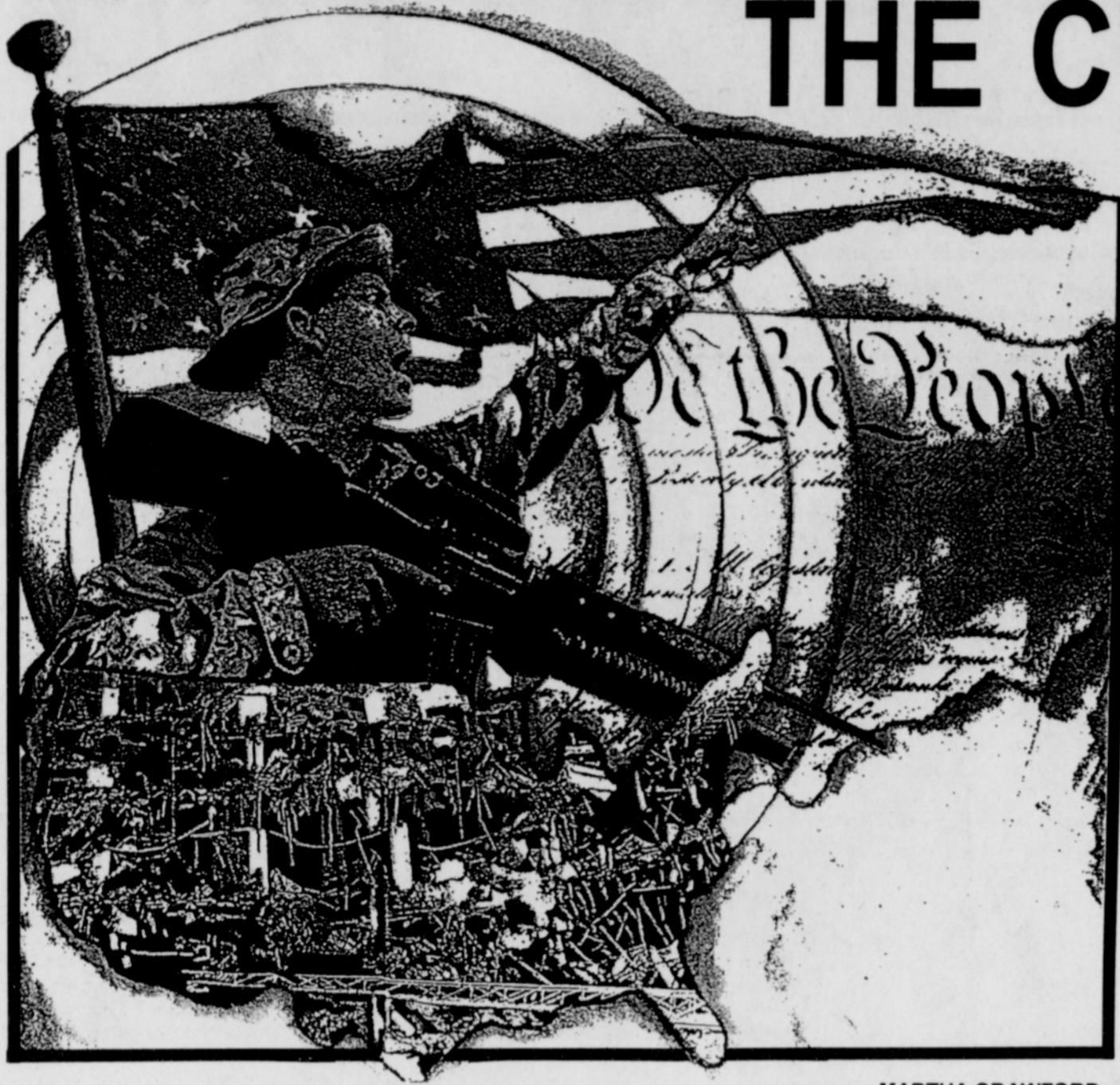


WHEN THE FRINGE BECOMES THE CENTER



MARTHA CRAWFORD

BY D. ARMSTRONG

"We'll go to economic summits and we'll do negotiations. But the business, as usual, is public relations. They won't fix it in their boardrooms or out at their resorts. It makes for bad financial statements and quarterly reports. It doesn't matter at their summer home, or out there on their yacht. They never thought to give a damn with all the crap they got."

~THE GREEN RAPPER

Might we reckon with some desperate truths, should we dare lay radical philosophies of left and right upon each other and speculate on the unspoiled ground which they share? The recent Senate hearings on the militia movement in the United States provided a rare glimpse into that peculiarly American entity. Their testimony revealed a passionate distrust in all branches of our government, international banking conglomerates and the CIA. In spite of all unlikelihood, amid a campaign of media whitewash and ridicule, could it be that these men actually had something important to say?

Generally speaking, progressive minds responded to their fiery testimony with the same kind of knee-jerk reaction they attribute to the ultra-conservatives. But let's not be so hasty. Beneath all the military paraphernalia and jargon, aside from the frightening Christian-hate group rap, what exactly was it these men were throwing in the face of Senator Specter?

"I submit to you sir, that the Central Intelligence Agency has been in the business of killing Americans and killing people in the United States and around the world since 1946 (sic). I submit to you sir, that the Central Intelligence Agency is probably the grandest conspirator in all of this government, and I submit to you sir, that perhaps the puppeteer strings of the Central Intelligence Agency reach even into the Senators, perhaps, before us and, perhaps also, in the Senate of the United States." This said, Norman Olson of the Michigan Militia dutifully offered "six pounds" of documents to detail his allegations.

With equal heat, Montana Militia representatives offered a list of reasons why they had lost trust in the United States Government. "The high office of the Presidency has become a position of dictatorial oppression through the abusive use of executive orders and directives... Billions of our tax dollars are forcibly sent out to pay off the banking elite... the government refuses to hold hearings on government sanctioned abuses, and whitewashing those that are held." Our government, they go on to say, works in "secret shadow means," operating with "black covert funding" and is presently militarizing the police departments in anticipation of martial necessity.

This is not new news to American progressives. They have been issuing the very same declarations for years. It should be, however, considerably revelatory to those in the middle where opinion holds sway. These men in uniform have accurately targeted the widespread "business as usual" money politics that harnesses our society. What screams out of this is the fearful truth. It may not be that the right and left agree on much, but the one note they both strike loud and clear is that our constitutional rights are in deep jeopardy and that democracy wobbles with corruption here in America. Think about it. Does it really matter who tells us that the waterhole is poisoned, as long as everyone understands not to drink from it?

There is a popular conspiracy theory that circulates through the radical right. Bristling in the words of these militia leaders were the filaments of this paranoid vision they label the New World Order. ("What's that, Mr. Bush?") Government has conjoined with big business. NAFTA and GATT are just the beginnings of a new global economic management system, and to these highly patriotic "Americans" the first step toward the breaking down of national borders, the dissolution of individual currencies, and a surrendering to the banking elite. The global village may be a utopian vision for the left, but the ideal has nothing to do with the manipulative practices of multinational banking conglomerates. Foreseen by these rightwing constitutionalists is a socialist world run by bankers and policed by a covert and mercenary intelligence agency. (Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they are not out to get you!)

In light of this, the indebtedness banking strategy described in the article entitled "The World Bank and The Immiseration of the Third World" by Harry Johnson in the June/July '95 NCTE should inspire a wave of sharp nausea in thinking minds. The same banking mechanics that chain Third World nations to these so-called austerity programs are also presently at work in the United States. The Reserve Bank has us bridled with a debt that we can not catch up with. And in response to its sharp bit, budget reductions have been cut deepest right where we are already severely deficit -- education, health, and care for the elderly. Just as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund harness indebted Third World countries, though surely not to the same extreme, the Reserve Bank controls our economy simply by dialing in the prime interest rate to keep eight million Americans unemployed and to give the farmers added incentive to burn the top soil a little deeper every now and then.

That's why the national debt has become the central target of American politics for the last ten years. The greatest nation in the world submits to the yoke of international fiscal will. And sad to say, we are only relatively better off than those Third World nations regarding the management of our natural resources. In an age of increasing ecological despair, in both the United States and the Third World, the agricultural methods of the austerity banking regime continue to aim at quick return and ignore long-term damage to Mother Earth. Driven by the looming presence of national debt, present stripmining techniques, extensive farmland irrigation, high intensity chemical fertilizing, and conscienceless extraction of living resources amount to global suicide.

Even worse is the way the bridle of deficit finance promotes, albeit indirectly, the necessity of blackmail drugs. (Ah, yes, it's getting clearer now, Senator Kerry!) In the face of national poverty, Third World leaders consent to illegal drug cultivation and trafficking in order to survive the political crush of this legitimized blackmail. And the bankers simply turn their heads, because certainly regardless of origin, the profits invariably come back to them.

It is ironic to recall how 25 years ago the drug culture joined in with the wave of new politics. Now the drug culture has lost all political sophistication and has additionally become the fueling source for the New Imperialism. Drugs sold on the street in the United States contribute to the bankrolling of covert industrial strongarm tactics abroad. Hail to the war on drugs!

If this is beginning to sound like conspiracy theory, the truth is simpler than that. There need be no conspiracy when money is the element of our global breath! Greed is the natural common denominator. No, there is no conspiracy. Money makes money. This is a known fact. All that goes on is simple solid investment philosophy espoused and carried out among consenting adults. Can you believe it? One day the accumulation of interest will exceed the natural resource value of the planet! What then? Mars here we come? Or how about a return to the practice of slavery?

As this paranoid vision expands, one must shudder at the ease in which the Omnibus Counter-Terrorism Act sped through the Senate (and may do the same in the House). In some perversion of sense, our dear liberal President Clinton has proposed a bill that King Richard himself could not have posed in more dangerously vague language. It reads like an open ticket to jail or a fine to anyone who opposes the party line. With the changing of the guard be careful of your affiliates today for they may be grounds to suspend your freedom tomorrow. That the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City should occur just as this bill went to vote suggests more than this writer feels comfortable disseminating in any way but between these lines.

The point is that something is clearly wrong. Those in the middle should open up their eyes and ears and try to determine what this ruckus on the left and on the right is all about. Use your common sense. Cull out the radical in these philosophies, look for what is true despite the bias, and know -- even were it all conspiratorial disinformation -- there must be some seed of truth at the bottom of it. If there's this much smoke, you know there's a fire blazing somewhere.

Dan Armstrong is a writer and lives in Astoria. His article is "pretty much inspired," he writes, by Harry Johnson's article ("The World Bank & the Immiseration of the Third World, June/July '95, NCTE) and the recent Senate Hearings of the Militia in America. "It may be that I'm stumbling through my political correctness...but I'm also the kind of guy who's been known to (expletive deleted) in public. I don't know. You be the judge."

Sunbelt Stories

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Illustrated by Henk Pander



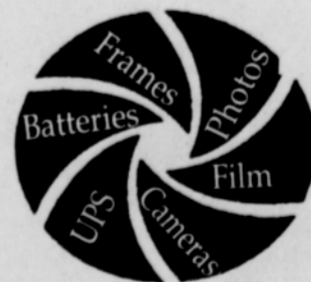
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