

## Staying on The Highway

"The Highway Revolution That Wasn't" by Jonathan Walters, in *Governing* (May 1995), 2300 N St. N.W., Ste. 760, Washington, D.C. 20037.

Despite its ungainly name, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 was supposed to usher in a new era of flexibility and creativity in American transportation. No longer would federal aid go overwhelmingly to highway construction. Now there would be more bike paths and public transit, fewer superhighways. It has not worked out that way, reports Walters, a senior writer at *Governing*.

In 1991, according to the American Public Transit Association, \$3.3 billion in federal aid was spent on public transit and \$15.1 billion on highways, a ratio of \$1 to \$4.60. In 1995, \$4.6 billion went for public transit and \$19.9 billion for highways—a ratio of \$1 to \$4.30. Hardly a revolution, Walters points out, especially when one considers that 1992 marked the official end of construction of the interstate highway system.

ISTEA (pronounced "ice tea" by those in the know) emphasized planning and local control, and gave states great flexibility in spending federal transportation aid. But very few states, Walters says, have taken advantage of that to shift funds from highways to bike lanes or rail service. Out of a total of more than \$15 billion appropriated for ISTEA's Surface Transportation Program for its first four fiscal years, states tagged only about \$400 million for such "alternate transit."

ISTEA has not lived up to its backers' dreams, Walters argues, because most Americans, including most state and local transportation officials, do not share those dreams. "Despite the best efforts of environmentalists, pro-transit forces, land use planners, preservationists, and bike and greenway proponents," he writes, "Americans still love roads, love cars, and love to drive." They roll up 250 million miles a year on their odometers—twice as many as they did two decades ago. "Americans don't like taking the bus. They view cycling to work as highly impractical. They want to drive. Alone." The 1980 census showed that 64.4 percent drove solo to

work; the figure a decade later was 70 percent.

In a few states, ISTEA is being used along the lines that its supporters envisioned. Maine is putting together a statewide transportation plan that calls for enhanced public transit and envisions moving truck freight onto rail, establishing bike lanes on the shoulders of highways, and perhaps expanding passenger rail service. But ISTEA did not turn the state around, Walters notes. One month before ISTEA was signed into law, Maine's voters—by a margin of nearly three to two—rejected a bond issue to fund the widening of the Maine Turnpike, and they went on to approve a new transportation policy. "The people of Maine wanted change," says the former head of the state's transportation department. But for now at least, it seems that—ISTEA or no ISTEA—most of the rest of the country does not.

## The Charlatan And the Scholar

"Levin, Jeffries, and the Fate of Academic Autonomy" by Nathan Glazer, in *The Public Interest* (Summer 1995), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

To the federal courts, the cases of Leonard Jeffries and Michael Levin looked very much alike. Both men were tenured professors at the City College of New York (CCNY), both had either written or said things that many, on campus and off, found offensive and false, and both had had actions taken against them by the college. For the courts, First Amendment issues were paramount in both cases. Yet there were profound differences between the two, contends Glazer, the noted Harvard sociologist. The college's failure to recognize them is a cause for alarm.

Jeffries, chairman of CCNY's black studies department, gave a 1991 speech on multicultural education in which he characterized his critics as Jews hostile to blacks, and attacked Jews generally for their roles in the slave trade and in Hollywood portrayals of blacks. On other occasions, Jeffries advanced his theory that blacks are superior "sun" people and

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## Brothers and Dreamers

Writing in *Civilization* (July–Aug. 1995), Gerald Early, the director of the African and Afro-American Studies program at Washington University in St. Louis, explains the appeal of Afrocentrism.

*[Writer and critic] Stanley Crouch is right in pointing out that the Afrocentrist is similar to the white Southerner after the Civil War. To black nationalists, the lost war was the "war of liberation" led by black "revolutionaries" in the late 1960s, which in their imagination was modeled on the struggles against colonialism then taking place around the world. (The enslavement of the Africans, of course, was an earlier lost war, and it also weighs heavily on the Afrocentrist. He, like the white Southerner, hates the idea of belonging to a defeated people.) This imaginative vision of a restored and indomitable ethnicity is not to be taken lightly. In a culture as driven by the idea of redemption and as corrupted by racism as this one, race war is our Armageddon. . . .*

*Today, Afrocentrism is not a mature political movement but rather a cultural style and a moral stance. There is a deep, almost lyrical poignancy in the fantasy of the Afrocentrist, as there is in the white Southerner's. What would I have been had I not lost the war? The Afrocentrist is devoted to his ancestry and his blood, fixated on the set of traditions that define his nobility, preoccupied with an imagined lost way of life. What drives the Afrocentrist and the white Southerner is not the expression of a group self-interest but concern with pride and honor. One group's myth is built on the surfeit*

*of honor and pride, the other on the total absence of them.*

*Like the white Southerner, the Afrocentrist is in revolt against liberalism itself, against the idea of individual liberty. In a way, the Afrocentrist is right to rage against it, because liberalism set free the individual but did not encourage the development of a community within which the individual could flower. This is what the Afrocentrist wishes to retrieve, a place for himself in his own community. Wilson Jeremiah Moses, a black historian, is right: Afrocentrism is a historiography of decline, like the mythic epic of the South. The tragedy is that black people fail to see their "Americanization" as one of the great human triumphs of the past 500 years. The United States is virtually the only country where the ex-masters and the ex-slaves try to live together as equals, not only by consent of the ex-masters but by the demand of the ex-slaves. Ironically, what the Afrocentrist can best hope for is precisely what multiculturalism offers: the idea that American culture is a blend of many white and non-white cultures. In the end, although many Afrocentrists claim they want this blending, multiculturalism will not satisfy. . . . The Afrocentrist does not wish to be a mongrel. He wants, like the Southerner, to be pure.*

whites are "ice" people. When the 1991 speech provoked an uproar—though he had been expressing such views for years—CCNY reluctantly tried to reduce Jeffries's term as department chairman. He sued. (A federal appeals court first upheld his reinstatement on First Amendment grounds, then reversed itself last April.)

Levin, meanwhile, in forums such as the *New York Times* letters section and the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, criticized affirmative action and argued that blacks, on average, are less intelligent than whites. Levin's views also stirred an outcry. Demonstrators even blocked students from entering his classroom. The college

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moved with manifest determination to condemn his views on race and intelligence, and to set up an alternative philosophy course, so that students could avoid exposure to the one that he taught (although Levin apparently never advanced his racial arguments in the classroom). Levin, too, went to court. The judge ordered the college not to attempt to discipline the professor, not to create any "parallel" classes to his, and to protect his classes from disruption.

The "key difference" between the cases, Glazer contends, is that Levin was "a legitimate scholar" engaged in "legitimate academic activities," including research and teaching, while Jeffries had done no published research and was engaging in "outrageous" classroom teaching. Levin's "objectionable views," published in the form of a coherent argument with supporting data and sources, can be judged and criticized by other scholars, and modified. Jeffries, on the other hand, "cannot play a role in the research and discussion process and in settling such matters as his claim about the Jewish role in slavery because he does not write and does not publish." Instead, he makes demagogic speeches.

The CCNY administration, Glazer argues, should simply have left Levin to his academic work and, if necessary, prevented his classes from being disrupted. But it should have stripped Jeffries of his chairmanship and perhaps his tenure. Instead, CCNY "censured Levin but refused to act against Jeffries until forced to do so by a political uproar." If the academy cannot uphold academic ideals, Glazer fears, the courts and the law, "with all their limitations," may be the only recourse.

## *An Invisible Hand Up*

"From Underclass to Working Class" by James L. Payne, in *The American Enterprise* (Sept.-Oct. 1995), 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

*Exploitation* is the word that journalists tend to use when a corporation takes men who are down and out and puts them to work in

low-wage jobs. They shouldn't, argues Payne, director of Lytton Research and Analysis in Sandpoint, Idaho, after a close look at the operations of one such firm, Industrial Labor Service Corporation (ILS).

The firm's Dallas branch (one of 20 it has in different cities) is the largest employer of temporary manual laborers in the city, offering 650 jobs on a typical day. It pays workers an average of \$4.70 an hour and charges employers \$7.50 for their labor. Out of the difference, ILS pays dispatchers, van drivers, salespeople, rent, taxes, and other overhead—and makes a profit of 17 cents per hour of labor contracted. ILS also operates a one-room shelter called the Bunkhaus, which charges lodgers \$5 a night and can accommodate up to 180 men.

Most of the men staying in the Bunkhaus, Payne found, had done time in prison. But keeping good order among them required only one manager and one security guard; they screened out the worst troublemakers, kept drugs out, and cooled off tempers when violence threatened. "The steadying, motivating influence on this little community," Payne says, "is work. The real jobs to be had and money to be earned provide an order and camaraderie to the shelter. The discipline of work sends the men to bed early, with lights out at 10 P.M., and propels them to rise when the lights pop back on at 4 A.M."

Instead of government "make-work" jobs that stress "self-esteem" but involve the kind of work that no one really wants done, Payne contends, the ILS workers get meaningful jobs "where an employer 'selfishly' demands productive labor in exchange for money." The men "can hardly escape gaining a sense of accomplishment. . . . When you've dug a ditch or unloaded a 60-foot trailer truck, you know you've accomplished something that sets you apart from, and somewhat above, the soft and unproductive sectors of society."

Government job-training programs have difficulty inculcating good work habits because the programs are funded according to how many people are served. Administrators tend to tolerate disruptive workers. "In the