

# THE Libertarian Forum

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Murray N. Rothbard, Editor

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## DOUBLE VICTORY FOR AGGRESSION

June 1982 will go down in history as a banner month for aggression. In the same week, two aggressors in two separate wars — Great Britain and Israel — smashed their opposition in an orgy of empire, vainglory, and mass murder, all to the scarcely disguised cheers of the Reagan Administration.

In the Falklands, all the *macho* mouthings of the Galtieri *junta* ended in abject surrender, with the Argie troops turning tail and fleeing the action. The excuse that the Brits had secret technology equipping them for night-fighting rates a loud raspberry; perhaps the Argies need to eat a lot more carrots. The Air Force did well in sinking several Brit ships, but even it lacked the fortitude for an assault on the beloved British troopship, the QEII. Meantime the triumphant Brit war machine re-planted the sacred Union Jack on Falkland soil — with the only cost hundreds dead on both sides and no less than one billion dollars to be extracted from the long-suffering British taxpayer. Strutting and bloated with victory, the Brits now insist on keeping Argies out forever — though the admitted cost will be another billion to garrison troops permanently in that remote hole and to pour in money for sheep development.

The Brits reached the depths of shame after the fighting ended, when Mrs. Thatcher virtually threatened death for some 11,000 prisoners of war unless the Argies surrendered officially as well as *de facto*; how vile can one get? Meanwhile, the only face left for the Argies is at least to continue the war *de jure*; but clearly the increased power of the dovish Air Force means that the Argies have no intention to carry the war forward in a protracted struggle by air and sea against the British garrison in the Falklands. It seems that the Argies are all wind.

There are only two points of solace in the Falkland outcome for libertarians: (a) that we have another argument for the superior fighting qualities of volunteer mercenaries (the Brits) as against draftees (the Argies); and (b) the pro-British intervention by the United States has opened a serious rift between the Reagan Administration and its right-wing authoritarian allies in Latin America.

Meanwhile, across the globe, Israel, which likes to launch aggression when a distracting war is being fought elsewhere (*pace* 1956), sliced through Lebanon, unmercifully slaughtering Lebanese civilians as it went. For a few days, the flimsy excuse sufficed of ending shelling threats for a 25-mile zone north of the Israeli border (Never mind that the PLO guerrillas had observed a cease-fire in that zone for eleven months). That excuse kept the United States benignly favorable and the Arab governments out of the action, permitting Israel to shell and murder Lebanese cities far north of the zone — such as Sidon and of course Beirut. Suddenly, Israeli troops were on the edge of Beirut itself.

Trudy Rubin, in a revealing article (June 17) in the *Christian Science Monitor*, shows that Israel was able to conduct these operations without generating an outraged world opinion by simply exercising press censorship and keeping journalists out of the war zone — thereby avoiding the protests following its far more limited invasion of south Lebanon in 1978.

So far, estimates are that over 10,000 Lebanese civilians have been killed or injured in Beirut alone. In Sidon, the Israelis killed a thousand Lebanese and wounded 3,000. And in the Lebanese city of Tyre, conquering Israel ordered large numbers of civilians to gather on the beach before it began to shell the town; the civilians were left on the beach by Israel for two days without food, water, or shelter. Overall, in southern Lebanon, 600,000 Arabs have been made homeless by Israelis engines of destruction. But this news has only been allowed to trickle out after the deed has been done, allowing the U.S. to cheerfully accept the new *fait accompli* presented by Israel.

The Reagan Administration, in fact, shamefully looks forward to Israel's imposing a new "strong, central government" on war-torn Lebanon. (*There's* a real libertarian goal!) Clearly, the U.S. is prepared to help Israel accomplish that objective. This "restructuring," however, is in the absurd

(Continued on page 5)

# FLAT-RATE: THE LATEST CON

Suddenly, they're all going for it. Reaganites trying to find some gimmick, some distraction from the current economic mess now that New Federalism is dead in the water. Democratic Neo-Liberals trying to find something newer than 1930s left-liberalism. Conservatives sick of the progressive income tax. Tax-wielders trying to find and crush the sheltered, the exempt, those not paying taxes. "It," of course, is the flat-rate income tax.

Flat-ratism originated with the Friedmanites, who have always praised its "simplicity." Secretary of the Treasury Regan calls it "maybe the fairest tax of all." The sainted Bill Simon, for a while back there the ubiquitous belovedest man in the free-market movement, is for it. Even my friend Congressman Ron Paul (R., Tex.) has swallowed this one hook, line, and sinker. In a June 1 press release, Ron calls flat rate "An Idea Whose Time Has Come," and repeatedly praises not only its simplicity but its "perfect fairness," since no one is allowed to "get away without paying their fair share of taxes."

And finally, of course, there are the Craniacs, ever ready to tail after someone else's sellout bandwagon. None other than Jule Herbert, head of the Craniac National Taxpayers Legal Defense Fund, has added his mite, hailing flat-rate as a sensible transition step toward the ultimate libertarian goal of income tax abolition.

The problem with conservatives and minarchists is that they have *no* theory of taxation. They favor taxation for protection and other services. But how *much* taxation, and *who* shall pay? As Ayn Rand would have said, Blankout. They can only fall back on the pernicious nonsense of "fairness."

But beneath the moral cloak of "fairness" rests the ugly reality of institutionalized envy. For saying that Smith is "not paying his fair share" of the taxes paid by Jones is *really* saying that since Jones has suffered by God Smith should be forced to suffer equally. Behind the cloak of "fairness" is the real mean-spirited "ethic" of compulsory equality of suffering. It is as if a group of slaves had escaped from the South before the Civil War, and they were met with the following: "Yes, we too are opposed to slavery and we seek the day when all men are free. But in the meantime, it is very wicked of you to escape slavery while your brothers and sisters are still under the yoke. For you are thereby evading your fair share of slavery, and therefore we shall send you back to your masters, to remain there until all slaves can be freed equally."

And yet that is precisely what conservative and libertarian flat-raters are saying. For the key to flat-ratism is not the welcome reduction in the tax paid by the upper-income groups; it is the eager search and destroy mission to eradicate tax shelters, credits, and exemptions, so as to *force* these lucky or

ingenious people to pay.

And what now happens to the libertarian transition demand for tax credits of all sorts? For tax credits for tuition, charity, or whatever? All this will be pulverized in the name of "fairness." Even Ronald Reagan demurred that those suffering from catastrophic illness would be forced to lose their exemptions under flat-rate domination. And here lies an interesting point. For none of the flat-raters are consistent enough to carry their logic through. The poor, the lower-income groups — in most plans those below \$10,000 income — are not to pay any taxes at all. But why should the poor be exempt from the universal fairness of flatness while the catastrophically ill are not?

The slavery analogy is correct because there can be no such thing as "fairness in taxation." Taxation is nothing but organized theft, and the concept of a "fair tax" is therefore every bit as absurd as that of "fair theft." Conservatives often see that there is something iniquitous about taxation, but they misidentify the "progressive" part of the income tax as theft, mistakenly thinking that the progressive income tax is a system whereby the poor rob the rich. In truth, taxation is a system whereby the State robs everyone else, rich, middle, and poor. *Taxation* is robbery, not simply progressive taxation.

But that means that Herbert and other libertarians who think of flat rate as a sensible "transition" step toward tax abolition are dead wrong. Gradualism *toward* a goal is one thing; gradualism *away* from a goal is quite another. Flat-ratism would sock much higher taxes upon the exempt and the sheltered. The proper transition demand should be precisely the opposite: not to join the envious in blathering about forcing the sheltered to pay "fair shares," but to hail their ingenuity and to set about widening these exemptions to include all the rest of us. Widen and deepen the flight of fugitive slaves, *don't* drag them back.

Furthermore, the broad base of the middle class — the exploited and conned majority who pay virtually all the taxes now — will continue to pay most of the taxes and are likely to find their tax burden increase. For if the poor and the rich are to have their burden cut, who but the long-exploited middle class will be expected to take up the slack? Once again, the Sumnerian Forgotten Man, the member of the middle class, will be socked. Or at least he will unless he catches on to this new Con as fast as possible.

And, finally, we cannot move toward tax abolition by increasing the taxes of any person or group. Ever. That strategy is very much like the Marxists moving toward the goal of the "withering away of the State" by first maximizing State power. It is opportunist double-talk. □

# HOUSTON: THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

The LP NatCom meeting at Houston, March 27-28 was a quiet but deeply satisfying event, for it marked the distinct turning of the tide on the National committee. As we reported in our August-January issue, the Bethesda, Maryland meeting on November 7-8, 1981 was an exciting one in which a newly forged Grand Coalition of Mason and Clark forces beat back a determined attempt by the Crane Machine to seize power. Houston was deeply satisfying because it became clear there that the Crane Machine had reached its high-water mark at Bethesda, and was now in a distinct and subdued minority. (Our Military Maven who had predicted this great decline after Bethesda was proved, once again, right on the mark.)

One observer complained at Houston that the meeting lacked exciting battles and was therefore "boring." Not so. For the strategic and tactical offensive had now clearly passed from the Craniacs to the Grand Coalition, who now began to pepper the National Headquarters staff (a Craniac stronghold) with audit reports and demands for accounting. So while there were few vitally important votes at the meeting, there were resonances and behind-the-scenes events of considerable long-run importance, including the obvious passing of the initiative. The following were some of the important resonances to emerge from the Houston meeting:

## 1. Alicia Clark as an Effective Leader

Alicia Clark emerged at this meeting as an effective, tough, and savvy chairman. This emergence surprised the Crane and the Mason camps, both of whom had obviously underestimated Alicia all the way. The Craniacs evidently thought that they could steamroller Alicia, and it hasn't worked that way at all.

## 2. The Strengthening of the Grand Coalition

The Grand Coalition is now firmly in place and working effectively--another continuing shock to the Crane Machine. In effect, the old Mason and Clark camps are now merged into one force, one "Majority Caucus," as one wag put it. Paul Grant (Col., Mason) is our acknowledged leader, assisted by Emil Franzi (Ariz., Clark), Mike Emerling (Nev., Clark), and Bill Evers (Cal., Mason). This unity is forged on two positive ideological themes: Principle First, and grass-roots organization, taken from the two campaigns in 1981, and providing an effective base from which to confront the power-hungry opportunists of the Crane Machine.

We have also found--in a surprising and welcome serendipity--that the Grand Coalition members all like each other, that we are a congeries of diverse, interesting, and authentic personalities. This contrasts to the Crane Machiners who look and act in an uncannily similar and robotic manner. One astute observer at the Denver convention last year put it this way: "You can spot a Guida delegate at 100 yards. They all

look alike--all Preppies." The anti-"Preppie" note is an interesting cultural point that has gone unobserved in the movement; there is, outside of the Northeast quadrant of the country, a deep underlying hatred of "preppies," who are all identified, rightly or wrongly, with the Crane Machine. My own perspective is that the Craniacs, preppie or no, all try to look and talk like tough, cool young professionals, neo-Haldemans. Look at the Craniacs, and one gets the feeling that one is back in the Nixon White House, with all the tough, cool, obnoxious young folk--the Cheneys, the Deans, *et al.*, ruled by Haldeman/Crane himself.

If the Grand Coalition made any mistakes at Houston, it was in underestimating the extent and depth of our majority. Presumably that will be rectified at the next NatCom meeting at Billings, Montana on August 7-8.

## 3. The Audit Report

Dave Walter (Pa.)'s Audit Report was a thorough investigation of the National Headquarters, a Craniac stronghold, with some sensational implications. Most fascinating was the revelation that National Director Eric O'Keefe had made "at least a hundred" calls to the Cato Institute in San Francisco during 1981. Since Cato, Ed Crane's base, is supposed to be non-political, what would the director of a political party be doing making almost daily calls to Cato? Unfortunately, NatCom failed to question O'Keefe in depth on this one.

There is also the revelation in the Walter Report that national treasurer Vivian Baures is not getting proper records from Headquarters to prepare the books, and is "also having trouble, apparently, in getting the staff to understand the financial procedures she is trying to institute in order to bring, at long last, proper bookkeeping and controls to the Party." Walter, a CPA, adds sardonically that this lack seems to be due not only to the headquarter staff's unfamiliarity with accounting, but also "to the fact that accounting is boring, etc. when there are exciting political action tasks that can be done instead."

## 4. The Headquarters Staff

The most important measures passed by NatCom at Houston were to curb actual or potential abuses by headquarters staff. First, Evers' motion that no person who has been terminated from the national staff for non-performance of duties can return as an employee or volunteer without approval of the National Chair, passed by the overwhelming vote of 23-7 with one abstaining. Then, Emil Franzi (Az.) moved that the national headquarters may not be used for partisan activity within the LP by the staff or the National Director. I moved to strengthen the motion to prevent headquarters staff from being delegates to the national convention, and my motion passed by

the overwhelming vote of 20-10. After crushing an attempt by Jule Herbert (D.C.) to gut the resolution, NatCom passed the Franzi-Rothbard resolution by a smashing vote of 22-6-1. History should record the bad guy voters on this important motion. Two out of three bad-guy votes: Herbert, Lindsay (Ark.), Palm (Mont.), A. Rich (N.Y.), Taylor (Minn.). *Three* out of three wrong votes: Baures (Ore.), Burch (Va.), Hocker (D.C.), and Johnson (Ill.).

## 5. Behind-the-Scenes Memos

Behind the scenes at Houston there circulated two stunningly revealing memos which embarrassed and helped subdue the Craniacs and strengthened the resolve of the Grand Coalition. One was a memo by Crane himself to the various Crane Machine bigwigs, setting the line about what should be done about Ed Clark's proposal to hold a public opinion poll about the LP, and stressing the importance of keeping the *interpretation* of poll results in Craniac hands. In this Feb. 16 memo, Crane instructed his Machine to stop opposing the poll itself, but rather to make sure to control its interpretation. The shocker is that the memo was sent, not only to top Craniacs Tom Palmer, David Boaz, Leslie Key, Chris Hocker, Kent Guida, and the Riches, but *also* to LP National Director Eric O'Keefe, who, as an employee of the entire Natcom, is supposed to be strictly neutral among the factions. This memo raises profound questions as to *whom* O'Keefe is reporting to.

The other fascinating memo circulating at Houston was anonymous, dated Feb. 16, and sent to other top Crane Machiners. Our sister magazine *Libertarian Vanguard* has now revealed that the author of this snide and arrogant memo was none other than Chris Hocker, publisher of Crane-run *Inquiry* magazine. The June issue of *Libertarian Vanguard* publishes the entire memo (this bi-monthly is available for \$10 a year at 1800 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94102).

One important aspect of the Hocker memo is that he refers frankly and openly to the "Crane Machine" and assumes that his readers are all members thereof. This should put to rest once and for all the various naifs and Pollyannas in the Libertarian Party who have claimed that there *is no* Crane machine and that it is all a figment of some of our imaginations. So let us all from now on stipulate: there *is* a Crane Machine.

It is clear both from the Hocker memo and from other evidence that, having lost control of NatCom, and being strong in only a handful of state parties, the only hope for Craniac control of the LP is to dominate--once again--the Presidential campaign in 1983-84. The Crane machine managed to control, with Crane himself as campaign manager, the MacBride campaign in 1976 and the Clark campaign in 1980, and domination of presidential campaigns has always been his major interest.

Since Crane's strength has always been Kocktopusian money and the employment of full-time cadre, his emphasis within the LP has and continues to be on TV spots for the Presidential campaign rather than the building of grass-roots cadre and organization. As opportunists ever ready to jettison principle, the Crane Machine yearns for a "name" presidential candidate which it thinks will help the campaign amass votes and monetary contributions.

The focus of the Feb. 16 Hocker memo is to warn about an expected anti-Crane Machine strategy in 1983-84 which would concentrate on local races, local-oriented publicity and party-building, and not on TV spots for the presidential candidate. All this sounds pretty good to me, but the prospect drives Hocker to frenzy, or as frenzied as this neo-Haldeman can ever get.

Hocker worries that Ed Clark and Alicia will be the leaders of this line, which, according to Hocker, would weave together "every version of Wrongthink we've had to contend with for the past year: emphasis on local, bottom-up organizing, "terminal Crane-haters," and opponents of Craniac centralized elitism. As Hocker puts it: the argument he fears "holds the subconscious message that all us rank-and-file soldiers don't have to just shut up and let the big guys run the show anymore." An interesting revelation of course of what Craniacs have in mind for every party member except themselves: to "shut-up," and, of course, to contribute money and gather signatures. Hocker also attacks Clark's "we need to turn out more people for campaign events refrain." At first, the reader might be puzzled: what's *wrong* with Ed Clark's wanting more people to turn up for campaign events? Until we realize, of course, that the Craniacs don't want *people*, but TV spots and money. They want to do it all with mirrors.

Hocker's major worry about the influence of the Clarks is, as he puts it, that "they've amply demonstrated that they hold no loyalty whatsoever to the Crane Machine, and will be happy to push it to the background." Tsk, tsk!

Another notable feature of the Hocker memo is his repeated use of an obscenity to characterize his opposition: "the Rothbard/Colorado" faction as well as the state of Texas. One would think that this Stanford graduate could find some invective that is a bit more precise and on a bit higher level. It is one of the sad consequences of the Kocktopus for the libertarian movement that it has elevated a raft of know-nothings like Hocker to continuing power and influence in the movement. Absent the Kocktopus's artificial inflation of the labor market, and Chris Hocker would be back selling busses in the Bay Area, a job in which he would, one hopes, no longer stand as a permanent living proof of the Peter Principle.

## 6. Leslie Key's Missing Agenda Items

More amusing than earth-shaking were two items which Leslie Key, the Madame DeFarge of the movement, had originally placed on the agenda, but which cooler and wiser Crane Machine heads had apparently convinced her to withdraw. One was an item entitled "NatCom behavior toward National Headquarters staff," presumably some sort of resolution proclaiming that we should not (no longer?) be beastly to Eric O'Keefe and the rest of the staff. This would have given an opportunity for various NatCom members who have felt aggrieved at *their* treatment by the staff to amend the resolution ordering *them* to be nice, etc. *ad absurdum*.

But the really bizarre agenda item originally introduced by La Key was "Request for retraction by Craig Franklin of his statement on the Maryland LP elections"--in which the Craniacs used proxy votes to take over the party. Now *there* would have been a fun item indeed, especially coming from

someone always ready to instruct the rest of us in proper strategy and tactics. I was tempted to introduce an amendment, saying that this superb resolution lacks one critical item: an enforcement procedure. And that therefore an Enforcement Committee should be set up, perhaps to be called the Holy Office of the Libertarian Inquisition, to catechize the errant heretic Franklin, to stretch him on the rack to force him to confess and recant his crimes, and then to finish him off with an *auto da fe*, in which, *inter alia*, he would be castrated with Madame's notorious knitting needles. One is almost tempted to call Leslie the Madame Nhu of the movement, except that she would have to be considerably shorter and more Oriental to qualify.

### 7. More on the Alaska Party

The Houston meeting also provided an opportunity for further revelations of the social philosophy and world outlook of the Alaska LP. Steve DeLisio, Alaska NatCom rep., and myself addressd the Texas LP banquet Saturday night. On being asked what advice I would give the elected Texas Libertarian school board officials, I replied that they might begin to widen the libertarian consciousness of the Texas electorate by attacking the *bona fides* of the public school system itself, and not only those of that particular board. This advice seemed to fall like a lead balloon on the heads of the banqueters, to be topped off by DeLisio grabbing the mike and accusing me of advocating "mooning." It is an interesting revelation that the Alaska LPers seem to liken an honest

assertion of libertarian principle to the commission of an obscene act.

### 8. The Voting Alignment

Without going into more details of the voting, it was clear that there was considerable movement away from the Craniacs and toward good-guydom. Tom Bogel of Kentucky was a truly impressive newcomer to NatCom. Clark Hodge of Florida moved dramatically from a largely Cranian stance to a fine voting record. Sheldon Richman, Vice-Chair, had a similarly fine record moving from a middle-of-the-road position, as did Jim Lewis of Connecticut, and especially Secretary Frances Eddy (Md.). In a significant change, DeLisio of Alaska moved from a Craniac to an independent, middle-of-the road stance. Top voting records (in addition of course to myself) were turned in by: David Brazier (Wash.), Mike Emerling (Ariz.), M.L. Hanson (Col.), and Dale Pratt (Haw.); followed closely by Dave Bergland (Cal.), Tom Bogel (Ky.), Lynn Crussel (Okla.), Frances Eddy (Md.), Bill Evers (Cal.), Emil Franzl (Ariz.), and Matt Monroe (Tex.).

There was a lot of jocularity about Craniacs and fellow-travellers changing their votes "to look good in the Forum" -- if true, a delightful example of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle at work on NatCom. The booby-prize, won last time by Jim Johnston (Ill.), was shared at Houston by three Craniac stalwarts: the irrepressible Johnston, whose stentorian voice was often heard booming out "Nays" even when fellow Craniacs were willing to go along with a vote; Chris Hocker; and Mike Burch -- the latter two Craniac employees. □

## DOUBLE VICTORY (Continued from page 1)

direction of re-imposing rule over Lebanon by its Christian minority. Christians are now only 30% of the Lebanese population, which means an attempt to keep the overwhelming Muslim majority in permanent subjection.

Israel has once again pursued the logic of empire. A territory is first conquered, then more has to be conquered to defend the frontier areas from being shelled, then a narrow frontier zone has to be conquered, then a wider zone, and on and on, until . . . Until what? The logic of empire is endless; it can never end until the entire world has been forced into subjection.

But suppose that Israel conquers Beirut. Then what? What will it do with hundreds of thousands of sullen and hostile subject Arabs? Unless they are genocidally slaughtered, they too will become nuclei for continuing guerrilla struggle. And then what? On to Damascus?

The logic of empire promises only permanent war, permanent tyranny, and permanent injustice, and, in the end, failure even on its own terms. But war — especially winning war — is the eternal unifier, and so this venture by Israel's supreme war-hawk Arik Sharon has simply silenced the previously vocal opposition within Israel and strengthened the forces for permanent aggression.

In the meanwhile, with the exception of the PLO itself, Arab *macho* seems to have matched Argie *macho*. The Syrians,

for all their tough talk, didn't lay a glove on the Israelis and caved in quickly, and the other Arab states did precisely nothing. If nothing else, the invasion of 1982 should finally teach the PLO the lesson which they should have learned after the Jordanian massacre ("Black September") of Palestinians in 1970 and the Syrian invasion of Lebanon to crush the PLO-Muslim forces in 1976. Only treachery to the Palestinians can come from the Arab states. The "rejection front" was right: Palestinian achievements will be built on quicksand until a long march is made through the political institutions of the front-line Arab states.

Until that day, we will continue to receive such horrifying reports as the one on June 10 by ABC correspondent Hilary Brown from the devastated Lebanese city of Sidon: that Israel had "destroyed the infrastructure of all civilian life in cities where the PLO was based." □

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# ARE WE BEING BEASTLY TO THE GIPPER? — PART V

## 7. Macro-Reaganomics: the Latest

Since we have begun this series, the Reagan record has become so putrid that even the right-wing of our movement has fallen into a conspicuous silence about their erstwhile Hero. Our assaults on the Reagan performance have lately been pushing on an open door.

Inflation has dramatically "abated," but interest rates remain very high, clearly because the public and the market understandably distrust the enormous and unprecedented deficits and the fact that the Fed has been quietly pouring in more money since last October at the whopping annual rate of 10 per cent. All this means an imminent deflation, high interest rates, and a big increase in both once a boom reappears.

For the last several months, the Reagan Administration has been desperately attempting to deflect the attention of the public from its rotten record. In addition to scapegoating the Democrats and the Carter Administration, the Reaganites have thrown up a series of razzle-dazzle gimmicks to try to gull the voters.

First, trotted out in last-minute desperation at the 1982 State-of-the-Union message, was the New Federalism (remember that one?). Even the original version was so vague and so pie-in-the-sky (taking a decade to go into effect), that it was difficult to take it seriously or to figure out whether federal spending or each state's spending, would go up or down as a result. But, in offering to assume all state Medicaid costs for the federal government in exchange for shifting welfare and food stamp costs to the states, it was at once clear that Reagan was offering to shoulder the fastest-growing expenditure of the three (Medicaid) by the federal government, so that the feds would probably wind up spending more money than ever before. In addition, Robert Carleson, White House aid in charge of welfare, was reportedly unhappy because the proposed swap would be setting the stage for national health insurance from the next administration.

Now, the Reagan Administration has caved in even more, since it is now offering to keep food stamps for the feds, and only shift welfare to the states. More and more, the New Federalism is looking like the same old galloping statism under the cloak of Reaganite rhetoric.

When the New Federalism failed to fly, the next gimmick adopted by Reagan was the balanced budget amendment, which has been kicking around for a long while, and has now been introduced in the Congress. The President must get high marks for unmitigated gall; here he is, presiding over by far the biggest budget and the biggest deficit in American history, and still attempting to carry favor with opponents of Big Government by self-righteously urging a constitutional amendment for a balanced budget! How can Reagan keep getting away with his favorite ploy of being Head of State and yet *still* sounding like a private citizen reading oppositional

anecdotes attacking Big Government from his eternal 3x5 cards?

Furthermore, the main balanced budget amendment before Congress is so namby-pamby and so attenuated that it would probably be better if it were defeated right now. First, Congress is not required to balance the actual budget, but only its estimates of future budgets, estimates which are notoriously vague and chronically inaccurate. Second, there is no enforcement procedure to bring Congress to heel. Deficits are right now against the law, though not yet unconstitutional, and yet no one pays any attention to the continuing violation, let alone proceed to incarcerate some erring Congressmen. Third, it is absurdly easy for Congress to override this solemn amendment, ranging from a mere majority to a three-fifths vote. Even easier than overriding the constantly abused statutory limit on taxes would tie tax revenues to a percentage of the "national income." It is truly absurd to enshrine a slippery concept such as "national income" in to the basic law of the land. Who knows what "national income" is? This is not a precise or scientific concept, but whatever government statisticians say it is. For example, every time the government hires a bureaucrat, the salary is counted as a *per se* addition to the "national income." The saints preserve us from Friedmanites (for such they are) adding their mumbo-jumbo to an already much-abused Constitution! □

## LETTER FORUM

### Solution to the Falklands

Dear Editor:

One of your proposed solutions to the current dispute in the Falklands ("Oh, Oh, Oh, What A Lovely War" — May 1982), namely to move the Islanders to East Anglia, has one further attraction.

Not only could the Islanders "enjoy" the bad weather, the strong winds, the marshes, the food and the pubs of East Anglia but also the seaweed which, as in the Falklands, grows in abundance offshore.

However it is a much higher quality seaweed than the Falklands variety.

Whereas the latter is fed to the sheep, the East Anglian variety is a local delicacy which, when pickled, is called samphire or St. Peter's herb and is eaten with a cold meat salad.

Yours for the duration,

John Blundell  
Menlo Park, California