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THE SOCIALIST SCHOLARS CAPER

Once again, dear reader, your own *Lib. Forum* has made the mass media. The fact that the reference, though prominent, was also malicious, distorted, and absurd, should not make us despair. However distorted, "as long as the name is spelled right" and it was, *some* of the tens of thousands out there who read about us might have the urge to look into us more closely, to see the Devil plain as it were, and then their conversion is always possible.

The story begins with the Socialist Scholars Conference, which, confusedly, is the name both for an organization of socialist scholars and for the conferences that they have held in New York every year since 1965. Not being a socialist, I am not a member of the SSC organization, but I have attended many of their conferences, for many of their papers and panels have been lively, interesting, and informative. Never having much influence on the Left, the SSC conferences have been declining in recent years, since they have suffered, along with the rest of the Left, from a growing group of young militants who hold scholarship and intellect to be worthless and "irrelevant", and who therefore long to purge the word "Scholars" from the title. (If we ask the logical question: If they don't want scholarship, *why* do they join an organization of scholars and then try to wreck it? Why do they bother?—then we are in deep waters indeed, for then we would be trying to explain much of the destructiveness and unreason that has overcome the Left in recent years.)

From the beginning, into these pleasant if not earth-shaking sessions strode one Mrs. Alice Widener, wealthy owner and editor of an unimportant, Red-baiting newsletter called *USA*. A self-styled "authority" on the Left, La Widener arrived every year at the SSC sessions, and reported on them with unwavering mininterpretation and ignorance of what the whole thing was all about. La Widener trying to make sense of all the nuances of social philosophy was truly a bull let loose in a china shop. One famous *gaffe* of hers was the time she attended a session on slavery featuring Eugene D. Genovese and Herbert Aptheker. Trying desperately to link the then famously radical Genovese with the admitted Communist Aptheker, Widener had them in solid agreement, when the entire scholarly world knows that, in their views on slavery, Genovese and Aptheker could not be further apart in every possible way. But apart from the mininterpretations of Widener was her strange notion that the SSC was in some way the Politburo of the Left, so that its papers and panels set down the annual line for all the Left underlings everywhere. Widener's annual reports from the conferences, ever agog with new crisis and horror, have always provided welcome horselaughs for the SSC members, who were particularly amused by the fact that, of all the people in the country, in or out of the SSC, only Mrs. Widener seemed

to think of these sessions as having any earth-shaking importance.

Mrs. Widener's annual blatherings only took on importance from the fact that they have been solemnly reprinted, year after year, as lead articles in *Barron's*, a pro-*laissez-faire* Wall St. weekly of large circulation, blessed with an editor of neo-Randian persuasion; from *Barron's*, they percolated to a readership of conservatives who imbibed her annual nonsense as Gospel, and took from it their world-view as to what was going on in the world of Left scholarship.

Well, comes 1970 and the June 13-14 meeting, and Professor Leonard Liggio and myself were invited to speak at a panel to be organized by Professor Liggio, and devoted to "Left/Rightism"—specifically, to a reassessment of the Old Right and how it prefigured much of the New Left criticisms of welfare-warfare America. We devoted considerable care to preparation of the papers, and I must say that much enjoyment was had by all, although how much influence we had on the assembled Left is dubious, since the overwhelming majority of our audience were our own libertarians, with an occasional leftist wandering in who didn't seem to know the difference between Franklin and Teddy Roosevelt. At any rate, our entire panel was devoted to an appreciative portrayal of the hard-hitting views of the Old Right and their libertarian approach to war, foreign policy and militarism, as well as to education, state-monopoly-capitalism, decentralization, the judiciary, and civil liberties. Especially lauded by us were such "Old Rightists" as: Senator Taft, John T. Flynn, Frank Chodorov, Albert Jay Nock, Garett Garrett, Felix Morley, Senator borah, H. L. Mencken, Rep. Howard Beffett, etc.

Enter La Widener. (*USA*, June 19-July 3; *Barron's*, July 13.) Or rather, enter La Widener by remote control, since it is all too clear that she did not attend any of the Conference. Her entire report is taken up with lengthy quotes from unimportant position papers issued ahead of the Conference by the SSC organizers; there is not a word on any of the panels, that is, on the content of the Conference itself, *except, mirabile dictu, on ours!* To our panel came her assistant, one Falzone, accompanied by a certain Miss Poor from the Orlando *Sentinel*. (In thus ignoring all the other panels, Widener-Poor-Falzone completely missed the *real* story of the Conference, which was its total domination by the crazed forces of Women's Liberation, whose well-attended and almost continuous panels barred The Enemy—men—from daring to attend. Seconded, I might add, by singularly truculent and unscholarly youths from the Free Joan Bird Committee.)

So there we are, Leonard Liggio and myself, with our names spelled correctly, on the front page of the mighty

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SOCIALIST SCHOLARS CAPER — (Continued from page 1)

Barron's! There, Poor-Falzon-Widener report that in introducing me, Professor Ronald Radosh, moderator of the panel, made "snide remarks" about the American flag (Oh no! Good God! Not that!), and added that I had once, somewhere, described the flag as a "rag", and they noted that I did not immediately leap up and protest this attribution. So much for what I *didn't* say at the panel. Next, in a truly cunning piece of research that must leave us all agog, our intrepid authority on social movements finds repeated links between Professor Liggio and myself (Oh, wow!). From there, our indefatigable scholar goes on to find what she believes to be the *key*, the key evil article which set the line for the entire Socialist Scholars Conference, and since we already know that the SSC in turn functions as the Politburo of the Left, for the entire Left-wing in America. And that article, dear reader, is none other than Leonard Liggio's "State of the Movement", which comprised the *Lib. Forum* of May 15. So there we are, emblazoned on the front page of *Barron's* as kingpin of the entire Left in America! There follows two quotes from the Liggio article: one in which Leonard dared to quote favorably from Julius Lester (in a highly intelligent attack that he had levelled on the ultra-adventurism of the Panthers), and another in which she scoffs at an example of Liggio's "so-called Libertarian thinking, the example being praise for early SDS opposition to the draft!

I suppose we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that there *are* people in this world so divorced from reality that they really believe that Leonard Liggio and the *Lib. Forum* are the high panjandrums of the American Left—just as there are people who believe that the world is being run by twelve secret Jewish Illuminati. And I suppose we must accept the fact that there are "authorities" on political philosophy so lame-brained as to believe that a libertarian is someone who approves of the draft. But what is this nonsense doing on the front page of *Barron's*?

But, and here we rise from the merely stupid to the slightly sinister, isn't it odd that in all the concentration by Mrs. Widener on our panel, there is not a single word of what we actually *said* at the panel, at the content of our rather lengthy remarks? On this, the actual substance of what we said at the Conference, the team of Poor-Falzon-Widener falls strangely silent. The reason for this odd silence should be clear; if she had written one word of what we actually said at the Conference, it would have blown her entire thesis of us as leading Marxists and socialists sky-high. For even a gullible conservative readership that has virtually forgotten its past might think twice at talks exclusively devoted to praising Taft, Nock, Flynn, etc.

The *Barron's* article predictably sent many conservative readers into a tizzy. Instead of rejoicing at the fact that some socialists, at least, are coming to see a great deal of merit in libertarian, Old Right perspectives, their reaction was just the opposite. "What! Murray Rothbard, a free-market economist, is now a socialist! What happened?" Obviously, what these people need badly is to stop reading La Widener and to start reading the *Lib. Forum* and its ancillary and recommended readings. Like all prospective readers, they are welcome. Why did we put on this panel at the Socialist Scholars Conference? Because we were asked. I am sure that we would do the same at a conference of conservative intellectuals; but the important point is that we have *not* been asked by any such conference, which says a great deal about the current ideological scene.

At any rate, I have written a letter of protest to *Barron's* setting the record straight, which has of this writing not been printed (perhaps following the Randian line of denouncing but not "giving sanction to" The Enemy?). If it is printed, then the Great Socialist Scholars Capar will have one more installment.

More On Ardrey

Some further notes on Jerry Tuccille's critique of the Ardrey-Lorenz fad among libertarians:

1. The "territorial imperative" thesis can be, and has been, used far more easily to defend *not* individual private property but collective-herd property, as well as interstate wars. Thus, dogs prefer to use lampposts which other dogs have also used, thereby displaying a collective tribal "property" "instinct"?

2. The "instinct" concept is generally tacked on when we lack a genuine explanation for a phenomenon. Thus, even Adam Smith explained the universal phenomenon of exchange and market, not in terms of mutually rational advantage, but of an innate "instinct", or "propensity to truck and barter". Man, in particular, must use his mind to learn, to formulate his goals and the means to attain them. He has no inborn instinct to guide him automatically to the correct

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Bits And Pieces

By Jerome Tuccille

A subject getting much attention lately is the studies on evolution and human behavior performed by a new breed of ethnologists whose chief pioneers are Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, and Desmond Morris. *Playboy* covered the new ethnologists in an article by Morton Hunt appearing in the July, 1970 issue, and the *New York Times Magazine* recently published an interview with Konrad Lorenz. Basically, what the ethnologists are saying, is that man has survived and become dominant over all other earthly creatures because he was the most murderous and most savage of all the primates. The primordial ancestors of man were the first to develop the use of weapons, and in the struggle for survival through evolutionary time, man emerged triumphant because he learned the art of murder and violence better than his competitors. Man, according to the ethnologists, is still largely driven by violent genetic instincts which set him off from time to time on an orgy of war and mass destruction.

The part of this theory which is of primary concern to proprietarians is the claim that man's hunger for real estate, for a private plot of earth over which he can reign supreme, is an integral part of his nature as a violent being. According to Ardrey, it is useless for the social engineers to try to "socialize" man, to take away his property and make him share his possessions with the multitudes, because to do so is to tamper with the basic nature of man as a private, acquisitive animal. What the socialists are doing is forcing man to act in variance with his own nature, and thus they are setting the stage for revolutionary uprisings against their governments. The "territorial imperative", man's drive for private chunks of real estate, say the ethnologists, is stronger than his sexual urge. Ardrey argues that since this instinct is inborn in man it will be part of his genetic makeup as long as he exists. It is better to leave man alone, to let him have his land and possessions, since to tinker with his instincts will only increase his penchant for violence.

The controversy involved here is that most free-market libertarians base their arguments for private property and free trade on reason: the private-property, free-trade system is better because it is the most rational way for man to exist. What Ardrey is saying, at least implicitly, is that a socialist society is somehow more rational and would be a less violent way for man to live. But since man is more instinct-driven, more apt to act on irrational instincts than he will on rational considerations, and since this is part of his basic, unchanging nature, it is better to leave him alone with his selfishness, his greed, his drive for land and gadgets.

Both Ardrey and Lorenz seem to be contradicting themselves later when they state that man does have the capacity, because of his evolving brain, to overcome his violent nature. Both Ardrey and Lorenz declare explicitly that man's emerging capacity for reason may enable him to chain down his murderous instincts and live in harmony with his fellows. They have put themselves in the precarious position of saying, on the one hand, that man can never overcome his violent nature because it is permanent in his genes and, on the other, that man's reason does give him a chance for peace after all. They are attempting to have it both ways and therefore their arguments in favor of man the competitive property owner are tenuous at best.

The great weakness in this position, it seems to me, rests in the fact that the ethnologists attribute man's survival over the millenia to his "violence-prone" nature.

If it is true that the ancestors of man (and here a layman has to defer to the knowledge obtained through years of scientific studies) survived by developing weapons and slaughtering their fellow primates, does this necessarily mean that they did so because they were instinctively murderous? If original man created tools and weapons half a million years ago it is indicative that, even then, he was beginning to develop his capacity for reason. Ardrey admits that it was a time of fantastic hardship for all living creatures on the continent of Africa, where he claims our species first emerged. If this is the case and the various primate species were forced down from the trees onto the land in their quest for a dwindling food supply, it follows that the creatures who survived would be those who were best able to *defend* their food and land from marauding bands. In the age of pre-civilization there simply was not enough to go around. Many had to die and only a limited few were able to stay alive and procreate their species. Does this mean that the few, those who developed the means of survival were "murderous" and "savage"?

For one to reason this way he would also have to believe that, in a present crisis, if the earth were savaged by a massive famine with not enough food to feed the world, only the most violent and murderous would survive. This is simply not the case. It is the most rational, the most capable and productive of our species who would outlast the rest. Murder would be primarily an act of self-defense committed against those who were also capable of murdering for a crust of bread.

If the originals of our species were able to survive the perils of the ice age, as well as the designs of less-acquisitive, less-inventive creatures, they are to be commended instead of denigrated as "savages" and "murderers". We surely have a great inheritance to live up to. They have shown us that our drive for property, food and comfort is ours because it is good and rational, and not because we are genetically-driven killers. It is here, in their *basic premise*, that Ardrey and his colleagues have gone astray.

* * * * *

One of the best statements to date on the question of abortion *reform* appears in the August, 1970 issue of *Ramparts*. In an article entitled, "Abortion Reform: The New Tokenism", Lucinda Cisler, president of New Yorkers for Abortion Law Repeal, warns against the enthusiasm engendered by the sudden rush to liberalize abortion laws in many of our states. Cisler's message is directed primarily at feminists, but her reasoning has ecumenical appeal because of its basic libertarian foundation.

She begins by listing the usual arguments given by legislators for their endorsement of abortion law reform: "they are concerned with important issues like the public health problem presented by illegal abortions, the doctor's right to offer patients good medical care, the suffering of unwanted children and unhappy families, and the burgeoning of our population at a rate too high for *any* economic system to handle."

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BITS AND PIECES — (Continued from page 3)

All these reasons are good in themselves, she continues, but in the final analysis they are peripheral to the key principle involved: justice for women. The liberalizers of existing abortion laws are operating under the premise that a woman's body belongs to the state, and because of this underlying logic the mere *reform* of abortion laws is insulting and patronizing to women. Cislser sets her sights on the total *repeal* of all regulatory codes governing abortions on the grounds that a woman "belongs to herself and not to the state", and the decision to have or not to have an abortion is hers alone to make.

While many advocates of abortion law *repeal* have welcomed *reform* of abortion laws as a "step in the right direction", the author warns that in the long run it may be a dangerous seduction since "it can buy off most middle-class women and make them believe things have really changed, while it leaves poor women to suffer and keeps us all saddled with abortion laws for many years to come." The four major restrictions imposed on even the most liberal of the new reform bills are as follows:

1. *Abortions may only be performed in licensed hospitals.* Cislser argues that this not only drives up the cost of abortions, but it subjects women unnecessarily to a new host of "guidelines" established by generally conservative hospital administrations. It also limits the number of abortions that can be performed by making it illegal to obtain an abortion at a clinic or in a doctor's office;

2. *Abortions may only be performed by licensed physicians.* This again serves the purpose of driving the cost over \$300, and it protects the doctors' monopoly from paramedics who can "be trained to do a great many things that physicians do not";

3. *Abortions may not be performed beyond a certain time in pregnancy, unless the woman's life is at stake.* This restriction is insidious since, in effect, it says to women that "(a) at a certain stage your body suddenly belongs to the state . . . and (b) because late abortion entails more risk than early abortion, the state must 'protect' you, even if your considered decision is that you want to run that risk . . ." This regulation requires "that we must be in a state of tutelage and cannot assume responsibility for our own acts";

4. *Abortions may only be performed when the married woman's husband or the young single woman's parents give their consent.* According to the author, the "objection to vesting a veto power in anyone other than the pregnant woman is too obvious to need any elaboration."

All in all, this is one of the most eloquent and cogent declarations yet from a prominent leader in the struggle for individual rights for women.

RECOMMENDED READING

Murray Kempton, "Union Blues," *New York Review of Books* (April 9, 50¢). Witty, perceptive dissection of the union leader as junior partner in the Establishment.

Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-23* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press). Study of business and U. S. foreign economic policy in the post-World War I era; inspired by Beard and Williams.

"With reasonable men, I will reason; with humane men, I will plead; but to tyrants, I will give no quarter . . ."
William Lloyd Garrison

MORE ON ARDREY — (Continued from page 2)

choices, as the bird or the salmon are *supposed* to be guided.

3. The whole basis for the "territorial imperative" among animals rests on the fact that animals are bound *within* the environment in which they find themselves. If a group of animals are adapted only to the environment of a certain area, X, and they are forced to leave X they will die. They must then defend this environment to the death. Man, on the contrary, is unique among living beings for his capacity to *change* his environment, to leave, transform, and alter his circumstances on behalf of his own survival and progress. Man is not bound to a fixed plot of earth and all the environmental conditions upon it; he can move, he can build shelter against the elements, he can transform the earth, etc. And so the animal-derived argument for territory cannot apply to man.

4. As for scholarly authority, a friend of mine tried to organize a scholarly conference of biologists, ethnologists, etc. to discuss the Lorenz thesis; try as he might, he could not find *one* scholar to take the Lorenz side. All the others had flatly rejected it.

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