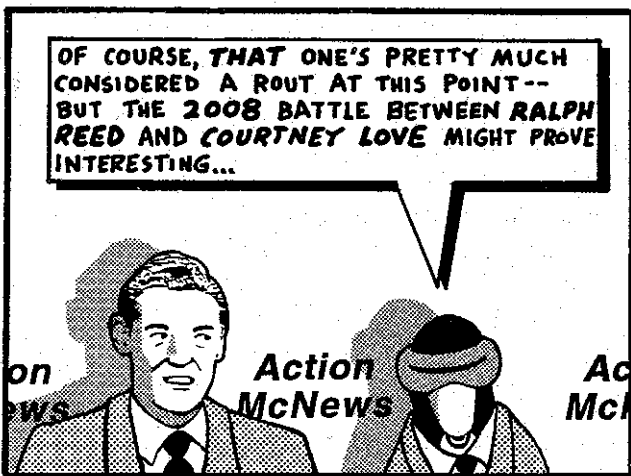
### *Columnists From Center to Far Right*

**B**ack in the 1970s, when the *Inky* had George Will and William Rusher of the *National Review* and far-rightists John Lofton and Smith Hempstone (feebly balanced by Mike Royko and David Broder) as columnists, I visited the editorial offices to try to sell them on Howard Zinn, who then had a syndicated column. I failed in this, and the *Inky* has never had a regular columnist as far "left" as Mary McGrory. They have had lightweight, issue-evading centrists like Broder, easily overpowered by rightwingers like Will and Charles Krauthammer,

who all through the 1980s pressed the Reaganite propaganda lines on Central America, the soviet threat, and the welfare mother threat, with only weak opposition. The *Inky* defends the columnist imbalance on the ground that their own editorials are liberal, as is their cartoonist Tony Auth, so the "left" is well covered. But this argument does not hold water. As noted on Central America, even when tending toward opposition to official policy *Inky* editorials are badly compromised, and on many policies they are distinctly illiberal: the *Inky* editorially supported Clarence Thomas, the Panama and Gulf wars, and Clinton's bombing and starving of Iraq; NAFTA; the anti-PC crusade; privatization; the urgent need to balance the budget; the Concord Coalition view of the threat of Social Security; and Boris Yeltsin as savior of the highly desirably Russian "reforms." With liberalism like this who needs conservatives?

Each new rightwinger who comes on board in this country goes straight into the *Inky* Op Ed columns—Greg Easterbrook and Michael Silverstein on the threat of the environmentalists, Mickey Kaus on the end of equality, Richard Rector of Heritage on the welfare threat, Christina Sommers and Camille Paglia on the menace of feminism. Sommers and Paglia are not needed anymore as the Op Ed page has latched on to Cathy Young, who has had over 50 columns since 1993, a large fraction aggressively attacking feminists. It is true that the *Inky* often carries Ellen Goodman and Sally Steenland, but these women are general-interest columnists who rarely address and defend feminist concerns. They in no way offset the steady anti-feminist aggression of Young, supplemented by columnist and former editor David Boldt, local rightwing contributing editor Mark Randall, and local fanatic Ronald James ("Where are the feminists when a sister needs help? Free Leona!" July 8, 1992).

The *Inky* has also been very kind to Dinesh D'Souza. His book *Illiberal Education* was given a featured double review (one favorable, one critical). With his new racist tome, *The End of Racism* [sic!], he was given generous Op Ed space (and identified as a conservative "scholar"), a featured book review, plus an accolade by David Boldt. When D'Souza spoke at St. Joseph College following publication of *Illiberal Education*, his speech got a generous *Inky* write-up complete with a flattering picture of the speaker. At almost the same moment, Noam Chomsky was in Philadelphia, giving a fund-raising speech at a downtown church. Not only was Chomsky's speech never mentioned in the *Inky*, the paper refused to report that it was to take place, despite repeated requests. Chomsky has never had an Op Ed column in the *Inky*; he supplied one, by invitation, several years ago, but it was never published, and no



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explanation was ever given for the failure to do so. The most frequently published economist on the Op Ed page—22 columns, 1994-1996—is Walter Williams, the black reactionary first syndicated by Heritage and holder of an Olin Foundation chair. He specializes in attacking entitlements (of poor people), welfare, and affirmative action. The local progressive economist, Richard DuBoff, gets published much less frequently—two columns, 1994-1996—and his submissions put the Op Ed editor under stress. For example, DuBoff submitted an Op Ed on July 16, 1996, defending Social Security. The Op Ed editor, when pushed, told DuBoff that he couldn't find a "peg" for the piece, although social security is a hot issue and he was publishing "unpegged" feel-good tripe and Walter Williams columns without a problem. The piece was never published. DuBoff submitted another one in January 1997 on the immensely topical issue of investing Social Security money in the stock market. The editor was trapped: so what he did was solicit an "answer" from Michael Tanner of

the Cato Institute, to set alongside DuBoff's piece (which he also cut and softened), to provide "balance."

The two most frequently published *Inky* insiders are Claude Lewis and Trudy Rubin. Lewis, who is black, is perfect for the *Inky* as he gives ethnic balance while staying nicely within the bounds acceptable to the white establishment. He strongly supported Clarence Thomas (although to his credit he recently expressed regret and admitted having made a mistake), supported Arlen Specter for the Senate in 1992, found that "So far Bush is a pleasant surprise" (September 13, 1989), argued along Reagan lines that the homeless made a free choice and asked for it ("Homeless, by deciding not to work," Dec. 27, 1989), and in a recent marvel on the crack-cocaine CIA connection, notes that "Even if the CIA flooded inner cities with crack, blacks didn't say 'no'" (September 25, 1996). Lewis shows his black solidarity by bravely denouncing Texaco officials for racist talk and talk show hosts for racist innuendo.

Trudy ("I love Boris") Rubin, the *Inky's* foreign policy specialist, was once a pretty good reporter, but her long stint on the *Inky* editorial board has taken a heavy toll and it has been years since she has said anything that departs one iota from the establishment foreign policy consensus. She also makes grossly inaccurate statements, like, "[the Europeans] opposed U.S. moves to quarantine Saddam Hussein before 1990" (August 7, 1996; the U.S. was appeasing Saddam up to August 31, 1990; this factual error was uncorrectable in the letters column). Her apologies for Yeltsin, the attack on Parliament and the Constitution in 1993, the 1996 election, the Chechnya War and the devastating effects of Russian reform have been grounded in a simple avoidance of inconvenient facts. They have made the editorial and Op Ed page a travesty on this important area.

In September 1995, *Inky* editor Jane Eisner announced changes in the syndicated columnists, replacing a few tired centrists with others, and substituting Joseph Sobran for George Will. Sobran is on the far right among the regulars of the rightwing *National Review*. Eisner explained Sobran's selection on the ground that "we've heard often from readers who complain that this kind of unvarnished conservatism is not represented on our pages."

Eisner had not done her homework. Sobran's outbursts and warm affiliation with the pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic, and racist instauration in the mid-1980s had caused Midge Decter to label him "a crude and naked anti-semitic" and even led William Buckley to distance himself from Sobran, briefly. In 1994 Sobran criticized *Schindler's List* as "holocaust harping" that has "gotten out of control," and in another column assailed Roosevelt for having gotten us into war in 1941 because of his unreasonable antipathy to Nazi Germany.

Eisner took quite a bit of flak for bringing in Sobran, but defended herself in print by a selective reading of his work and his personal assurances that he regretted some of his past remarks. She also stated with great pomposity that "I understand that some readers wish to open these pages and find a set of opinions that conform pleasantly to their own views. I am afraid that I can't accommodate them." Eisner apparently forgot her previous statement admitting her accommodation to rightwing readers desirous of an "unvarnished conservative." A letter signed by 55 individuals pointing out her inconsistency, and asking why the Left has to be satisfied with beltway centrists who never challenge the status quo, was refused publication. The Letters Editor did, however, publish a letter extolling Eisner's "clear reasoning." So much for Citizens Voices.

## The Barlett-Steele Anomaly

Barlett's and Steele's populism doesn't fit too comfortably into today's *Inky*, but as noted the paper is not entirely closed to critical fact and opinion and these authors have built a strong reputation for investigative research. Their productions bolster *Inky* circulation, enhance its reputation even if they "go too far," and they come along only very periodically. The *Inky* can support NAFTA and largely evade distributional issues year after year, with only rare discomfort from the house populists.

Barlett/Steele populism also has its limits. They don't urge a vigorous full employment policy or strengthened unions as means of improving income distribution; nor do they propose cutbacks in the military budget or decentralization of the corporate system and media. They support campaign financing reform, which everybody agrees to but which is hard to enact or enforce with existing inequalities intact. They also take dubious positions on trade and immigration—they support more aggressive efforts to open foreign markets, and, although urging higher taxes on TNC incomes, they offer no useful proposals for controlling U.S. foreign investment or international money market speculation. They fail to recognize that a great deal of immigration pressure comes from U.S. and IMF policy abroad that generates political and economic refugees.

Back in the mid-1970s, when SANE was a vigorous membership organization in Philadelphia, they organized a membership protest against the very conservative editor of the *Inky*, Creed Black, with many scores of letters and numerous phone calls to John Knight and others in the top management. Black was replaced by Ed Guthman shortly thereafter, and the *Inky* did become a somewhat better paper. But we failed to maintain that organization and level of activism, and the liberals and Left of Philadelphia have largely sat on the sidelines as citizens without representation, as far as the *Inky* goes. And the *Inky* remains a "part of the problem," speaking consistently for the establishment, giving the Right ample voice, and marginalizing citizens of the Left. We need new media for a real voice, but we also have to fight harder to get representation and a modest public sphere operating in the existing media, which will accommodate to some extent those who press hard and with tenacity.

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*Edward S. Herman is a professor of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and the author of numerous books and articles on media, economics, and foreign policy.*