

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## There is something we can do

The television movie, *The Day After*, was viewed by more than 100,000 Americans, many of them seeing for the first time a portrayal of some of the devastation and human suffering a nuclear war would bring.

Yet our country is rushing headlong toward a nuclear war, with deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe that will give the Soviets only six minutes to determine if an attack was in progress and to respond rather than the thirty minutes depicted in the show. The world has never been in a more dangerous position since the man with his finger on the button has already demonstrated his willingness to kill.

The program demonstrated that the essential, most crucial, task facing the American people is to get Reagan out of the White House before he destroys humanity. The second crucial task is to enter into sincere negotiations with the Soviet Union, recognizing that the U.S.S.R. does exist and that it will not give up or alter its Marxist ideology. We must decide that two opposing and competing systems can co-exist in peace.

These are tasks that should involve all people. If the program did nothing else, hopefully it woke up those whose view of the world stops at their neighborhood boundaries and whose interest in humanity includes only family and friends. It should be clear that this country must allow

the peoples of the world to seek and find their own destiny or we will all be annihilated. And, like it or not, the responsibility and power to change our government is in the hands of the voters.

While other Democratic candidates are hiding under the table or patting Reagan on the back, only Jesse Jackson is condemning U.S. aggression throughout the world and calling for a halt to it.

Jackson's campaign is organizing in Portland and can use help. There is no one who does not have something—time, money, talent, etc., to share.

### This year take the train

The holidays are upon us and many people—those with not enough money to fly or with an undependable car—are used to catching the Greyhound to get to the home of a favorite relative or friend.

This year take the train (or the other bus company). Over 12,500 drivers and baggage people are out on strike—not asking for raises but trying to hold their own against a company determined to break the union. Help them keep their jobs.

## Letters to the Editor

### Get out of Grenada, Lebanon, El Salvador

To the editor:

The U.S. government has earned the title of International Public Enemy No. 1. It has criminally invaded Grenada and Carriacou. In Lebanon Reagan's military policy is responsible for the deaths of over 200 members of the armed "peace-keeping force" sent to prop up a government accepted by almost no one except the U.S. government. "Our" government is arrogantly trying to overthrow the legitimate leftist government of Nicaragua while in El Salvador they support the hated, murderous right wing government. They are deploying missiles in Europe despite massive protests and support the fascist South African government against Black leftist revolutionaries.

Here in the U.S. the government especially targets women and people of color in its attack on the well-

being and rights of its citizens by union busting, and attempting to wipe out the Civil Rights Commission, affirmative action programs, abortion rights and benefits of the poor and disadvantaged.

Government officials conduct their national and international campaigns against the lives and hopes of the poor in the name of humanity and democracy. But the real motive is to create a subjugated population—barefoot, pregnant and without unions to press high wage demands and good working conditions. The U.S. government and its partners, domestic and international corporations, want access to all the land, natural resources and cheap labor in the world. When countries choose socialism, like Grenada, Cuba and Vietnam, they use their wealth to create jobs and services to enrich the lives of their cit-

izens. The U.S. government, who believes that all resources and labor are for the personal enrichment of businessmen, are resorting to outlaw methods to regain control over countries who want to be free from U.S. economic, political and military domination. As a U.S. citizen I am disgusted at having my tax money spent on weapons to be used abroad to keep people suppressed and in poverty.

The U.S. must get out of Grenada, Carriacou, Lebanon and El Salvador immediately. They must cease using our hard-earned money to support right wing dictators who rob and murder their citizens, and stop attacking the poor and working people in the U.S.A.

Adrienne Weller

### Thanksgiving celebration has deep roots

To the editor:

Your newspaper is always interesting to me, if for no other reason than that in its pages I often see news and pictures of friends, former students, neighbors and community events that I seldom find elsewhere. I also appreciate the coverage of alternative opinions, even though I do not always share the point of view of some of the writers.

In previous Thanksgiving Day issues you have had guest columnists who have disparaged the celebration of America's traditional harvest festival, and have made it appear inappropriate for persons who are sensitive to the human rights of minority groups. Was this holiday indeed initiated by English colonists, to commemorate their successes against the Indians, as some have said? If that were so, I would have no part in it either.

We should not overlook the ancient roots of Thanksgiving Day.

Thanksgiving is much older than the Pilgrims, older than English settlements in America. The Pilgrims celebrated a harvest festival because in their homeland it was traditional to have what was called the "Harvest Home." The English in Virgin-

ia had done the same thing, years before the Mayflower ever sailed from England. It was a time of public and religious celebration for the fruits of agriculture, and it recognized that all good comes from God. Jewish people, whose book the Pilgrims read diligently, have had a harvest festival for 2,000 years. So do many other races and cultures. To make Thanksgiving Day a nationalistic and political celebration is to twist it out of its original context. Like so many other holidays, Thanksgiving has been costumed and commercialized for the convenience of the callous.

If the Pilgrims expressed thanks for the bloody destruction of those that they perceived to be their enemies, they were no different from people today on both sides of modern wars. But the inappropriate thanks of one group of people does not change the appropriateness of gratitude. Jesus once called attention to an inappropriate giving of thanks. He pointed out a man who was morally upright in his own eyes, who went to church and thanked God that he was a better man than most—certainly better than another person who was praying nearby. The second person meanwhile bowed his head and agonized, "God be

merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus made it plain that the Heavenly Father knows a sincere prayer from a phony, but the insincere do not pre-empt the act of praying.

Our family experienced three successive Thanksgivings without any of the traditional foods or trappings, when we were prisoners of war during World War II. It sharpened our sense of appreciation for family and food, and it gave us more concern for those who have neither. The events in Plymouth in 1621 were interesting but they did not make our Thanksgiving. Rather, the abiding sense of the peace and presence of God, regardless of material prosperity, was an dis the occasion for celebration. This is as valid in the North/Northeast community of Portland as it is anywhere. If some celebrate with greed, others can heed the instructions of the Hebrew leader, Nehemiah, on the occasion of a much more ancient thanks-giving: "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared." We have yet to learn the full implication of that last clause.

Beth Nance



## Small farmers endangered

by Dr. Manning Marable

Earlier this month, the world's first international conference on robotics and high technology in agriculture was held in Tampa, Florida. The conference participants discussed the means of developing robots to replace farm laborers as a cost-cutting device; but the question of making American produce "more competitive" with foreign produce raises many more political questions concerning the survival of small farmers.

Advances in technology and the growth of agribusiness have already eliminated millions of jobs for Black, Latino, and white workers. Only 40 years ago, two out of five Black males were farm workers or farmers. Even as late as 1960, five percent of all Black workers were employed in agriculture, and another three percent were farm owners. By 1977, fewer than 146,000 Black men were employed in agriculture.

High technology is promising to eliminate the remainder of these jobs within the present decade. Agricultural engineers in Florida are currently at work on a robot equipped with a crude form of vision that can spot ripe oranges and pick them gently. At the Tampa conference, the Australians demonstrated a computerized robot that takes only 15 minutes to shear 88 percent of the wool from a sheep, without ever cutting the animal. By contrast, an experienced worker can shear one sheep in only one-fourth the time, but ordinarily cut the animal an average of 17 to 25 times.

Japanese scientists have developed a robot-driven combine which harvests rice and wheat. The driverless combines eliminate the

need for skilled workmen, and are now being exported to the U.S. by large agribusiness firms. By 1990, much of America's food supply could be harvested by robots. But lacking adequate capital, most smaller farms will not be able to purchase the new technology, and they too will simply disappear.

The crisis of Black farmers has been building for decades, and has now reached a critical point. From 1959 to 1974, the number of Black-operated cotton farms in the South declined from 87,074 to 1,569. Black-owned tobacco farms dropped from 40,670 to less than 7,000 during the same period. Blacks now represent only 5.6 percent of the South's farmers; only 27 percent are self-employed, two-thirds are salary workers, and five percent are unpaid family workers.

The dire condition of Black farmers is now shared by many thousands of white farmers. Farm families are being pushed off the land at the rate of almost one percent per month in the 1980s. Farm prices are at the lowest point in a half-century, due to enforced below-parity prices. The social costs of the economic crisis are also devastating—a rise of farmers' suicides, divorces, child abuse and alcoholism.

What are the broader political implications of the agricultural crisis? The North American Farm Alliance, a coalition of more than fifty agricultural and community associations, points out that one out of every five jobs is linked to agriculture in some way, from processing food to the making of tractors and pickup trucks. Fewer farmers mean more tractors, trucks and other farm equipment sold at auction,

thus depressing the tractor industry. The result is a 35 percent unemployment rate in the farm implement industry.

Suppose half of all family farms disappeared. Since farmers collectively control almost one trillion dollars in various means of production—land, livestock, machines, etc.—about 500 billion dollars would be transferred to banks, insurance companies and the upper classes. Agribusiness has proven repeatedly its contempt for environmental protection standards, so the impact for both urban and rural workers would be utterly disastrous.

Reversing the trend toward the elimination of small farmers begins with federal legislation. A new farm products pricing system must be established which will guarantee small farmers a stable and fair return for their labor. The federal government should directly subsidize the cost of buying land for low income and new farmers. Tougher laws advocating the rights of farm laborers to collective bargaining, to increase their wages and to improve their working conditions must be passed. An immediate debt moratorium on small farmers' loans to the Farmers Home Administration and the cancellation of past taxes would save thousands of farms this year alone. The federal government must prosecute those corporate interests responsible for perpetuating all forms of debt peonage, a contemporary form of agricultural slave labor. And affirmative action policies on the hiring and promotion of minorities within the Agriculture Department and its various agencies would help to end that department's discriminatory policies.



From the Winston-Salem Chronicle

## Feds, state prosecute Indians

(Continued from page 1 column 3)

White men are making millions of dollars a year fishing. Indians make maybe \$40,000 a year with thirty people depending on him."

Nineteen Indians were tried in federal court for "poaching" but were denied the defense of the U.S.-Indian treaties. Now there are 71 new indictments on both sides of the Columbia, many involving the same people who were tried in federal court.

The Indian people see these prosecutions as an attempt to deny them their fishing rights and to blame the decline of the Columbia fishing on them.

The National Marine Fisheries Service claimed in June, 1982, that

the arrest of over 35 Indian fishermen would end the depletion of the fish. However, two days after the federal court verdict, a National Marine Fisheries Service study absolved the Indians of any responsibility and found that "missing" salmon were the result of a miscount.

The Indian fishermen also charge that the Lacey Act—which super-

cedes treaty rights—is a conspiracy designed to circumvent favorable court decisions that recognize and guarantee Indian treaty fishing rights, and that it undermines the sovereignty of the Indian Nations.

Because of the political nature of the prosecution of these fisher people, Amnesty International has sent an observer to attend the pretrial hearings in the Oregon cases.

Thanks to you it works...



The Observer welcomes Letters to the Editor. Letters should be short, and must contain the writer's name and address (addresses are not printed). The Observer reserves the right to edit for length.



MEMBER



### Portland Observer

The Portland Observer (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217. Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The Portland Observer was established in 1970. Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.



283-2486

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher  
Al Williams, Advertising Manager

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York

Portland's largest black-owned newspaper.

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

News for and about you.

Subscribe today!

Yes, I would like a subscription to the Portland Observer.

I have enclosed my check or money order for \$15, for a one-year subscription.

PLEASE PRINT

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Portland Observer  
Box 3137  
Portland, Oregon 97208