

1/15/14

721 West Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Feb 1, 1991
607-273-6552

Ithaca Times
PO Box 27
Ithaca, NY 14851

Dear Ithaca Times Readers:

Next time you go to the gas station, rather than turning your face from the nozzle, stick your nose down next to your tank as the fuel flows in. Take a big, deep breath.

Nauseating, no? Gasoline is a deadly poison. Better avert your face before you blow your guts all over your car, and your brain cells start to gum up...

As you pay for the gas, ask yourself: What are you willing to pay for mobility? Will you enlist, and join our forces in Arabia, fighting courageously to restore Kuwait and its oil to our "friends," who have striven to guarantee that OPEC will set the price of crude oil below the point which would encourage the development of alternative forms of energy, thus prolonging our dependence on oil and maximizing their long-term revenues?

After you turn on the engine, take a moment for reflection; your meditation may be improved if you get down next to the tailpipe of your car and suck in a few fumes...

Vile, isn't it? Not only does the exhaust contain ozone, nitrous oxides, and other

pollutants which contribute to local air pollution, the average car produces over a ton per year of "non-toxic" carbon dioxide, which contributes to global warming. Picture Washington, D.C., in the year 2050: picture it *underwater*.

And as you sit uneasy in your chariot, frustrated by traffic, fretting as you negotiate some intersection which you fear might add you and your family to this year's tragic list of casualties (which will certainly exceed the toll from the War) you might reflect a little on the chilling fact that your gas tax not only fails to cover these indirect costs, but covers much less than half of the direct costs of building and maintaining the highway system.

Ask yourself: is this a transportation system, or a highway to hell? And if we can't come up with a less costly alternative, if "we can't get there from here," isn't that what we call a *Dead End*?

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

December 13, 1986
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
607-273-6552
Afternoons: 255-7341

Letter To the Editor of The Ithaca Journal:

The proponents of Route 96 "Plan C with overpass", dreamily envisioning the realization of their beloved Overpass!, have once again demonstrated their insensitivity to the reasonable concerns of people who live in the City of Ithaca. Both Elline Gambrell and Robert Ronsvalle, in their letters of December 10, seem to be incapable of admitting that implementing the Overpass! proposals will lead to the construction of superhighway-type roads, preferring to maintain, in curiously parallel phrasing, that what they propose is a "beautifully landscaped 2 1/2 mile boulevard with regulated speeds," and denouncing those who disagree as "skeptical" "negativists."

C'mon, folks, put down that pipe and face reality: whatever virtues can be claimed for the four-lane Overpass!, it WOULD BE INDEED an ELEVATED SUPERHIGHWAY. You've become intoxicated with rhetoric. (Note that the ardent overpasser, Dr. Weiner, has seriously posed the question: "Where is it written down that an overpass has to be ugly?")

These fantasists might, if they bothered, visit numerous American cities which have been made over for the automobile, and see if they can offer a real example of a lovely 1/4 mile long Overpass! Having lived in such cities before moving to the Ithaca area in 1979, I would "wish them luck" in this endeavor--they would need it, because, as everyone knows, highways and overpasses are not intended as monuments to art, but are instead built for function, and inevitably come out looking like massively elongated shrines to some forgotten pagan god of concrete. (Or perhaps not forgotten, because they do attract swarms of traffic--speeding urgently to a congregation at a traffic jam up the road a bit, where the horns of the multitude will clamor, as if to implore their god to extend the cathedral just a little more.)

From my perspective as a homeowner on the West End, I can only regard the arguments of those who proclaim the scenic beauty of overpasses with cynical amusement, and wonder at their inability to admit that their Overpass! would have a significant negative impact on the appearance and "livability" of Cass Park and the West End. Plan A, which would ax the Octopus and makes Fulton and Meadow one-way streets in order to speed traffic through the West End, is derided by the Overpass! propagandists as a "Band Aid"; still, it would dramatically alter the status quo on the West End and relegate that locally-dreaded but strictly minor league traffic hassle, the Octopus, to memory. It seems the Overpass! crew won't be satisfied unless the West End is placed in a concrete cast!

I hope that those who've observed the Overpass! letter-writing campaign and struggled for wakefulness through the Octopus! TV show have noticed that the Overpass! activists, while continually claiming to be truly representative and totally objective, routinely attack those who disagree with them as irrational,

irresponsible, spendthrift members of an over-vocal minority, and shower Ithaca's elected, overworked, and underpaid Common Council members with abuse. These accusations come from groups which draw about 60 people to very well-publicized meetings; I believe their desperate resorts to abusive rhetoric demonstrate that they seek to compensate for small numbers with loud voices.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

January 14, 1987
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, New York 14850
273-6552/255-7341

A Letter To The Editor:

After my letter was published in the Journal (12/26/86), I received repeated invitations to sit on the panel of the Jan. 15 meeting of the Coalition for Improved Roads; I politely declined. I did, however, attend the meeting in the company of my wife, to hear the arguments being raised. Tables flanked the entrance, loaded down with xeroxes of letters favoring the Octopus, lists of politicians to contact, and Overpass buttons, but we entered nonetheless.

At that meeting I heard a lot of intemperate language, all of it from the proponents of an Overpass. The moderator never once called for moderation, or reminded participants of the need for civility in public debate. When Mr. Peter deGraff, who runs a marina on the West End, took the podium and humbly confessed that his feelings were torn about the Overpass proposal, because he believes that it might ruin his business and would reduce tourism in Ithaca, he was attacked forthwith by a man who said he "valued his property over human life." Later, a member of the Coalition board declared that a letter in the Journal "has upset many people in this community" and then proceed to state that "we invited Mr. Saunders to be on our panel tonight and he REFUSED!" and that "we deserve an explanation!"

At that point I got up, waited for my turn, and pointed out that I had declined because I thought I would feel uncomfortable; and considering that the panel was stacked for the Overpass, 12 to 4, and that I had just been personally attacked, my fears had been fully justified. I then told a personal story to help explain my feelings about traffic in Ithaca, and the appalling deterioration of traffic courtesy and safety in recent years: just two days before the meeting, the driver of a dump truck violated my right of way as a pedestrian as he was rolling through a right turn at a flashing red light. Only when I shouted at him--"Hey!"--did he stop, and then only so he could argue with me over his right to run me over! His clinching argument for my guilt: "How come you're walking?" I called the Ithaca police, and was very impressed with their professionalism and rapid resolution of the problem.

To conclude, although the gentleman who invited me to the meeting was kind enough to call me up and personally apologize, I have received no apology from the organization he represents. I believe more firmly than ever that the Coalition for Improved Roads has no business presenting itself as an impartial mediator for this debate; their real goal is to grind the Overpass Ax, the better to bury it in the heart of Ithaca.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

February 23, 1987
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, New York 14850
607-273-6552

To the Editor:

Ralph Jordan's response to AM Whelan's article "The Other Side" exposes once again the character and tactics of the forces behind the "Coalition for Improved Roads."

Mr. Jordan has spoken elsewhere of "smokescreens being put before us," but he himself attempts to shroud his causes' true goals with the "hospital safety issue": "if it is your loved one waiting at the train tracks in an ambulance . . . there is only one plan that offers the least resistance, PLAN C WITH OVERPASS!" The King and King report of 1973 shows that "our" community planners considered the access problem--and dismissed it, recommending, not a better location, but that "community and area planners take every possible step and exert every measure of pressure to effect funding and construction of the proposed Route 96 spur." The same report states that in this way "savings estimated at between \$500,000 and \$750,000 can be achieved."

The hospital safety issue is a red herring, created by some of the people who are loudly denouncing anyone who finds an OverPass! undesirable. These "planners" knowingly "built-in" an added 8 MINUTES for a trip to the hospital by the average citizen. They didn't talk about "The Wall" at that time. They excluded the Towns of Dryden and Groton from their "service area." Only now, after about \$30,000,000 has been sunk into the hospital's mis-location, do they recall that "5 MINUTES can mean the difference between life and death," and chide us for being inhumane if we don't love the OverPass!

Mr. Jordan also sheds crocodile tears for the taxpayer as he defends his "\$30,000,000 Absolutely Free Government Money" boondoggle. Our government now borrows against our grandchildren's earnings to fund such projects! Presumably, Mr. Jordan would argue that it is spendthrift to reject the \$2,000,000,000 Westway scam in New York City, since future American taxpayers at large will pay for the project and the profits of "our" auto-commuters and real estate developers.

Consider: The OverPass! proposal would cost about \$675 for each employed person in Tompkins County. Is the risk that you *might* have to wait for the train after an accident, and you *might* get to the hospital too late, so great that it would be worth \$675 to reduce your risk? When it's not clear that this has ever, in fact, happened to anyone? When many people don't even have the money to take their sick children to see a doctor?

Mr. Jordan "resents" my statements and misrepresents them as "insinuations." He claims I have "little regard for the taxpayer of this community," much like his pals, who claim I'm insensitive to "people with roots in Tompkins County" and that I've "upset many people."

Well, this is just par for the course: anybody who speaks out against the OverPass! proposal is likely to get a bruising. When the most powerful argument for supporting Plan C is "We'll smear you if you don't," something is rotten in the Tompkins County body politic. Our resolve to resist this "Hospital Driveway_cum_Industrial Strength Development" scheme will only be strengthened by intimidation.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

PS: Typesetting suggestions: words within '*' should be bold-faced; words within '_' should be underlined. Thank you!

June 19, 1987
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
607-273-6552

Editor
The Ithaca Times
Ithaca, NY 14850

Letter to the Editor:

Your report on the Nieder Korn Report Meeting (6/5/87) misquoted me, taking my question about the Report as if it were a question about the practicality of the Null Alternative. My question was: "Since the Report is professedly neutral, factual, and objective regarding the alternatives for Rt. 96, why was this treatment not accorded to the Null Alternative? Why, in a report advising the reader on page two not to 'look for a recommendation on the selection of a specific alternative' do we find a statement on page four that 'This factor alone [the lack of a second bridge] should be sufficient to eliminate the Null alternative from serious consideration?'"

Oddly enough, Mayor Gutenberger himself chose to field this question, and his response was that "we all agreed on that statement." When I pointed out that this didn't alter the fact that they had made a value judgment, he replied that "you can call it a value judgment if you like, or just facing reality." I was, and remain, shocked that the Mayor of Ithaca will not or cannot distinguish the difference between facts and value judgments, even as he and the authors busily congratulate themselves on this "factual, objective report."

Apart from the Mayor's wilful abuse of logic and the English language, what I find most striking is that the statement the Mayor defended parallels exactly an argument made for the Overpass (which he does not support): "A risk to health and safety exists, which can be resolved by Project X--therefore we must implement Project X, regardless of the degree of risk, the cost of the project, or the undesirable side effects it may have."

There are actually good reasons to favor the Null Alternative over the other plans. A Benefit/Cost analysis (prepared by the Tompkins County Planning Department) concludes that the Null Alternative is the cheapest DOT proposal, saving about \$2,900,000 dollars over the next cheapest alternative (Plan B). The primary cost of the Null Alternative (~\$30 million) is motorists' time, which in this study is valued at \$4.80 an hour.

I agree that a second bridge--which could eliminate the badly-designed Octopus for a cost of about \$1,500,000--is desirable. However, I see no reason why one must therefore support the expensive, uneconomic, and environmentally destructive Fulton/Meadow one-way pair included in all of the DOT's current plans. If the bridge comes implanted in a bucket of worms, I would politely decline the gift.

Sincerely,

721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
273-6552
December 20, 1988

Ithaca Journal
123-125 W. State St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Dear Editor:

I was dismayed by the undemocratic procedure of the public meeting held by the state Department of Transportation concerning the Route 96 proposals. At least on Wednesday night, when I was there, the time set aside for public comments on the DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) began with statements from all the politicians who wished to speak, followed by the special interest groups. Only then could individual citizens speak.

Politicians have easy access to the media and their positions are well-known to those interested. Ordinary people had to come early to get their name in line to speak. Although ostensibly the purpose of the meeting was to address comments on the DEIS to the DOT, these are the only public hearings on the issue before a decision is made, so the hearings were a prime opportunity for citizens to address their legislators and the community at large. Whether the politicians have a definite stand on the issue as yet or not, I would expect that they would have a strong interest in hearing the statements of their constituents before they are distilled by the next morning's newspaper.

I understand the temptation the politicians faced on a cold snowy weeknight to depart early, but I would like to commend Dan Hoffman and Martin Luster for sticking out the meeting to the end.

It was nice that Dan Fost reversed the order of the proceedings by quoting the comments of individuals first and politicians last, but he did not make it clear that this was not the way it happened at the meeting.

Anne Marie Whelan

I'm a homeowning "West Endian," and I and my family truly love what's left of the West End. Until recently I was simply mystified by Rob Romanowski's rhetoric—you know, the usual politician's claim that "I am simply representing the desires of my constituents." Like the other politicians who talk like this, he knows perfectly well that this is false, since *some* of his constituents clearly don't agree with him. For example, I think the government ought to *govern*, to concern itself with the *crucial* issues of public safety, such as apprehending and imprisoning *those who commit violent crimes*, rather than trying to run the economy. Thus, the government should cease fiddling its time and energy away with the "social engineering" exercise of planning, building, and subsidizing yet more highways and parking garages to benefit developers and suburbanite commuters at the expense of others in the taxpaying public and the health of the planet as a whole.

But then, when Rob (and Barbara Blanchard, the First Ward's "RepubliCrat") opposed the construction of a sidewalk for pedestrians on Elmira Road, while at the same time supporting broadening Rte. 13 in the same area, it became crystal clear precisely why my family is not included in Rob's weirdly-homogeneous "constituency": "None of the businesses on Elmira Road think a sidewalk is needed." Aha! I thought—now I understand: I had been under the misapprehension that Rob and Barbara represented the *voters* of the First Ward: in the New Ithacan Order, the concerns that count are those expressed by *non-resident business owners!*

Meanwhile, thanks to the "wonderful" new traffic lights on Meadow Street which have been installed to speed up traffic through the West End, pedestrians take their life in their hands every time they cross Meadow street. Sooner or later, *yet another* person is going to be run over by some inattentive driver and *once again another human being, probably either very young or very old, will die on "Meadow Street."*

I doubt that that person will appreciate the irony that the politicians who harp the loudest and longest about "public safety" are the very same ones who unswervingly support an automobile-based transportation system that has done more to destroy our environment, including the *social* environment, than any other feature of modern life. Consider how the mobility provided by the "private" (yet heavily subsidized!) automobile has provided endless opportunities to the criminal classes—e.g., drunken hoodlums from neighboring communities now whiz over to Ithaca to harass, maim, and kill Ithaca residents, and a child is kidnapped from Massachusetts to meet a grisly end on Connecticut Hill. Certainly, there have been major benefits—but will our children's children's children benefit, or will they be *paying* for our misguided conception of convenience? It strikes me as surpassingly strange that the vast majority of our politicians seem to favor spending to expand the road system, when crumbling parking garages and collapsing bridges indicate dramatically that much of the *existing* system is desperately in need of *maintenance!*

It's clear to me that the selfish wallet-interests of politicians, DOT employees, consultants, highway and building contractors, and unions, and the "mob" in general, weigh heavily in their decisions to support endless expansion of a dysfunctional and downright dangerous highway system. There is obviously a lot more money to be made building roads than in keeping them clean and free of potholes!

Folks, these guys *destroy the environment* like no other industry, and they do not *purchase* the property from a willing partner, they have the government *steal it* through the process they hypocritically call "*condemnation*." Those who support this system support socialism in its rawest and most exploitative form. It's a superb irony that the same people who support activist, socialist intervention by the government on behalf of commuters, the better to house them in subsidized garages, condemn the same kind of economic intervention for other causes. They're willing to spend \$3,000,000 of public money, about \$15,000 *per space*, to build a parking garage to provide *temporary day lodgings* for the cars belonging to relatively well-to-do people, but not a tenth of that amount to provide safe sidewalks along Elmira Road for people committed to saving money and practicing healthy habits! And as for housing the homeless—*forget it!* *Our government has a prior commitment to housing automobiles.*

And I want to ask Rob and Barb and their new friend Mark Finkelstein: are you just plain incapable of using language without subordinating factual meaning to suit your own political ideology? If Ithaca has not allowed "reasonable development," what do you call the new constructions in Collegetown which involved the destruction of all that was charming about Dryden Road? Some are attractive, one in particular is handsome in a big way but, sadly, misplaced, and others are truly hideous in their *blanc-walled* garage-like contempt for the Ithacan architectural vernacular. Growth (and Stone-cold Destruction!) on the Cornell campus has been robust, practically *Schwarzeneggerian*. And what do you call Wegmans and the other prodigious growths along the Route 13 strip on Meadow and Elmira Streets? Dan Hoffman, whom you folks try to portray as a wacko, called it "appropriate development," but call it what you like, there's a whole bunch of highly visible new commercial buildings that have gone up on the Strip in the past few years. Do you need an eye exam, or is the problem cognitive/ideological?

And right around our block over the past few years, Joe's has closed and yet re-opened with tremendous success, Clever Hans and the re-invigorated Ithaca Bakery have provided balms to our taste buds, Byrne Dairy opened a store—this is not exactly what I'd call *stagnation*. On a more industrial note, what do you call the electronics assembly shop and temporary storage units that have sprung up on our block since we bought in to the West End 5 years ago? The SRO housing unit that went up around the block on Meadow this year? The planned expansion of the hardly-managed Red Cross shelter two doors down from our house? Now, we bought a house in an area zoned as "light industrial", and such construction is to be expected, and needs to go somewhere. We can live without the free on-street parking which seems to be a necessity for some folks. *But why always here? Why are certain districts singled out to make sacrifices and provide services, while others are sacrosanct?*

As a free-market libertarian, I believe people have a right to build on their property, as long as they aren't rendering it permanently unusable and/or polluting their neighbors' property. For example, I would support someone who wanted to set up their modular home in *Cayuga Heights*, or, say, next door to *Gun Hill Apartments*. *Do you "Republican" "friends of the free market" agree with me, or do you prefer home-rule Socialism when development occurs in YOUR BACK YARD?)*

What I object to is the *socialist zoning policy* and *socialist transportation planning* which has targeted our neighborhood, again and again, as a "pedal to the metal" zone, ripe for yet another bridge/racing-canal/garage/super-highway. Rob Romanowski stabs the neighborhood of his birth *in the back* when he supports the undeserving *welfare bums* who really cheat the government—the commuting suburbanites who exploit the subsidies for automobiles to the hilt, letting the monetary and environmental costs fall largely on those who try to avoid this *evil habit* by living within walking distance of their workplace and shopping places. *Pedestrians may be a minority, but that does not justify their exploitation by the commuting majority!*

When an Ithaca Journal "news" article sneers about "Birkenstock-clad Ithacans," they're talking about *pedestrians*. Birkenstock is to shoes what BMW is to automobiles—German-made, in a tradition of excellence. They just happen to be a lot better for health, your own, your city's, and your planet's, than the automobile—and, come to think of it, several orders of magnitude cheaper, for those who still hew to *conservative ideals*.

As far as I'm concerned, the Automotive Soviets of our society, with their radical "four wheels good, two legs bad" philosophy and "let them eat fumes" attitude toward pedestrians and bicyclists, have a lot to answer for. They've spent the last 50 years re-engineering, suburbanizing, and paving America, and the results have been social disorder, economic decline, and dependency on foreign imports leading to over-reliance on aggressive militancy in foreign policy.

March 16, 1989

An op-ed piece refused by the Ithaca Journal...

"KILLER HIGHWAYS, SUBSIDIZED COMMUTERS, MISLOCATED HOSPITALS . . . HEAVY TAX TOLLS AHEAD"

The Ithaca Journal has in the past highlighted the County planners' and commuters' view of Route 13 as a "killer highway," which needs to be broadened and improved to save lives. The same reasoning is applied to the expansion of Rte. 96, with the inaccessibility of the hospital adding an additional spur to action.

The simple fact is that we drive killer cars, and that very impressive progress in automobile and highway design, even when joined with attentive policing of the roads, lower speed limits, and stricter DWI enforcement, have only mitigated the direct human health cost imposed by our highway system--45,000 people still die on the highways each year. That's in addition to the cost of air and water pollution and the enormous amounts of land required for automobiles, their highways, and their parking lots.

The fundamental problem with the automobile as a commuter transit system rests in the front left side of the car, in the driver's seat: the fault lies not in our roads, nor in our cars, but in ourselves. The truth is that even the best driver will eventually make a potentially fatal mistake, while the average driver does so weekly, and the odd suicidal/homicidal maniac will do so as frequently as possible.

Operating heavy equipment *safely* requires a level of skill and concentration which most people lack. The automobile is simple, deceptively simple: driving down a city street your car has 50 times the energy of a bullet from a gun, a potentially lethal weapon hurtling forward under your control. Where else in everyday life does an individual have so much power?

And when you get right down to it, the cases most urgently rushed to the Tompkins Community Hospital, and thence to Elmira, are victims of automobile accidents. You might recall that recently a man was killed, almost instantaneously, when a pickup truck collided head-on with his car as he attempted to make a left turn on a green light at the intersection of Rte. 13 and 3rd Street. You might recall that an old lady was run over by a truck on Meadow Street last year when the light turned red while she was attempting to cross. You might recall the woman who was "blown away" by a van while walking on the margin of Rte. 13 near Newfield a couple of years ago. These are just a few cases of the automotive havoc wreaked daily across our county and our country. And then, you might reflect on the fact that NOT ONE PERSON has ever died directly as a result of the mislocation of the hospital, and ask yourself whether expanded roadways make sense as a means of making people safer and healthier.

Curiously, the solution proposed by the "authorities" for the congestion and safety problems caused by an excess of commuters seems always to be "bigger roads for more cars," rather than addressing the roots of the problem:

suburban sprawl and its subsidization, direct and indirect, by government. Frank Liguori, County Planner, told the Journal that with the Route 96 proposals, "We just can't get a consensus on improving transportation," stating that the problem might be too many special interest groups and not enough involvement by local institutions and industries. Please note that he favors the biggest plan proposed to "solve" the Octopus congestion problem, doesn't consider commuters or industry pressure groups "special interest groups," was a key player in the decision to build a new hospital in the Wrong Place, and that he and his subordinates spend an inordinate amount of time plugging the virtues of this wonderful new highway. Maybe this reveals something about the values and priorities Mr. Liguori brings to planning the future of Tompkins County.

If he really wanted to find out reasons why his office's proposals are met with disdain from "special interests" (read: "irate taxpayers") he might take a look at the cost-benefit analysis of the various Rte. 96 proposals distributed by his own office. This analysis shows that the "best" proposal for new construction (a local mutation, Plan D) would yield more about \$1,500,000 more costs than benefits over its thirty-year life. Plan C with Overpass, for example, is worth NEGATIVE \$6,500,000. In other words, society would have \$6,500,000 more by investing this money elsewhere and leaving the road the way it is; this analysis includes all imaginable savings for the new road (e.g., time saved in commuting is valued at \$4.80 an hour!), while ignoring many of the costs. (The DOT's Draft Environmental Impact Statement contained a Cost-Benefit "study" which valued commuter's time savings at \$6.00 an hour--many Ithacans wish their time was worth this much to their employer! Coupling this with a brashly optimistic assumption that the real interest rate is 1.5%, rather than 4-5%, the DOT "study" makes road-building seem like an economic miracle, offering a 400% rate of return on investment!)

Who will pay for this boondoggle? Somebody else--not us!, suggest our county planners and the local highway lobby. Governor Cuomo proposed, prior to putting forward the 3.5 billion dollar bond issue which was approved in the last election, that drivers around the state should partially finance "badly needed" road improvements through an increase in the gasoline tax--the response? "Not us!", say the commuters and the oil interests! Let those who don't benefit pay for improving the road I drive on!

In Tompkins County in 1987, over \$12,000,000 was spent on roads and parking, or about \$400 for each commuter in the county. Most of this money was local, and comes from sales and property taxes, NOT from taxes levied on the motorists and truckers who benefit directly from these roads. This is Socialism, folks, it's robbing Peter to pay Paul: it's just as simple as that. I believe that individuals should pay their own way whenever they can; our highway system is funded and administered with a different point of view, which seeks to ensure that *every* Cadillac is a Welfare Cadillac.

Let's take, for example, a local clique of these "welfare cases," the 400 petitioning NYSEG "commuter activists," who have proposed that the taxpayers of the County and of the State should *increase* the Government's already substantial subsidization of their decision to live far distant from their place of work. Is this not obviously a "special interest group"--any guidance for us on this one, Mr. Liguori? Or does a person who *drives* somehow magically transcend this selfish status? I say that since it is clear that

since gainfully employed commuters are unwilling to bear the costs of the services government provides for them, they should be allowed to stew in their own traffic jams.

It's time for the people who subsidize this dangerous and irresponsible behavior to put the brakes on the government-run "free-way" scam. We can already ill afford the \$40 billion of automobiles and the \$30 billion of oil we import each year, and as time goes by and our natural resources dwindle, we will be able to afford it less and less. The governments which control the largest reserves of oil are either Muslim monarchists of the Absolute variety (Saudi Arabia--King George III grows green with envy in his grave), totalitarian socialists (Iraq, employer of poison gas on ethnic minorities), politically unstable (Venezuela, Mexico), or avowed terrorists (Iran, Libya). Our government runs an enormous deficit. Consumers are deeply in debt. Inflation is rising, interest rates are up, the dollar is falling, and still the trade deficit is enormous.

To top this all off, we now have an additional, very weighty concern--that the burning of fossil fuels is upsetting the global balance of carbon dioxide which has regulates the Earth's temperature, leading to warming all over the globe. Scientists disagree on the specific effects on various regions, but there is almost complete unanimity that warming is occurring, and that the warming will cause catastrophic effects if we do not act promptly to ameliorate its causes.

So I ask: Why should we spend millions on expensive new local roads when the benefits to us from spending it elsewhere would be so much greater? Inertia? Stupidity? Addiction? I await some sensible answer, with a growing dismal feeling that bureacracy means never having to say you're sorry.

Kevin Eric Saunders

March 23, 1989
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

The Ithaca Journal
123 W. State St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

A Letter to the Editor:

In a letter to the Journal, A. J. Golder of Trumansburg denounces the members of Common Council as "dangerous people," deserving of our "scorn and contempt."

True, perhaps, but they are so only in the sense that Neville Chamberlain was dangerous. I believe they will soon be appraised in the same cold light as the author of the 1938 Munich compromise with Hitler--"Plan A offers environmental quality in our time!" Hearken: Senator Albert Gore Jr. has heralded "an ecological Kristallnacht": "Unless we quickly and profoundly change the course of our civilization, we face an immediate and grave danger of destroying the worldwide ecological system that sustains life as we know it."

The uneconomic, antiecological highway system A. J. Golder promotes is a leading agent of this destruction. Intriguingly, it was Adolf Hitler who constructed the first "freeway" system, and who commissioned the Volkswagen, intending to make Germany "a nation on wheels." Will Hitler's posthumous revenge come, as pollution from the automobiles he promoted enshrouds the Earth in a lethal blanket, turning the planet into a global oven?

Please join me in saying "NO!" to the expansion of the highway system. Why should each auto travelling on Rte. 96 receive a subsidy worth, by my estimation, 25 cents, when the Fire and Police Departments are inadequately staffed? Why does our government build housing for automobiles, but not housing for the poor? Tell your representatives that polluters should be fined, not subsidized!

"Whither goest thou, America, in thy shiny black car in the night?" . . . we now have the answer, we are speeding to perdition, aided and abetted by Mr. Golder and his cronies.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

April 14, 1989

Cornell University is now struggling to cope with an ongoing traffic and parking problem. Cornell has taken the unusual, and to many Cornellians unjustifiable, step of publicly advocating an enormous public work--the Route 96 build Option C with Overpass--to address the local ramifications of this problem. As a member of Cornell's Network Systems Services staff, I feel our department can make significant contributions to this solving these problems. I believe the perspective of computer network designers and implementers, versed in the behavior of complex systems, can yield valuable insights into causes of the traffic congestion crisis and possible solutions.

First, I'd like to list some remedial measures which can improve the situation, saving money without requiring significant investments.

1) Encourage ride sharing: Cornell's Traffic Bureau should promote ride sharing by maintaining a allowing Cornell commuters to post offers and requests for ride sharing on a CUINFO bulletin board, such as the one now maintained for housing (1). Promotion of ride sharing is already part of Cornell's official transportation policy; implementing this proposal will turn this policy into a reality, rather than an empty pledge.

2) Encourage transit use: Cornell's Traffic Bureau should maintain current bus schedules on the CUINFO system.

3) Shifting employee hours: If it is pursued on a systematic basis, a policy which mandates staggered hours will spread peak hour traffic loads over a longer period, and could substantially reduce peak hour congestion. This would probably have to be implemented by recommending a given starting/ending time to each department.

4) A park-and-ride program for West Hill. Of the 2800 peak hour commuters who cross the Octopus daily, a significant percentage must be Cornellians. Since local commuters seem to regard the rather tame Octopus as if it were some vehicular Charybdis, surely a reasonably priced park-and-ride service located on West Hill would be a success, as it would offer motorists the opportunity to avoid the hassle, and for most of them the bus ride would simply be replacing their bus ride from the B lot.

5) Encourage pedestrianism. Sidewalks should be kept as clear of snow and ice as the roads. Cornell can encourage Ithaca to enforce its existing, but unused, ordinances which require property owners to keep sidewalks clear of snow and ice. Cornell could further encourage the City to take the same responsibility for sidewalks as it does for roads--currently, the city spends \$160,000/year clearing snow from roads, all of which is derived from local taxes. *All* sidewalk expenses totalled \$93,000 for 1988, while ?. Why do highways receive this subsidy, but not pedestrian ways? All of us are pedestrians; not all of us choose to drive, despite the lure of "convenience."

4) Mandate full recovery of campus traffic costs from users. Vice-President Gurowitz stated in his letter of November 1988 to faculty and staff that Cornell "currently provides an annual subsidy of more than a half million dollars" for traffic and parking. I believe that Cornell's current policy of charging for convenient parking show the correct approach--"those who reap the benefits should bear the cost." This policy should be extended to cover all parking and traffic services, which should be priced according to the best estimate available of the marginal cost of the specific service provided. Rather than subsidizing, and thus encouraging, behavior with unpleasant social and environmental impacts, we should charge users not only the full cost of the services provided, but should include a premium to account for the external costs imposed on the campus through automobile commutation: increased risks to pedestrians, dispersion of the campus to allow convenient parking, pollution, etc. I

would hope that we will not indulge the hope that somehow the state and federal governments will come to our aid: to the contrary, don't our principles tell us that our government should concern itself with more weighty matters than our local traffic problems?

If we are willing to dedicate significant resources to creating solutions, further measures can be taken which could have a major impact on the traffic problem. First, I'd like offer a brief analysis of the problem.

One truth about the "congestion crisis" in Ithaca's West End, Community Corners, and elsewhere is that the congestion would be greatly diminished if automobile loading rates were to increase from 1.5 (County planners' estimate, probably high) to 3 persons per car. This congestion is a case of the classic network Time/Space allocation problem: as you pack too many "packets" into a "network" of finite "bandwidth," "throughput" goes to zero as "collisions" cause "packet loss" or induce "network routing failures" which shut down the "network" while routing paths are reestablished. In the case of computer network technologies, it helps greatly that when an "intersection"--a network router--is overloaded, it simply throws away excess packets--a convenience that is impractical, to say the least, with an automobile! Invariably, it seems, highway planners offer only one solution to congestion: increase the bandwidth, or carrying capacity, of the road. Other measures can be taken to reduce congestion which use existing road resources more *intelligently*. For example:

5) Van pooling: Van pooling is the most efficient form of transportation available, especially given the broad dispersion of housing which has resulted from the abuse of the automobile as a system of mass transit. If the loading rate were to be increased to 6, congestion would be a thing of the past. Cornell could implement a number of policies encouraging van pooling:

a) offer free parking permits in convenient spaces to those who can establish that they are operating a van pool;

b) Help obtain financing for those who wish to begin a van pool;

c) Maintain as a corollary service to allow van poolers to use the CUINFO bulletin board as a market for their goods.

4) Encourage bicycle use. As the climate warms, Ithaca will become suitable for year-round bicycling; even in the current unfavorable climate, many people rely on bicycles through the winter! Separate paths for bicyclists, separating them from both automobile and pedestrian traffic, are a must if we are to employ bicycle transit safely and effectively. In order to promote bicycle use, racks can be mounted to buses so that the bicyclist can have an alternative when the weather turns wet--as it does with in Ithaca, with such appallingly frequent irregularity.

6) Encouraging "Telecommuting": Many Cornell students and staff often come to campus for the sole purpose of accessing Cornell's computer resources. If we extend network access into the community, in the short run we might reduce the need to commute to campus. Although the primary benefit in the short run is increased productivity of knowledge workers, in the long run providing this service could substantially impact the traffic problem.

If Cornell were to implement the available technologies for high-speed access over telephone lines, we could establish a self-sustaining service which allows computer users to access the computers on our networks from home for a total charge to the user of about \$20 per month. This service would be based on Data-Over-Voice technology now offered by NYNEX, which does not interfere with the normal use of the telephone, and can offer speeds of either 2000 characters per second or 56,000 characters per second; these speeds are 8 and 23 times the speed of the existing modem-based service, and are high enough to allow remote access to be used on a regular basis for

getting work done. This service has not been implemented only because 1000 users would need to subscribe to the service for it to break even, and there were concerns that this number of paying customers might not materialize. To me, as a network systems software developer, the contrast between this situation and the subsidized traffic system is painful: we are required to "pay our own way," even though we offer solutions which yield the greatest benefits when the "universal service" approach is employed; they receive a large subsidy, when in truth it is myopic management that has led to the inevitable crisis of the automobile transit system.

An alternative to developing a dedicated DOV service, which would be of even greater value in the long run, would be to coax NYNEX to offer ISDN telephone services to the Ithaca area on an accelerated basis. This proven, broadly deployed technology would not only permit local businesses to conveniently tap Cornell's resources, such as the supercomputer facility, but also allow them to easily accomplish computer data interchange among themselves. If Cornell were to speed implementation of ISDN locally, it might also provide an important source of good will in the community.

In conclusion, I'd like to try to underscore the importance of responding to this challenge with leadership, based on a fresh, rational assessment of our needs and the resources available to us. This traffic problem is not just a local affair: the crisis of automobility afflicts every community of any size in the U.S. The federal government has pursued a policy of making heavily subsidized highways available across the whole nation as the primary means of mass transit. From a network perspective, highways make no sense as a system of mass transit: inadequate higher-level control of routing will inevitably lead to congestion as individual drivers make bad routing decisions, inadequate access control and irregular driving behavior leads to high collision rates, and valuable resources (land) are consumed in storing automobiles, which by economic logic at least would be better employed transporting other people than in uselessly awaiting their owner's return. Furthermore, Cornell's decision to promote the Overpass, which will consequently promote the development of West Hill, can lead only to traffic congestion nightmare centered in heart of the City of Ithaca, as Cornell commuters gather from new suburbs to the North and West and are funneled together to meet, as THEY MUST, at the foot of Cayuga lake to cross the plain on which the City is founded. The logical corollary to the Overpass, and West Hill development, is a freeway running from the West End straight up East Hill to the B lot, a horrifying abortion of transportation logic, which would destroy Ithaca as we know and love it.

Moreover, the automobile has played a powerful role in promoting environmental degradation, the course of which MUST be reversed in the coming decade if we are to preserve the Earth as a place fit for human habitation. Locally, we even have the disaster of Jacksonville to remind us of the unreckoned costs--here, a community was rendered unfit for habitation when a leaking gasoline storage tank polluted its groundwater. In the public testimony regarding Route 96, we have heard from individuals--often, ironically, promoting the cause of their hurts--who have suffered profound health damage from gasoline fumes, who have been badly injured in auto accidents, who suffer from the noise of traffic, or who are "driven to distraction" by the congestion and delays they experience in using this under-designed and poorly-regulated network system. The major contribution made by the automobile to the global warming trend is a great, rotting cherry atop this greasy pudding of automobility. We should spurn this dish in favor of a more healthful "transportation diet."

Cornell can continue "living in the Sixties," promoting resource-intensive, energy-intensive, land-extensive, and in the long run *unsustainable* patterns of economic behavior, or Cornell can instead develop and promote new ways of solving the old problems of transportation, while addressing the new environmental needs our unthinking reliance on now-obsolete technologies have brought upon us. Cornell, as one of the greatest research institutions in the world, owes it not only to the public and the politicians who support us, but to its own great traditions of innovation and excellence, to look forward into the future, and design and implement systems which can deliver the

quality of life, convenience, and efficiency we desire, not only for ourselves but for the world and for posterity.

(1) Due to liability problems, CIT cannot offer a service which permits individuals to post freely to an official information service such as CUINFO; the Traffic Bureau seems to be the logical office to take responsibility for maintaining the bulletin board, which would require perhaps one FTE employee to oversee postings and manage publicity for the board.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders
Systems Programmer/Analyst III
CIT Network Systems Services

cc: Frank Rhodes
William D. Gurowitz
Stewart Lynn
David Newfield, Director, CIT Network Services
Dick Cogger, Asst. Director, CIT Network Services

The last time I spoke at a public meeting in Ithaca, about a year ago, I was condemning our transportation policy, as represented by the automobile-fixated schemes promoted to "fix the Octopus" and "enhance the flow of traffic in the West End." I not only argued that it was irrational and wasteful, but I also attempted (as well as I could within a three-minute limit) to connect that domestic transportation policy to its logical consequences of American foreign policy. Those consequences we see today in Kuwait.

The Middle East has a military history spanning back more than 8000 years; this is the birthplace of the military system of organizing armed conflict, this is where true armies were first raised, the first walled cities erected, the first empires established. Iraq is an heir to the militant traditions of Islamic Imperialism, and also the mantle of the Babylonians (who bested the early Jews in combat).

Hammurabi: 1750 B.C. king of Babylon (1792-50). That's about 3800 years ago. The Code of Hammurabi was among the first systems of law to be "graven in stone," establishing a regular system of rules for conduct, and also establishing punishments for breaking the rules. It was the Babylonians who first enslaved the people we know today as the Jews, some time before the Bible was written.

Today, this region of the world is largely impoverished. However, some sparsely-populated areas happen to contain huge quantities of oil. Oil which, over time, the British Empire, the Russian Soviet Empire, the US, Iran under the Ayatollah, and now the Iraqis, have attempted to control. Some of these powers have used the direct methods of war, others have used the indirect methods of assassination and domination by bribing the elite. Our government has used the indirect methods freely, as the Iran-Contra affair proves conclusively. In 1953 the CIA supervised the overthrow of a democratically-elected government in Iran which committed the unforgivable sin of nationalizing Iran's oil resources. Our CIA placed the Shah Reza Pahlevi on the Throne of Iran, governing as a monarch absolute in his powers and resolute and merciless in defending them against all opponents, sincere democrats included. (He also allowed the CIA and NSA to place facilities in Iran to eavesdrop on Soviet communications, particularly missile communications.)

We were doing pretty much the same thing the British did, making sure that rulers in the Middle East were on *our* payroll. After WWI, the British Empire, which already controlled Egypt, took over control of the oil-rich parts of the defeated Ottoman Empire of the Turks, including what would become Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and others, along with the less well-endowed regions that would become Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon. The people who were employed were among the most retrograde ideologically in the region, the most devoutly "conservative" Islamic hypocrites who claim that their nobility and superiority are established by divine judgment.

And so the country of George Washington, a bold challenge raised to the rights of monarchs everywhere, becomes the land of George Bush, friend and sustainer of Islamic monarchy. This country has sold its soul for the *convenience* of a highly mobile, petroleum-fueled economy. Cheap oil was and is absolutely crucial to sustaining the suburbanized model of life which American policy makers created through subsidization of highways and new housing in the suburbs. This policy was already in place before World War II; after the war, the car and the house in the suburbs were made icons of The American Way of Life, while the cities and railways were left to rot. The US government subsidized airways and "freeways," while regulating the once private-owned railroads into a condition of ruin.

The price of a gallon of gas doesn't include the cost of the blood that's already been shed to keep it cheap. Do you think it would be possible to calculate it, and add it on? How?

Sincerely,
Kevin Eric Saunders

721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Mar 12, 1991

Note: The Gulf War was all
about oil, & hence

Auto Mobility

KES 4/20/91

The Ithaca Journal
123 W. State St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Letter to the Editor of the Journal:

Neil Wallace asks (Feb. 25) whether American pilots who bombed civilians in Germany (during WWII) and Iraq are guilty of war crimes.

Anyone who participates in terrorist attacks aimed at civilians is a criminal. Sadly, the Allies planned and executed a number of explicitly terrorist bombing raids during WWII—most notably Nagasaki and Dresden. Under the Nuremberg Principles, those who planned and participated in these actions are guilty of “crimes against humanity.”

Obviously, the Allies concocted these “Principles” after WWII to punish the losers, *not* to punish *Allied* war crimes such as the Soviet invasions of Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States in 1939 and 1940. The bombing of Dresden was carefully calculated to turn a crowded city containing *no* military targets into a giant blast furnace. This was “classified information” until 1961; in 1945 the American public was told that *our* bombing was humane and strictly military—not like *their* bombing. Today we are again told that civilian casualties are being minimized; if you believe that power and water utilities are “military targets,” the planners and aircrew are Not Guilty.

But why should we focus on the people at the bottom of the chain of command? The pilots who “followed orders” on the losing side of WWII received no special punishment after the war. The harsh punishments were levied on those who *formulated* the orders.

Who has conducted a “war of international aggression” in the Gulf? Saddam Hussein, obviously, “with a little help from his friends,” who reinforced his rule, encouraged him to invade Iran in 1980, subsidized him and sold him weapons, including the leaders of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Red China, and the United States. If Saddam Hussein is a kind of human pit bull, I think the beast’s keepers should make some amends for feeding it, outfitting it with venomous steel teeth, and cheering as it exercised them on Persians, Kurds, and the USS Stark. *I think they owe us their resignations.*

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

June 3, 1992

Area Variance Appeal: 721 W. Court St.

The goal of the project is to add a private office/sound studio and a sunroom (covering 20' X 33') to an existing two-story single family residence, and also add a new shed on the property, owned and occupied by the applicants (Kevin Eric Saunders & Anne Marie Whelan, husband & wife, & their daughter Rachel Anne Whelan). The studio, which is not intended as a living area and which will not be usable as a separate apartment, shall be heavily soundproofed. (The construction would probably use concrete roofing material over concrete block walls, with acoustically-isolated rooms built inside this structure using insulated staggered-stud or metal-stud walls and a false ceiling; noise reduction should exceed 60 dB). The 700-block of Court Street is a mixed-use area, where long-term residents cohabit with semi-industrial facilities and group homes, so the planned use is compatible with existing uses in the area. The lot currently has two parking spaces, which will remain available.

5. Reasons for the Appeal for an Area Variance:

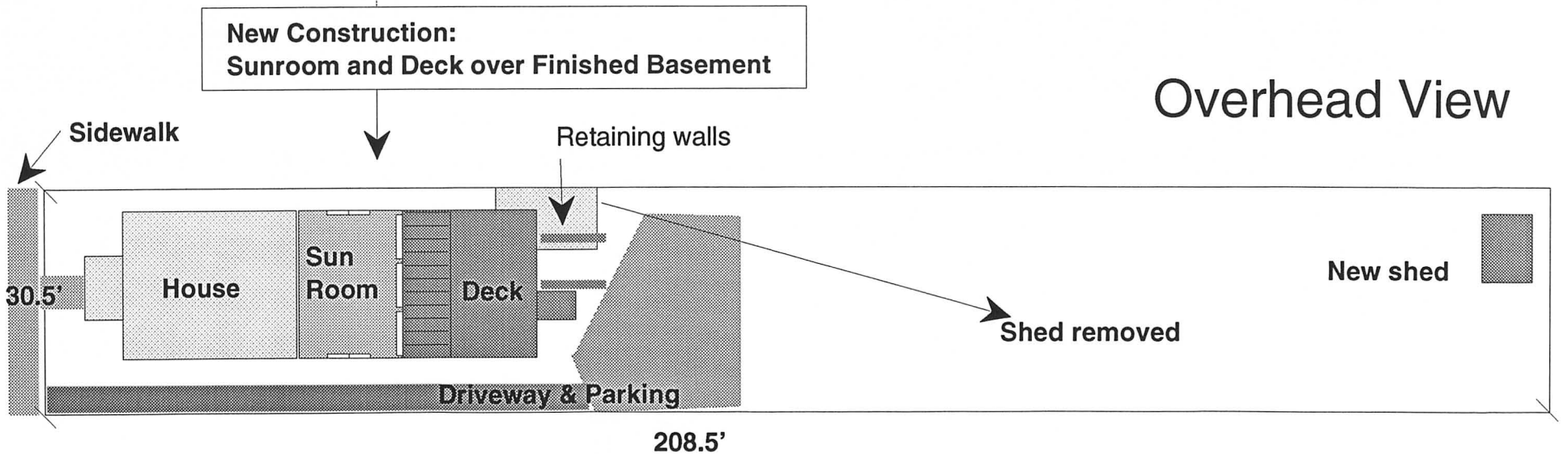
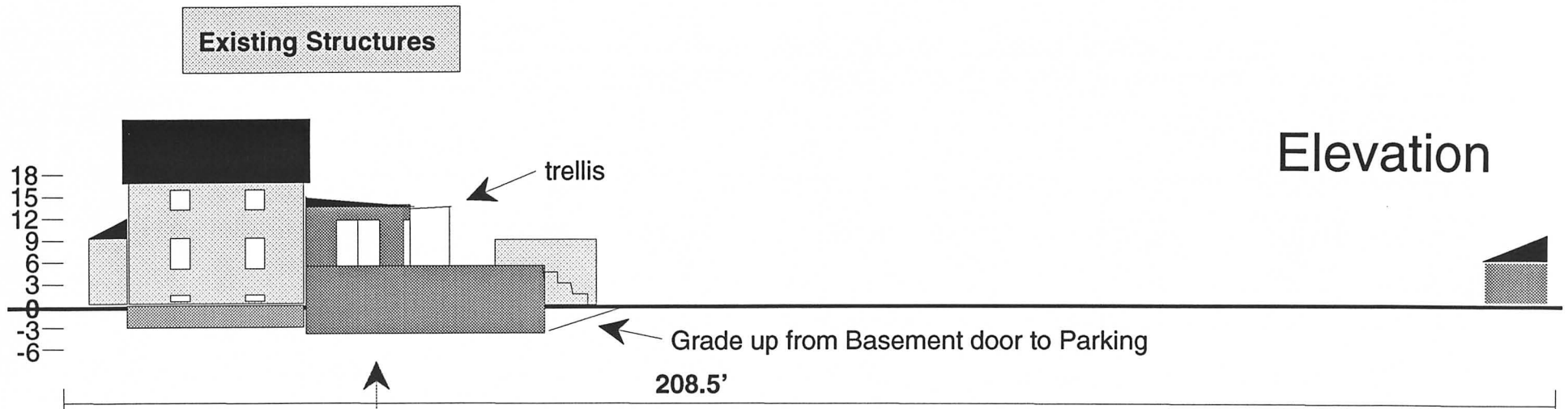
1) Practical difficulties are immediately apparent regarding construction within the strict limits of the code:

a) The lot width is less than the minimum allowed, even though the lot area is much larger than minimum required, and ample free space will remain on the lot after construction for parking, gardening, and other uses.

b) The existing residence already violates the offset requirement on the East side of the lot (3' vs. 5'); an addition of adequate size, which is readily accessible by stairway from the sunroom and which meets the special requirements for size and dimensions of sound studio space cannot be constructed within the 5' limit. Complying with the offset requirements would leave only 16' in width for construction, so that construction of equivalent floor area would extend more than 40' deep into the lot; conforming to this requirement also makes a design which covers the roof of the studio with a deck both impractical and unattractive. Also, if the construction extended further west, the driveway would be obstructed and the existing parking made unavailable.

2) I believe the requested variance represents a minor deviation from the area requirements imposed by the code, and that the construction is within the spirit of the code. The proposed construction will enhance the value of the existing property and surrounding residences. The sunroom will add much-needed living space to a rather small house, and adding the studio/office space will enable the occupants to work effectively at home, and at the same time will ensure that sound levels will comply with Ithaca's statutes.

Site Plan for Proposed Addition to 721 W. Court St., Ithaca, NY
Adding a 20' X 14' Sunroom and a 20' X 33' Finished Basement to A Single-Family Residence
 (Revision 1 of first proposal for Appeal 2125)



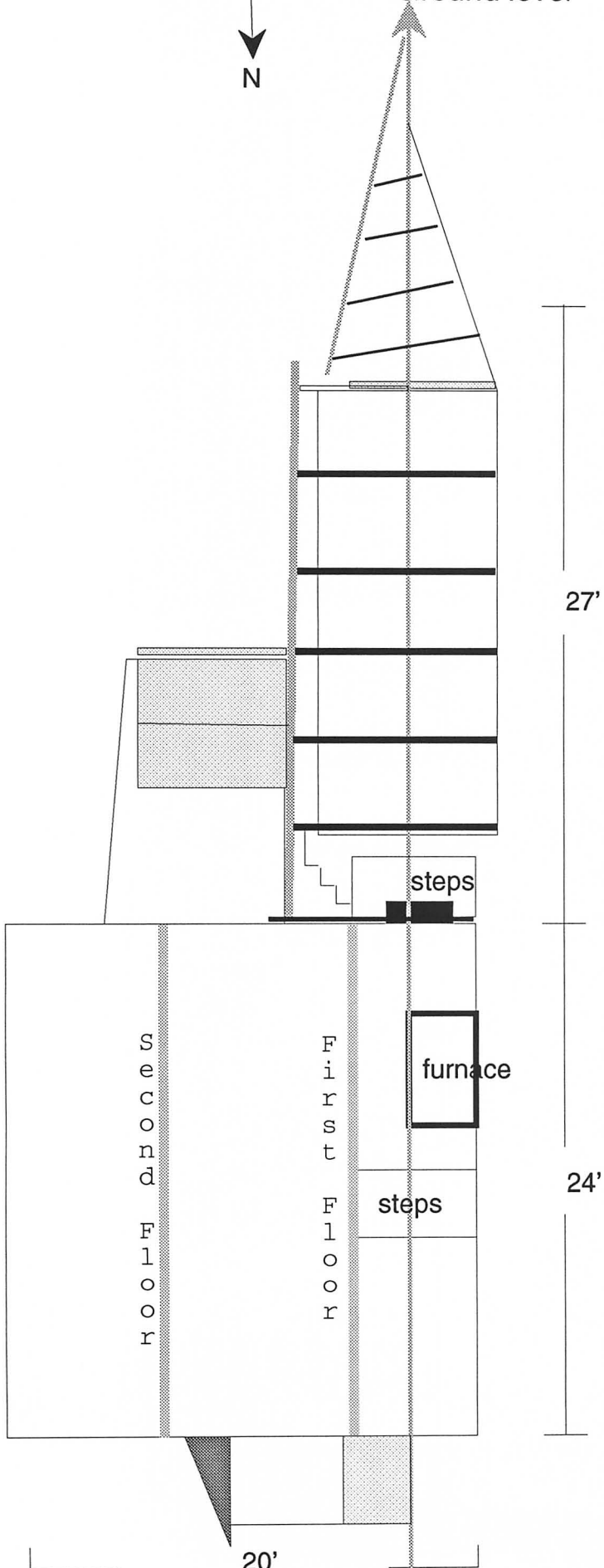
Zoned B-4

Scale 1" = 24'

Elevation



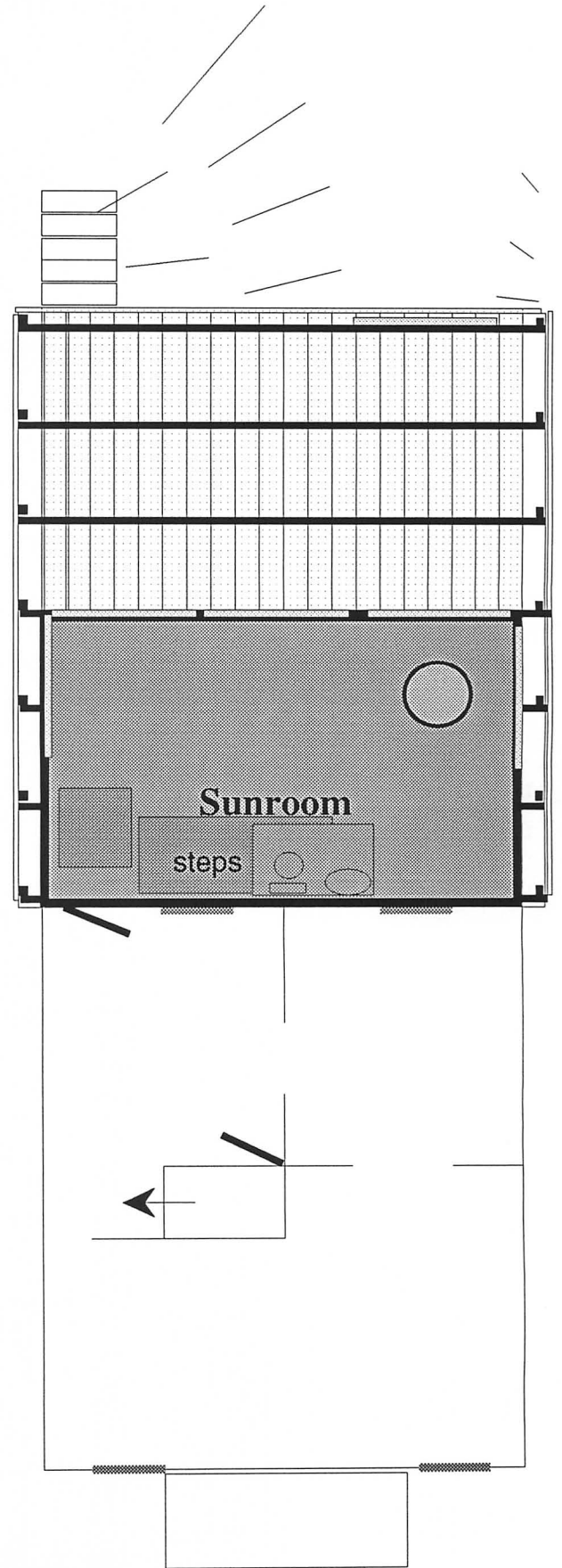
Ground level



First Floor

Sunroom/Deck

*Floats over Roof of Studio Basement
Sheathed*



March 9, 1989
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, New York 14850
607-273-6552

Dear Prof. Sagan,

By way of brief introduction, I'm a Systems Programmer in CIT Network Systems Services, where I do Macintosh programming (Cornell TN3270, for example). I mention this in order to establish that far from being an enemy of technological civilization, I am ardently in favor of "development" (especially software development!). I'm sending you the proposal I am placing before the Ithaca Common Council in the hope that you will publicly support this measure, which proposes a radically different approach to dealing with both our transportation and environmental problems.

I've researched the Route 96 issue fairly intensively ever since I became a "vested special interest" I i.e., since my wife and I purchased a \$40,000 home in Ithaca's ignored and underrated West End neighborhood. I started out with the attitude that Plan A was tolerable, even if it would eventually ruin our neighborhood as a residential area "hey, you can't stop progress," etc., etc., and after all it's quite possible that the value of our property would actually increase as a result of commercialization.

As I've learned more about the decisions that placed a new \$23M hospital on West Hill, 5 miles west of the center of Tompkins population, which is being used to justify a new Federally subsidized \$42M 4-lane with a 1/3 mile long overpass, I have become convinced that the whole project is one gigantic boondoggle intended to benefit real estate interests--including Cornell--who will profit from the development of West Hill. This occurs at the expense of taxpayers-at-large, those with medical emergencies, and those who live in the neighborhoods (Cliff St. & the West End) which will be ruined by ever-growing traffic volumes.

(In passing, I'll provide a little contrast and comparison on the magnitude of the expense involved: the New York Times of 3/7/89 reports that US corporations have lost interest in solar power technologies which are just now becoming cost-competitive with other power sources; they report that the Federal budget subsidy to solar power research was \$35M in 1988. These figures tell us something about how our government "thinks" and "plans" for our future--reducing traffic congestion on Ithaca's West End in the year 2010 is a vital concern, whereas developing technology to deliver clean electrical power comes in second. To characterize the burden placed on taxpayers by subsidies to highways, the WorldWatch Institute has cited figures placing the total government and corporate subsidies to automobiles at around \$2500/auto, which they claim would translate into a \$4.50/gallon gas tax if the costs were recovered through that means.)

The King & King report released in January 1973 by the hospital's own Long-Range Planning Committee conclusively demonstrates that safety was the last thing on their minds; they even neglected to mention the train as an

obstacle to access! The analysis County Planner Frank Liquori presented to the Tompkins Board of Reps indicated that "the results showed a slight edge of the site at Cayuga Heights Road and Route 13 with existing access to the present hospital site. If Route 96 were to be improved, the evaluation indicated strongly in favor of that site." In other words, when the Reps split down Town lines in the vote taken Oct. 15, 1973 (Dryden/Groton/Lansing Reps & 1 city Rep against, others pro) on the location of the hospital, the majority was in effect taking a hostage--a hostage which could only be restored to the community through the construction of a new highway.

Interestingly enough, on November 19, 1973, the Board of Reps voted to construct an ADDITION to the hospital, rather than the whole new facility which was eventually constructed. This vote was rescinded a year later, after the death of the Chairman Samuel Graves (Republican, City of Ithaca). At the November 26 meeting Chairman Graves made a statement which denounced the "strong-arm methods used on members of this board and other members of the medical profession" in order to get the Reps to approve a new \$26M facility rather than a surgical addition. As we can see from the letters in the Journal, the strong-arm tactics persist. (I've personally been victimized by Dr. Weiner and Vernon Gambrell--of Santa fame--who used Cable 13 to air a weirdly distorted image of a Coalition for Improved Roads meeting I attended. Just one more reason I'm not inclined to be liberal with the Health Honchos and Commuter-Welfare activists on this issue.)

Personally I happen to agree with the shocked comments made after the Iran-Contra affair, that as a matter of policy one should never accede to the demands of hostage-takers; this only encourages them to make further demands. This is a textbook case of the politicization of transportation, city, and health planning, in which major decisions on PUBLIC investment have been made with an eye to PRIVATE profit. To give in and construct an Overpass on the strength of "public health and safety" arguments made by the very same bad actors who put the hospital in the wrong location is exactly the same as paying a \$42,000,000 ransom to kidnapers who threaten your loved one's lives.

And so, because of the facts I've explained above--and because of the values I hold--I have put forward the resolution I'm now asking you to support. To put my proposal in a larger perspective, cities all across the United States are now facing exactly the same kind of traffic crisis, and are getting the same "solution" from the DOT and the vast, dedicated coffers of the Highway Trust Fund. I'm convinced that the best approach to dealing with the emerging ecological crisis is to put the energies of the free market to work on the problem through two means: 1) charge users of highways, water, US Forest Service forestry support activities, canal and waterway users, and other beneficiaries of US and State government largesse the true and full cost of the services provided; and 2) create "pollution rights" to allow limited production of effluents at levels which are compatible with survival of a rich planetary ecology, which should then be sold (on a global level, presumably through the agency of the UN) to the highest bidder.

Proposals such as the 40-MPG floor for new autos, which adopt the casuistic approach to dealing with environmental problems--"a regulation here, a regulation there, and all will be better"--will fail to accomplish the systematic reorientation of our economy from one founded on waste justified by

vulgar-Keynesian principles (roughly expressed, "let's subsidize some truly colossal public works projects and hope that the rising tide of dollars eventually lifts everyone above subsistence") to one based on economic efficiency, sustainability, and a consideration for human welfare. We must focus our efforts above and beyond this constricting "good jobs at good wages" model which has governed liberal efforts at helping the poor. We must adopt instead a social welfare model in which each and every human being on the planet is regarded as deserving of subsistence, regardless of race, creed, color, or happenstance of national origin.

In as many words, we must adopt a policy providing for a Global Minimum Income. Of course, limits on human reproduction must be part and parcel of this policy. But just as clearly, the developed countries cannot expect the LDC's to surrender their rights to burn their coal or rape their rainforest without some "quid pro quo": this, a global minimal-welfare state based on the free-market principles of open access to all markets; for that, your sovereign right to despoil the global environment as your leaders see fit.

Of course, as you already know, this "welfare reform" must go hand in hand with aggressive measures to reduce the incredible waste of resources devoted to "national security," a concept which appears increasingly dated and hopelessly parochial as we come to realize that modern technology will soon permit "terror states" to attempt to dictate their terms to a world trembling in fear at their nuclear, chemical, or bacteriological Doomsday Engine. We must turn from our obsessions with our national sovereignty, which has not been threatened since the War of 1812, to deal with the emerging problem of Global Security. (In this vein, Edward Teller's recasting of the Strategic Defense Initiative as an "Errant Asteroid Defense System" is relevant--especially in view of the evidence supporting a meteoroid impact as the cause of the demise of the dinosaurs. Perhaps with a few bones such as this, the Military/Industrial/Academic complex President Eisenhower so brilliantly limned can be induced to switch, rather than fight, and support measures to secure the global future.)

To sum up my perspective, I believe that the only way to preserve the future as a habitable possibility is to enforce policies which ensure that individuals bear the responsibility and the costs for their decisions, whether as consumers, employees, or officials. Our government and corporations have pursued policies to the opposite effect: we practice the dilution of responsibility through corporate committee-mongering and abuse of "the corporate veil," which allows corporations the privileges of individuals without corresponding responsibilities; the exemption from responsibility when the government deems national security interests to be at stake; and the bureaucratization of responsibility when liability laws put third parties at risk for the irresponsible behavior of others. (A salient and disgusting example of these tendencies is our denial of the right of an 18-to-20-year-old serviceman or woman, whom we allow and indeed encourage to risk life and limb daily for our country, to drink a beer when at home on leave with family because some irresponsible suburban punks tend to get drunk and drive like maniacs. Whups! Seems like I've hit one of my own "hot buttons" here!)

Only by returning to a social code of individual responsibility and reforming government policies so that they hold individuals, even powerful

individuals, indeed even wealthy stockholding "absentee owners," responsible for the consequences of their actions, can we preserve our precious individual liberties while preserving our environment. It matters not whether the awful consequences we suffer are Love Canal-style toxic waste disasters, the asbestos poisoning of construction workers, defective weaponry, hazardous releases of radioactive material from secret "defense plants," or even the destruction of industry through stock market speculation and "greenmail," the one reliable solution to correcting these problems is to discover the individuals responsible, and hold them accountable by the exact same standards we apply to pimps and bank robbers--showing mercy where incompetence is responsible, but giving no quarter where bad motives are at work. Only through ensuring individual accountability can we attack the root of these problems; only by applying the principles of Glasnost to our own corrupt, "black" (secret) defense and "black" (asphalt) transportation bureaucracies can we start to reclaim the liberties for which our ancestors fought and died: the right to choose our own way of life for our families, to freely choose which goods we will and won't purchase, while taking responsibility for our own actions and earning through our own efforts the money required for needs and desires beyond the bare minima of life.

I hope that you will join me in supporting this resolution, which takes the minor and purely local but nevertheless significant step of rejecting wasteful Federal subsidies for "development" in our community, and enjoining the State and Federal governments to turn their efforts towards their proper function of ensuring the future security, health, and welfare of the citizenry. I myself do freely pledge my life, my fortune, and my sacred honor to this cause.

Yours Truly,
From a fellow Philosopher,

Kevin Eric Saunders

PS: I wrote and printed this letter using a Macintosh program (a text editor/communications program) which I myself designed and developed. So I suppose I too am a developer! Maybe as a "developer" I can avoid the "activist" label the press sticks on anyone seeking political reform!

March 23, 1989
721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Senator Albert Gore, Jr.

Dear Senator Gore,

I was impressed by your article in the New York Times, "An Ecological Kristallnacht. Listen." I share your sense of urgency about the issues raised by environmental degradation, and I'm gladdened to see that awareness about the issues reaches into the Senate.

I'd like to share with you some of my own work on this subject, recent and not-so-recent. I've enclosed a resolution I recently placed before our City's governing body, encouraging them to reject a pork-barrel "transportation" project, one with a sleazy history--the primary argument for the 1/3-mile long overpass is a hospital that was mislocated by the county government, 5 miles from the center of population of this rural area. (On the reverse is a copy of a paper I wrote at the age of sixteen, which gained me admittance to a Telluride Association Summer Program on "Public Policy and the Environment," leading me through circuitous paths to settle in Ithaca as a Macintosh Systems Programmer for Network Systems Services at Cornell. How curious life can be!)

As you will see from the resolution and the paper, I have a different perspective on environmental and transportation matters. I'd like to suggest to you that the proposal now mooted, to mitigate the automobile's contribution to the greenhouse effect by mandating higher MPG standards, will in the long run prove to be ineffective. This transportation system, in conjunction with discriminatory zoning and housing codes, leads to ever-increasing commute distances; thus, despite the increased auto efficiency and the reduced per-mile auto emissions achieved over the past ten years, pollution in urban areas continues to worsen (Times, ???). What has occurred, and what is proposed, is a technical optimization of the minor details of a system that can never work well as a mass-transit system.

I suggest, instead, that the most efficient path to both a sound economy and a healthy ecology is to identify the costs, and to charge them as directly as possible, so that consumers can make the decision themselves as to whether the cost is worth the benefits. I think that this approach of (1) requiring socialized portions of the economy (highways, canals, national forestry, garbage disposal, sewers, etc.) to charge true costs to users, and (2) charging effluent fees on pollutants, as near the source as possible (e.g., the coal mine, the oil well, the chemical plant), based on estimates of damage the pollutant causes to the environment. The approach of fixing the amount of effluents and then allowing bidding has great merit for particularly dangerous, yet technologically very important, pollutants such as the CFCs. (Although in the case of the CFCs, it is true that an outright ban is probably for the best in the long run.)

Although as a failed economics graduate student (3 months, if I may brag) I

am the first to concede that the determination of these costs will be difficult, and to a great extent arbitrary, this approach can correct dangerous tendencies in the economy without the necessity of creating huge volumes of regulations, enforced by underfunded and undermotivated bureaucrats. Instead, particularly if the regulators see a proportion of the fees "kicked back" to their bureau for enforcement costs, the bureaucrats will have the motivation of increasing revenues as effluent fees are increased--a scary prospect, perhaps, but not so frightening as Universal Devastation.

At any rate, I greatly appreciate your leadership on environmental affairs, and in the technological field (particularly the national network!). You have my best wishes in your endeavors--including what looks to me like a very promising lead on the crucial issues of the 90's over any of the other Democrats who might seek the nomination in 1992! Of course, as a transplanted Arkansan I may just be tad prejudiced in favor of a Tennessean fellow....

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

P.S.: I just hate to leave off without a touch of acrimony to prove I ain't a bootlicker, so here 'tis: as the founding lead guitarist of the Angry Samoans, perhaps the most purposefully vulgar and alienated "punk" band in all of rock and roll, I really do wish your wife would close down her PMRC act and devote her energies to a more worthy cause. I suppose this plays well in some parts, but it completely turned me off to your candidacy in 1988. Please heed my words: attempts at regulating rock and roll, just like attempts at outlawing drugs, will only lead to more abuse.

I believe that in many cases heavy metal, hardcore punk, etc., allow alienated youths to vent anger that might be expressed in less desirable forms otherwise, although I will concede that it might encourage others to undesirable behavior. The Angry Samoans, by the way, is my brother's band; an accountant by day, a punk rocker by night, I think he's quite a good role model for an intelligent-but-alienated youth. In my current band, Auld l'Anxiety, even though we're generally serious and, betimes, indisputably, melodically, musical, we perform some ironic heavy metal/thrash material which would run afoul of a literal-minded censor.

Certainly there is too much utter trash out there, and it's shameful that one can grow rich by spouting Satanist sentiments to cliched riffs, but the worst musical crime I can imagine is an insincere love song; the worst media crimes are those committed on TV, where the average cop shoots more bullets in one show than a real cop shoots in a career. If people truly want to cut down on violent crime, they shouldn't ban assault rifles or handguns, but instead work to curb the violent imagery and routine mayhem that comprises the bulk of video productions these days. Modern horror movies are an abomination--why not focus on this graphic violence, which clearly inspires emulation, instead of the filtered, diluted stuff you might get from a rock band? Even rock videos are nowadays pretty mild stuff....

"When you have to kill a man it costs nothing to be polite."

(On the ceremonial form of the declaration of war against Japan, 8 Dec. 1941.)

"To jaw-jaw is better than to war-war."

– *Winston Churchill*

HERE WE STAND.

A declaration addressed to George Bush, the President of the United States, his Vice-President J. Danforth Quayle, and the Five Hundred and Thirty-Five "Representatives" and "Senators" in Congress: who claim the right to dispose of our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor:

We write to you in order to establish our opposition to the War Policy you and your colleagues pursue, and to condemn you for failing to discharge the *sworn duties* you are obligated to perform under the Constitution. We write to fulfill our obligation to oppose wars of aggression waged by our own government—an obligation imposed on us by the Nuremberg Principles, proclaimed by the United States Government itself as universally valid and binding upon all people of all nationalities, and imposed *ex post facto* upon German and Japanese citizens after the Allied victory in World War Two.

The roots of the present Constitutional crisis.

The history of our government's abandonment of Constitutional legality in pursuing both foreign *and* domestic policy follows a long and torturous path. It is only recently that secret deals, secret budgets, and policies based on ideals which are both thoroughly un-American and *anti*-democratic has lead to what can only be called a crisis of Constitutional authority: a crisis which takes place not in the streets, but in the minds of American citizens. Abundant evidence is available to support the belief that America is no longer governed by the open, democratic methods prescribed by the Constitution, in which elected Representatives agree on laws which are then administered by the President under the scrutiny of the courts. Instead the President and a small group of advisors (including a carefully selected few among our "Representatives" who may or *may not* be "consulted") decide upon policies in secret, implement them as they will, and reveal them to the American people at a time that suits them. It has become increasingly *impossible* to resolve the contradictions between our government's Constitutional basis

and its policies. *This crisis has profound implications for the future of America. Will faith in democratic government survive the cynicism of those who now wield power in American government?*

You know that, in 1986, an aircraft crewed by American citizens was shot down deep inside the territory of the Central American country of Nicaragua. It was shot down in the act of supplying weapons to the *contra* movement, which was rebelling against the democratically elected government of Nicaragua. *One crew member, Eugene Hasenfus, survived.* And then the revelations began to seep out from the "secret" cesspools of our government... How American weaponry, including advanced anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, was sold to Iran—secretly, while the Reagan-Bush administration proclaimed publicly that "we will make no deals with terrorists," and was indirectly supporting Iraq in its war on Iran... How the profits from this arms sale were diverted from the U.S. treasury and used for funding "an off-the-shelf covert action capability" to be employed secretly by the President without *any* notification *whatsoever* to *any* of those persons who have been elected to represent the American people in Congress. Every scruple of Constitutional government was abandoned by the Reagan-Bush government, in its lust to prosecute an illegal, undeclared, supposedly covert war against the Socialist government of Nicaragua.

Now, thanks to *your* failure to press for the impeachment of Ronald Reagan and *your* cooperation in concealing both the character and the extent of the un-Constitutional, un-American activities undertaken by the Reagan-Bush administration, George Bush sits in the White House as the President of the United States. Even though the United Nations is for once actually *united* in a policy which calls for a blockade against Iraq which will eventually, and inevitably, *starve Iraq into submission*, George Bush, the President, *professional politician*, and *spymaster*, who according to sworn testimony to a Federal Court was present when a deal was made with the Iranian government of the Ayatollah Khomeini to engage in a treasonous exchange of American weapons for American hostages *in order to rig the 1980 Presidential election*, is preparing to wage yet another illegal war—this time against Iraq, which we had supported openly throughout the Iran-Iraq war.

Cui bono? "To whose good?"

It's not for the American people, who are called to lay down their lives and prosperity to defend the rights of tyrants, *dictators*, whom our foreign policy bureaucrats and media *savants* are pleased to call "monarchs." Why should we defend the "conservative" Islamic government of Saudi Arabia? Why should we sacrifice American lives, a balanced budget, and the health of the U.S. economy to keep cheap oil flowing to Japan? It seems we're defending everything except common sense.

The truth is that Saddam Hussein is not even an outstanding tyrant. He is merely an exceptional student of American foreign policy. How could he fail to note our weaknesses...

->That no legal basis has been provided for continued presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. War has not been declared by the United States Congress against Iraq, although Congress has had both ample time available and legitimate grievances (based on the taking of hostages) to prompt a war against Iraq; nor has the War Powers Act been invoked, which would allow Congress to either *approve* troop deployments in Saudi Arabia and legally sanction this use of the President's power as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, or *demand* their prompt withdrawal;

-> That U.S. foreign policy is founded on the misguided notion that "the enemy of our worst enemy is a great friend." Even now the Bush government makes secret deals with the Syrian government of Hafez Assad, the butcher of Hama, the chief supporter of world terrorism, in our Great Crusade—just as it made secret deals with both Hussein *and* the Ayatollah during the Iran-Iraq War, and just as it made deals with Noriega when he was on the payroll of the CIA. Hussein knows, *probably better than we do*, just how disastrous all these deals have been for long-run interests of the United States and its citizens.

->That a Great Divide exists between the nobility of the Bush government's endless proclamations on human rights, and its employment and toleration of the most vile methods, including torture, terrorism, and military aggression, in guaranteeing that our "national interests" are "secured;"

->A policy of tolerance toward Iraqi crimes, in particular, our government's reaction to the *Iraqi* attack upon the *USS Stark*: *outrage!* directed at... the *Iranians*? Who, after all, were *defending* themselves from just the kind of "naked aggression" by Iraq which the Bush-Quayle government now *confronts* rather than *ignores*, when it is directed against our "friends" the Kuwaitis—who helped finance the Iraqi war with Iran when it turned sour and unprofitable for Hussein? Recall that the primary war aim proclaimed by the Ayatollah and the Iranian government in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988 was *the deposition of the tyrant and aggressor Saddam Hussein!*

->And finally, that just prior to the invasion of Kuwait *our Ambassador April Glaspie* assured him our government had "no position" on the border dispute, even informing him that *our government was jealous of his freedom from antagonistic media reports? Why did the Bush-Quayle government give Hussein the green light? Could it be that in reality the invasion of Kuwait is a gigantic double-cross, played upon the American people?*

It sounds unbelievable. Like the Iran-Contra deal, supporting an *utterly* illegal covert war against Nicaragua by providing the Ayatollah's anti-Hussein crusade with weapons. Like the "*legal*" covert wars waged by the President with the fig leaf of secret Congressional approval in Afghanistan, Angola,

Yes, Saddam Hussein is a vicious, inhuman beast, indifferent to the sufferings of his own people, who has slain those who dissent from his policies with his own hand. But for a time, he was a *good* beast, a *useful* beast: he ordered the invasion of our Iranian enemy, and killed them by the hundreds of thousands. That was *good*: *our* government

did not care had we about the sufferings of Iranians, who had a *really intolerable* ruler, the Ayatollah Khomeini.

But now Saddam Hussein is a *bad* beast: he has caused the invasion of a country with whose rulers *our* rulers are on good terms! Suddenly, a cry goes up: "*Egads! We must unleash the dogs of war against this—barbarian! Let a million Iraqis perish, to avenge this crime of Saddam Hussein!*" (Doesn't it seem as if... the *intolerable ruler* is one who insults *our rulers*... for instance, *Manuel Noriega*, whose *misbehavior* "justified" *our* invasion of Panama, and the *deaths and mutilation* of hundreds of innocent Panamanian civilians, along with the deaths of American soldiers who gave their lives in what our military propagandists named "Operation *Just Cause*." We invaded because he did not meekly surrender to our government to face hyped-up drug charges, on which we will *not* give him a fair trial!)

These policies of the U.S. government, which hold that our President may invade any country, at any time, for any cause, are *madness*, induced by the *pride and vainglory* of our rulers. As we head toward war with Iraq, with our economy staggering beneath a decade of malinvestments sponsored by Congress, with class resentments once again discernible after a mammoth redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, organized by a ruling class which (as Lester Thurow has pointed out) gave up governing for the sake of looting, we are really set to *lose big*.

Anyone who believes this war will last a week or two is a fool, ignorant of history, and deserves nothing but our contempt! Before so many wars, hawks have proclaimed that swift victory is inevitable: It was so before the Civil War; before World War I; before World War II; and indeed, before the Vietnam War, all of which were tidily scheduled so the troops would be home by Christmas.

War with Iraq has the potential to join the entire Middle East, indeed North Africa, into a *renewed* union of orthodox Arab Muslims *joined against the the Western world*. Iraq can lure Israel into a war with but *one* attack using chemical weapons. Once Israel is joined to this war upon an Arab nation, how long will impoverished Arabs in Egypt, Syria, and indeed *all* the Muslim countries around the world, stick with the Bush-Quayle government? How long will *their* governments endure if the average citizen of their countries believe that they are siding with George Bush, once-chief of the CIA, and *against* them? And, most perturbing of all, if they see the end in sight, will the Iraqi or Israeli governments unleash their weapons of mass destruction, which almost certainly include biotoxins developed for germ-warfare, capable of wreaking havoc world-wide?

And further, war will endanger the civil peace of the United States: if we have *yet another undeclared war*, do you believe that Americans will all join together in applause as American blood is shed on Arabian sands to defend our "friends" the House of Saud, whom the British anointed as rulers of Arabia? Whose goal has been "spread of fundamentalist Islam???" (*Strategic Atlas*) Men who keep more than one wife, even as they ban *Playboy* and forbid consumption (on pain of death!) of that *beer*? Anyone who believes this is *drunk—with power*.

We swear that if there is a war against Iraq we will withhold all tax payments due on my income from the Federal Government. Further, that in the event of an undeclared war, we will ??????

We have tolerated our government's participation in the oppression of Central America, in covert wars in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and its attacks over the past decade on our Constitutionally-guaranteed rights to privacy, freedom of speech and the security of our property from seizure without due process. *We will not sit by while our own blood-stained government invades Iraq for the sake of the "freedom" of fundamentalist Islamic monarchs and cheap oil. And we swear that we will do our best to move others to resist it also.*

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

king \ 'kin\ n

1a: a male monarch of a major territorial unit; esp: one whose position is hereditary and who rules for life

b: a paramount chief

2 cap: GOD, CHRIST

A few factors which disqualify the U.S. government as a judge of the morality of foreign government policies:

1945-53, 54-73, Indochina: First we help the French in a futile attempt to preserve their colonial empire, spurning requests from Ho Chi Minh to allow Vietnam to become a US protectorate "like the Phillippines." Eventually, achieving "Peace with Honor" (with Ho's government) in Vietnam requires CIA control of the South Vietnamese government, the saturation bombing of South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and (covertly and illegally) Cambodia and Laos, and a massive land expedition requiring a draft. Both conventional and chemical weapons are used extensively with utter disregard for civilian casualties. President Richard Nixon threatens to use the bomb in order to force North Vietnam to sign a "peace treaty."

1953, Iran (Persia): The USCIA arranges the overthrow of democratically-elected President Mossadegh and replaces democracy with the monarchy of Shah Reza Pahlevi, a self-proclaimed descendant of Alexander (Greek conqueror who ruled the known world, including Persia, in the 3rd century B.C.). The Iranian government led by Mossadegh had nationalized the oil industry; so the USCIA fixed that by crushing democracy.

1972, Chile: The USCIA assists in overthrowing an incompetent left-wing (but democratically elected and mostly humane) Marxist government and replacing it with an incompetent right-wing government ruled by a military despot, General Pinochet. (Why does US policy always seem to support miniature re-incarnations of Napoleon Bonaparte?)

1975-present, East Timor: The (Muslim) Indonesian government invades (Catholic) Timor, eventually killing about 10% of the population. The US government prevents the UN from pursuing sanctions against the Indonesian government.

1979-present, Nicaragua: In order to maintain US control of Central America, the US sponsors the *Contra* "Freedom Fighters," who are attempting to overthrow the more-or-less legitimate (albeit socialist) government of Nicaragua. Disdaining international law in the form of World Court decisions, the US government of Ronald Reagan finances a bloody, bitter civil war, eventually shredding the US Constitution in its lust to punish Marxists abroad.

Now George Bush, Jim Baker, and the other incumbents of the Reagan regime--these same people--who apparently believe the "original intent" of the writers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution was to make the President an elected King--are still running the executive branch of the US federal government, and are still defending their right to conduct foreign policy on an *ad hoc* basis.

War in the Gulf: A hot place, not such a hot idea.

Oil War. The rules for this wargame, a simulation of conflict in the Gulf Area offering many scenarios for conflicts involving US intervention (US with and without Israeli support against all the governments of the region, US against Iran, US with and without re-supply and transit through Europe). The game runs over a two-week period, because, we are told by the game's designers (who have done a lot of simulation work for the Pentagon, by the way) any oil fields we do not physically control within two weeks will probably have been destroyed.

We're worried about an Iraqi bomb. We should be worried about the possible Pakistani bomb, about the Israeli bombs (more than 100, along with a proven ability to deliver conventional weapons air-express to Tunis, over 1000 miles from Israel. The Israelis can of course deliver these nuclear warheads onto American soil, using somewhat less spectacular means of transport than an F-15....) We should be worried, especially, about the tens of thousands of warheads possessed by the rapidly-collapsing Bolshevik "government" of the Soviet Union (about 50 million of the USSR's 265 million people are Muslims living adjacent to the Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan; only 50 million are Slavic (Russians); the Russians conquered the Muslim provinces during the 19th century, "often in the face of fierce resistance," some of it from the British, who also wanted to

rule the Eastern world).

Ah, the British. How their imperial ambitions have screwed the world up. After WWI, the French and British partitioned the areas taken from the defunct Ottoman Empire (ruled by the Turks). "Divide and rule" is the principle, and the divisions are calculated very precisely to help a few "friends" and keep the masses at bay. The Kurds, for example, are split between Syria, Turkey (our NATO ally, which disavows the presence of any Kurds on its territory; the Kurdish language is outlawed), Iraq (poison gas in 1987?), and Iran (from which CIA-sponsored Kurds launched attacks on Iraq). After WWII, the French and British empires kept themselves busy collapsing, employing brutal techniques to attempt to hold on to their colonial empires.

To quote at some length the *Strategic Atlas* (Gerard Chaliand and Jean-Pierre Rageau):

"The rivalry between Iraq and Iran (which for a long time supported Iraqi Kurds fighting the central government) was fueled by concessions Iraq was obliged to make to Iran in 1975 (the Algiers agreements) leading to withdrawal of Iran's support for the Kurds, and their eventual collapse. These concessions involved problems of sovereignty in the Shatt-al-Arab and the Iraqi claim to the ethnically Arab [as opposed to Persian] province of Khuzistan...

"Hussein took advantage of the disorder created by the revolutionary process in Iran and sought, by invading Iran, to make Iraq the leading regional power in the Middle East... Although the Iraqi people were not very enthusiastic about this military adventure, the majority, who are Shiite [ruled by Sunni Muslims] ignored the calls to revolt issued by Ayatollah Khomeini...

"The Baath party's organization (some 400,000 members) [which Hussein uses to rule Iraq] appears likely to hold up, while external assistance (from France and the Arab countries including Saudi Arabia) is assured.

"No state (except Syria and Israel) wants the collapse of the Iraqi regime and a change in the balance in Iran's favor. Whatever the outcome, the economic consequences of the conflict, not to mention the human losses, have been heavy for both countries."

There's a story related in Herodotus' *Persian Wars* about a siege of Babylon (which was located, by the way, in Central Iraq) conducted some centuries before the birth of Jesus.

The besiegers of Babylon were shocked when one of the Babylonian nobility arrived with his nose and ears cut off. He swore that he would lead the besiegers against his former rulers in order to attain vengeance. After several successful small attacks, he gained their confidence, and was allowed to command a full-scale assault-which resulted in the slaughter of the attacking force, when he led them into the trap that had been arranged before this noble *himself* had conceived the plan and insisted on doing the job *himself*.

Now isn't that *subtle*? And that was 2000 years ago!

721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Feb 1, 1991

The Ithaca Journal
123 W. State St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Letter to the Editor:

The Journal should drop DeWayne Wickham's column—*permanently*.

Wickham's analogy in his column (Feb. 1) between the Baltic States and the Confederate States of America is partially correct: Gorbachev, like Lincoln, is willing to plunge his country into civil war to preserve his state's Great Power status; he is willing to suppress civil liberties, pit neighbor against neighbor, and risk ruin for the sake of the principle of State Power.

But only a moral idiot would equate the two cases: the Southern States *voluntarily* joined in a Free Union, which was of great benefit to their (white, male, voting) citizens; the Baltic States were *forcibly incorporated* into one of the most awful terror states of modern history, the Soviet Union under the rule of the dictator Joseph Stalin. Note that Wickham's argument is idiotic on its face: Poland, no less than the Baltic states, was traditionally subject to Russian rule,

and the existence of an "independent" Polish state after WWII was a matter of formality only: if Poland should be free, so should the Baltics.

It is sadly symbolic of the perversion of reason to the purposes of ideology that anyone now raises the argument that Baltic States deserve the fate of the Confederacy. If it were not for the fact that American opinion is being mobilized to support our disastrous intervention in the Gulf, requiring moral justification for the "Coalition" George IV has patched together by bribing a set of totalitarian governments, such ludicrous mental mis-haps would receive the scorn they deserve.

The truth is that nationalist ideologies and the States which represent them, American, Lithuanian, Russian, Kuwaiti, Iraqi, Israeli, and others, are leading the world into a condition of chaos and violence which will be disastrous for the entire planet. Wickham and the like, who would subordinate *individual* freedom to some kind of state apparatus, all deserve to inherit one of the hotter rings of the regions of Hell; for, contrary to their preaching, *no* state should be allowed to dispose of human beings as slaves

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

721 West Court Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
Fri Apr 12 1991

The Atlantic
745 Boylston St.
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Editors:

Thanks are due to the editors of the Atlantic both for publishing "The Economics of Legalizing Drugs" and for deconstructing Charles Rangel's forth-issuing anti-drug homily *in situ*: indeed, the holes in Rangel's arguments are big enough to "drive a Wild Turkey through." Although the letter was probably prepared for Rangel's signature by a staffer, in accordance with the ethic of intellectual counterfeiting which has infected our body politic, he did sign it, and should be held accountable for its incoherent contents...

In "his" letter Rangel amply demonstrates his taste for the grandiose generalization at the expense of reality, a failing widespread among the Drug Warriors. He claims that marijuana was "more or less legal in small doses" during the Sixties—for political conformists and their offspring it was "more legal," perhaps, but others could be

subjected to life imprisonment, depending on the whim of the legal authorities! He baldly claims that "it is spurious... to make physiological comparisons between alcohol and illicit drugs" –to wit, when scientific knowledge collides with the law, science must yield!

To make it unmistakably clear that he is "innumerate" and that his scenarios spring from the realm of bad science fiction, he claims that if drugs were legalized "the number of addicts would not stop at some magical plateau but would increase exponentially"– leaving us to conclude that the ranks of the addicted would swell to encompass, and quickly surpass, the population of the whole world! "We know from experience that drug use is contagious. Unrestricted access to drugs would inestimably expand drug use"–but *somehow* the use of tobacco, perhaps the most addictive substance *known to science* and still *readily* available, has *declined* even though the American government is subsidizing its production to the tune of \$800,000,000 (Common Cause, March/April '91). Ah, facts facts–who needs them, when you've got a simply *splendid* ideology?

If Rangel wants to set an example for the youth of America, he should start by cleaning up his rhetoric: he should henceforth eschew *ad hominem* attacks on the morality of those who disagree with him, stick scrupulously to fact and logic, and

concede error when he is demonstrated to be in the wrong. *It is his example* that undermines our faith in the law by demonstrating that the authorities in charge of our drug laws are loud, obnoxious, hypocritical boobs, who are insensible to rational arguments *which take their own premises seriously*, and become *vindictive* when we do not defer to their favorite argumentative tactic—the argument from authority. America today abides uneasily under a new McCarthyism, whose victims dare not protest for fear of vengeance by the authorities: users of illegal drugs risk the loss of their property and livelihood, and perhaps even their lives, if they defend their habits publicly. *Charles Rangel, have you no shame?*

Rangel, Ronald Reagan, and the Nicorette-chewing nicotine addict William Bennet have demonstrated to my satisfaction that the anti-drug crusade is insincere; protecting the health and "morality" of Americans is not its goal, since pursuing that *utopian* "moral goal" would require a *uniform* ban on *all* "mind-altering substances." Instead, their real goal is to find convenient scapegoats to distract Americans from *genuine* threats to their freedom and prosperity... such as the incompetence and venality of our government, which has delivered its citizens an *imploding* banking system, an *exploding* space program, chronic deficits, stagflation (once again!), a "justice system" corrupted by

bribery and brutality, and a run of Pyrrhic wars, overt and covert, at home and abroad.

Simultaneously, they would *empower* our wrong-doing government, enhancing its police powers at the expense of our Constitutional rights to due process and trial by jury.

I myself enjoy the occasional shot of fine Kentucky bourbon, and have learned to fear the persistent lure of the bright red "du MAURIER" cigarette package; but I prefer marijuana, which I have been smoking for over fifteen years. I have avoided cocaine, not because it is illegal or unavailable, but because I perceive that *the health risks involved in using cocaine outweigh the fleeting psychological benefit*. I believe otherwise in the case of marijuana, which helps me remain calm and focus on "cultivating my garden" in the face of destructive stupidity of earth-shaking magnitude—such as that demonstrated by the Drug Warriors, with their "Reaganitic" imperviousness to reason. Smoking pot may eventually cause me to die prematurely of lung cancer; however, I expect to die some time before that eventuality, thanks to the rapid development and deployment of modern weapons world-wide and a modern mind-set susceptible to Armageddon Fever.

This marijuana user, like many others, *thinks for a living*. I write complex computer programs: errors in *my* logic are tested daily in the harsh regime of electronic circuitry,

and when one of my programs has failed, I can correct the failure only by admitting the possibility of error, by scrupulously tracing the logical paths which led up to the failure in order to isolate its cause, and then correcting the flaws in the algorithm or its implementation.

Rangel and *his* cohort disdain responsibility for one hundred years of abject failure in their quest to "purify" society. They continue to claim that if only they could succeed in capturing people like me, productive, tax-paying, family-oriented marijuana smokers, locking us in prisons, and placing our children in orphanages, America would be a better place. *The logic is Stalinist, and so is the result: fear of State power.* This is why so much venom is heaped on the "casual" drug user, whose behavior is generally rational, civil, and, apart from adherence to drug laws, law-abiding: the Nay-Sayers cannot abide the counter-example of successful drug users, and wish to bring calamity upon those who use illegal drugs in moderation. It is *the drug warriors*, with their lust to punish, who are *immoral and un-Christian.* They are the source of the threat to American values, including constitutional democracy and the inherent individual rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness.

"Drug abuse" is not the problem in the streets of America today: *criminal violence* is the problem. Charles Rangel and his allies aid and abet the violent criminal underworld by guaranteeing its profit margins. The specious "reasoning" of those who support Discriminatory Drug Prohibition demonstrates once again that individual judgment is most profoundly distorted by lust for power, and that the greatest danger to peace in civil society is the extremism of "moralists" who prefer disaster to compromise.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

PS: Let's reflect a little on the consequences I might suffer if you print this letter with my name on it. Cornell University is subject to Federal regulations requiring all recipients of Federal aid to maintain "drug-free workplaces," which means in practice that Cornell employees must maintain drug-free *homes*. If some alert Federal bureaucrat reads the letter and notifies Cornell that it is harboring a *confessed drug user*, Cornell would force me to take counseling sessions to "help" rid me of this *awful* habit. If I were to persist in *advertising* that I smoked the demon weed, Cornell would have the alternatives of 1) firing me or 2) losing about \$1,000,000,000 in federal grant money each year. Hmmmm.... which would they choose? Of course, I could simply state that although *of course* I would never dream of doing *anything* illegal, people should be allowed to pursue their own version of happiness as long as they don't infringe on the liberties of others; but then, there would be no *counterexample*, and the notion that marijuana smokers consist of the *lumpen* elements of society too stoned to work would persist. Catch-22! If you defend your habit, we've *got ya!* On the other hand, if you defend "someone else's habit," clearly you are ignorant of "the degradation of substance abuse," you don't realize that "the life of a substance abuser is *based on lies*," and are a selfish Yuppie "willing to

write off the lower class."

Then there's that Federal form I had to sign to buy a firearm. It didn't ask me whether I am alcoholic, or whether I like to get drunk and wander about the woods shooting at random targets which look like deer; it did ask, with rather stiff penalties for lying, whether I used marijuana, which would *disqualify* me for the *privilege* of owning a firearm (which I will use strictly for self-defense, in accordance with the laws of New York State: call the police, retreat to your bedroom, announce that you are armed, and *then* you may fire on Charles Manson Jr., should he persist in his assault and enter your bedroom). Now, at the time I signed that form, I could do so with utter conviction, since the question is posed in the present tense and I hadn't smoked anything besides cigarettes for a couple of months, and I could state honestly I was not a user of any "narcotic substances" including marijuana. It's true, I don't have much of a problem with drug use as long as the users remain civil in their behavior; I've got a *major* hangup about lying... too bad Charles Rangel, who has invented U.S. treaty obligations when placed on the spot on national TV, has no such qualms about the morality of deception!

Now, two doors down from my house there's the Ithaca Red Cross shelter, where three years ago an employee was viciously slashed to death by some person who is still at large, and here in the "Murder Capital of Upstate New York" we had the truly grisly mass-murder/robbery/rape of the Harris family just before Xmas '90—so I have valid concerns regarding the security of my home; nevertheless, merely smoking that demon weed *disqualifies* me from buying a firearm to defend myself, my wife, and my three-year-old daughter.

Finally, the Feds could simply seize my house (all \$38,000 worth, clearly the product of a dissolute life spent in drug evangelism!) and let me spend a few years in court trying to get it back. My, it's wonderful living in a *free country*! I can do just about anything I want—as long as I *watch my mouth*.

PPS: This missive is getting out of hand, but I *can't resist* taking on Dinesh D'Souza, who like so many other canon-worshippers seems to have no acquaintance with the heritage he claims to adore. One sad aspect of this canon-craze is that the best conservative critique of academia I've ever read was written a decade ago, and failed completely at the test we *knowing moderns* apply to prove whether a contemporary work might be truly *classic*, and thus worthy of foisting on simple undergrads—i.e., did it make its author *rich*?

I'm referring to Russell Kirk's Decadence and Renewal in the Higher Learning—published in 1978, it offers an analysis of the problem in the great Anglo-Scot tradition which *takes facts seriously*, rather than offering a tome in the Continental philosophical style, a "history of ideas" in which the Great Thoughts engage in battle to End History As We Know It. (Of course, without Synthesis or at least Recapitulation the Book Trade As We Know It would also cease to exist, an alarming consideration.) Particularly, Kirk criticizes institutional giantism, which he stigmatizes as "Behemoth

State U."—none of the current crop of "reformers" *dares* to do this, since dominating the giant universities is *precisely* their goal.

I'm astonished at the level to which some of these "reformers" sink—D'Souza rabidly sics Marxist economic reductionism on his enemies ("To illuminate this underlying ideology, one simply has to ask who most benefits from, and thus gravitates toward, the new scholarship")! How can a crop of Avid Publishers like D'Souza and Bloom bring themselves to criticize the senseless quota system which rules academia? D'Souza: "...by reducing truth to bias, and knowledge to ideology, some believe they can win greater rewards than they might have by struggling to meet traditional academic-review criteria, such as the publishing requirements for hiring and tenure." *Traditional*, my ass!— he's talking *reverentially* about a post-WWII mass-university quota system which would be smilingly approved by the most doctrinaire Soviet manager! Naturally, D'Souza overlooks the obvious truth, which is that the deconstructors and their ilk are *true champions* when it comes to publication, and that it is *precisely* their techniques which have helped them triumph in this arena by giving them *more* interpretation *per text!* "I started using Psyllium in my analyses, and it doubled the bulk of my output!" (When I was a student at Cornell, I was told that the Economics department assigned different point values for papers depending on the journal of publication, and summed them up for a Figure of Merit to help make tenure decisions—how *exquisitely* rational, like a body count... we Teaching Assistants were judged according to the averages received on TWO "1-5" ratings in a course evaluation with 30 such ratings! Less than 3.0, and you're OUT! As you might intuit, I did not excel in this regime of "scientific instruction.")

In the pits of his analysis, D'Souza resorts to listing papers with silly names (D'Souza apparently learned at Dartmouth that books are best judged by the title page). He mentions not *once* that perhaps institutional forces have something to do with the proliferation of unread (and often unreadable) academic papers, published *solely* in pursuit of tenured security—the alternative to which is the life of a mendicant beggar, travelling from institution to institution until you are *kicked out* rather than *moved up*.

And, speaking of tradition, how about reinstating requirements in the physical sciences? Oddly enough, the "reformers" of D'Souza's wing seem to be obsessed with literary criticism (I suppose since they write so little literature, they would like to interpret it—the Ivy Man's Burden). They pursue this interest at the expense of learning How the World Works, a problematic, complex, awe-inspiring topic which has everything to do with why the modern academy is so fractured—there are nowadays numerous *sciences*, some of them even having predictive power and technological *puissance*, which can require a lifetime of dedication and profound *concentration* to

master. "Fie, Physics, what's a boson to a boatswain? Give me a poem about the Sea!" The unavoidable problem of such "scientific" literary critics today is that they must compete for money and students not only with plausible, politically useful equation-mongers like the economists and political scientists, but with B-Schoolers who make real *money*, engineers who make real *things*, and scientists who make real *knowledge*—and an acquaintance with Plato is not going to engender confidence in mandating that undergrads pursue their studies under the tutelage of these profoundly ignorant Guarantors of the Western Heritage, the Objective Literary Critics. After all, Plato firmly held that mathematical knowledge is the ONLY reliable knowledge; D'Souza would do well to check out that "line" of knowledge in Republic: he seems to be one of the desperate "cave-ins" Plato describes as becoming frantic at being torn from the comforting Play of Shadows on the wall...

Many of the philosophical greats advanced scientific knowledge; some modern scientists have enriched our philosophical heritage; can we name a literary critic who has enriched science? I can think only of Hugh Kenner and Umberto Eco as (marginal) participants in the scientific enterprise, precisely the kind of (ugh!) *semioticians* D'Souza despises. (Kenner's The Counterfeiters is worth its weight in fissionable material, 100 pp. chock full of Swift Pope, chockablock with the infernal engines of Babbage and Turing, overlaid with a creme de Keaton, Buster, devoted to the ever-enthraling question, what *do* we mean when we speak of "humanity"? At least one meditation on computer evolution has been dedicated to Kenner... Astonishingly, Eco gleefully brags about counterfeiting a successful novel in his Postscript to The Name of The Rose, and hews forthrightly to the incredible line that as a mere *author* he should not disturb our interpretations of his work by telling us what it *meant*, but will simply describe the *mechanics* of his invention... clearly he is not a "serious man" of the type D'Souza deems fit to judge the classics!)

But credit must be given where due, D'Souza knows how to tell a joke with a straight face: "At the university they [some 13 million students] hope to shape themselves as whole human beings, both intellectually and morally. Brimming with idealism, they wish to prepare themselves for full and independent lives in the workplace, at home, and as citizens of a democratic society. In short, what they seek is a liberal education." Well, I was *and am* a philosopher, and I *wish* that were the case so that I could make a living teaching philosophy; but it's perfectly obvious that what those kids are seeking is a union card, a credential, a ticket to a middle-class life, *not* enlightenment. And that's possibly the major reason that the academy is dominated by ideologues of various stripes: there's no monetary reward, there's no job security, and there's no respect, so they're doing it *almost wholly* for the sake of the intellectual rewards.

After all, that's why *I* work at Cornell...

PPPS: NEWS from the front! Ahhhh, to be middle-aged and the Governor of California—surely it was "practically legal" for Ronald and Nancy Reagan to suck a joint with the Bloomingdales? I'm reminded that Reagan resurrected the Drug War in the pits of the Iran-Contra crisis, in a desperate (but successful!) move to distract attention from his dealings with the Ayatollah's henchmen. I recall that, according to Reagan's speech, the American Revolution, the Civil War, WWI, WWII—all, all were fought to rid America of Oppression, and surely Drug Abuse is a Form of Oppression, and to honor those brave Americans who died for our freedom, we *must* make drug use a Moral Issue—"Americans must become *intolerant* of drug abuse."

(Now, I *was* smoking pot while we were watching the President's speech over at a friend's house—now surely I have got this wrong, have I not read that pot destroys long-term memory? Now *surely* he said, "Nancy and I can't understand what the fuss is about!" Perhaps five years of the renewed drug war have left me disoriented—wasn't this to be one of those lightning victories? Oh, perhaps I had *better* stick with something less intellectually demanding than politics, where's my copy of *The Motorola MC68000 Assembly Language Guide*?

Seriously, this MJ-twisted memory of mine has got me a little nervous—last year I was trying to dig up some local history on how our local hospital came to be located on the wrong side of the lake, and I'd swear the Ithaca Journal's front page news of 1972 had Richard Nixon declaring a crackdown on drugs, and making bold initiatives which would make America *energy-independent* by the the year 1980. Oh, that stuff does rot the brain! My Memory Hole seems to be plugged! *Everybody* knows that drugs were practically legal then, and that America has *always* been energy-independent! But—maybe—*there's hope*—could a *lobotomy* help correct my condition?)

Perhaps Bill Bennett will be allowed to achieve his high moral goal of executing drug pushers by personally bringing the ax down upon Mr. Bloomingdale's head? Perhaps Ronnie himself will heft the ax—I do seem to recall him also wishing aloud the execution of drug dealers? (And Bloomie belongs in this category, *mere transfer of the prohibited substance qualifies as dealing under the law!*) Perhaps not! But maybe Bill or Ronnie can satisfy their "philosophical" impulses on some inner-city black... that's the kind of *appropriate* law enforcement Americans have come to *expect*.

The fascinating backdrop for the persistence of the anti-marijuana component of the Drug War is that science last year finally got a handle on the action of THC: the receptors for cannabinoids in the brain have been mapped. Intriguingly, the receptors are densely clustered in the forebrain, and the receptors are possessed by "lower species" all the way down to the fruit fly! Of course, there's been no media splash about this major discovery, which occurred after a major drug manufacturer abandoned its attempts to produce a "non-psychoactive" variant of THC to use as a pain-killer, and put its pre-potent radioactive-tagable synthetic THC analog in the public domain. (THC is

apparently the most effective painkiller known to medical science when introduced directly into the nerve stem, and since it is possibly the most benign of all known medicinally active agents, it would be the ideal painkiller—if only it did not get people *high!* This was published in Science and Omni—the Omni article had an amusing quotation from the researcher who sought the Grail of high-free THC, describing the test rats as being "obviously stoned out of their minds!") Why? Well, according to the researcher who mapped the receptors, the receptors cease activity after ~3 hours of exposure to THC, and *there is no damage to the receptor as a result of exposure to THC.* Now, it's A-OK to show fraudulent TV commercials "comparing the brain wave of a marijuana user to a normal brain," in which the traces are not only forged but *scientifically impossible*—but information of this kind we can leave out of our \$3,000,000,000+ propaganda campaign, since it might confuse people!

(My intuition informs me that the dis-associative effects of pot which users value are an important survival mechanism which damps the fight-or-flight reaction. The insight came while watching a documentary on the grizzly with my daughter; a woman who had been attacked by a grizzly described how as she lay on the ground being battered, "I suddenly had the feeling that I was looking down at myself, being swatted around by the bear... and I knew that I had to remain utterly still, and not react. After I stopped moving, the bear stood up and moved away." Probably the body's native cannabinoid source is only activated under conditions of extreme stress. As the researchers stated, with all those receptors, there's *got* to be a source of cannabinoids *somewhere.* And then, clearly, the marijuana plant's production of THC is yet another example of co-evolution in action: its ability to produce this compound used by all animal species has favored its survival, especially today—when it is cultivated by pot-loving humans all over the world!)

Hmmm, what a lot of text I generate—24244 characters forming 4015 words! It looks like it is *badly* in need of an editor to keep it within the bounds of taste... could you perhaps be interested in an article, say, "Don't Turn That Canon On Me!" hewing more strictly to the topic of Bloom, D'Souza, et. al's striking misperceptions? (As a key-bearing and wisdom-loving rock-n-roller, the original lead guitarist for the Angry Samoans, I've got several axes to grind with Bloom, including a '61 Les Paul and a Little Black Steinberger!) Or, perhaps, "Confessions of a Marijolic Systems Philosopher," inviting the Feds to persecute me by publicly defending my smoking habits? (I can deliver PostScript on a PC-formatted 3.5" disk; this is a NeXTCube I've got here, but I can manage the transfer without much difficulty...)

I've got a telephone, a major university nearby, and access to a DataTrak down at the Tompkins County Public Library, and I'd love to do more research on the Drug Front.

Likewise, Bloom *et al.* would suffer *awfully* in an analysis focussing on how they badly serve the classics. A few quotations from Nietzsche are in order—clearly, Bloom is of the academic type Nietzsche loathed, and described as expressing intellectually the consequences of their bad digestion, ill-humoredly poring over texts in stuffy (smoke-filled!) rooms. (The most mind-bending aspect of Bloom to me was his denial that TV has formed the youthful mis-attitudes he decries! Where has this guy been living—the University of Chicago? Oh, right—he *has* been, now hasn't he!)

Let me know if you're interested...

721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Tue Jan 29 1991

Harper's Magazine
666 Broadway
NY, NY 10012

Dear Mr. Lapham and associates,

As I read the Forum article "Who Owes What to Whom?—Drafting A Constitutional Bill of Duties," my heart curdled with dismay. There's an hallucinogenic quality, drug-free but no less dangerous on that account, to the argument that Americans are inadequately provided with duties. I am reminded of the anthropologist Marvin Harris' distinction between "emic" and "etic" components of cultural belief systems: *all* cultures work with a set of ideal prescriptions for behavior, to which which we fervently pledge allegiance, while our routine violations of these precepts are kept below the level of conscious awareness.

We believe that we are the most wild and crazy of the free, while we frantically construct new prisons to house marijuana peddlers (but do not be confused, *Tobacco may be addictive but it is not a drug! Let's boost this American export!*); that ours is the most peaceful of nations, while we fund the development and employment worldwide of the most destructive military systems ever devised; that our economic system is a model of *laissez-faire*, while our government protects wealthy investors from risk and subsidizes the devastation of our "National Forests;" that we live under a system of "laws, not men," even when Congress restores Oliver North's pension as a reward for breaking his oath to uphold and defend the Constitution; and that we cherish the family, while mothers are lured into the work force "to pursue meaningful careers," and their mewling babes are delivered into the tax-creditable custody of day-care "professionals."

Ernest Fitzgerald wrote in *The High Priests of Waste* that "Americans are the most passive subject population in the history of civilization." Indeed,

tax rates in America average over 40 percent of individual gross income, going to support schools which socialize rather than educate, subsidize roads to environmental ruin and bridges to foreign dependency, enrich militant mismanagement in the domestic economy and finance fraud in our foreign relations; thus, most Americans dutifully spend over 800 hours a year slaving at the peak of their abilities to fund government lunacy. Moreover, every able-bodied male citizen of New York between the ages of 18 and 45 is legally bound as a member of the State Militia to serve *under military law* if the Governor signs a document proclaiming a state of emergency. And shall I go on to list the innumerable petty regulations which we are liable to observe under pain of fines and/or imprisonment, providing every opportunity for the "authorities" to harass fundamentally decent people? Is there a single parent in America who is not, in the legalistic sense, guilty of child abuse?

I would assert that the broad masses of Americans have learned by example: the cultural, political, and economic elites of this country have been the first to abdicate *their* duties, to proclaim *mobility* as the highest virtue, and to deploy, as a kind of moral "golden parachute," the claim that to walk the fine edge of legality *is precisely what is required* to be "ethical."

These are the people who will prescribe the cure for our ethical ills?

Humbug!

To better understand our future, I think we should meditate on Shakespeare's *King Lear*: when leaders seek to enjoy the perquisites of power, disdain the attendant responsibilities, reward flattery, and punish those who speak plain truth, they will reap a most uncivil discord as their reward. Over our Kingdom of the Lie George Bush and his government now extends its sway, and their noble protestations cover actions base. Would that he and his ilk could be made to suffer the account, rather than the rest of us.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders

PS: I note with fascination that your cover portrays Ithaca's Great Fire of 1840: representing no doubt the "good old days" of community spirit, when citizens pitched in to quell threats to public safety. It's worth noting that Ithaca still relies on unpaid volunteer firefighters to support a small corps of professionals; these volunteers share the exposure to the hazards of modern firefighting, such as exposure to toxic by-products, for no reward beyond the respect of their comrades. As you would expect, it's getting more difficult for the fire department to find volunteers, given the exigencies of individual economic survival and time stresses of modern life.

Oddly, while there's no lack of government millions to build (and staff) a new "mental health" building and a new county jail, to expand the local highway system, and fund other projects beloved by our Mafia-ridden politicians, contractors, and unions, the professionalization of firefighting, an essential public service, is beyond our financial grasp.

So now here's the solution to this sticky problem: *National Service!*

Let's draft those lazy kids and have 'em fight fires at a sub-minimum wage!

Yeah—*That's the ticket! A one-way ticket down the Road to Serfdom...*

721 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850
Thu Aug 08 1991

The Ithaca Journal
123 W. State St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Letter to the Editor of the Journal:

In his letter (Sept. 6) Jim Crawford, publisher of the Herald Examiner, condemns boycotts aimed at his paper as a "guerilla tactic" that somehow contradicts his right to freedom of speech, claiming the boycotter's "ideological agenda" is "poisoning the political arena" with its "aggressive rejection of established cultural conventions."

How exquisite an irony: Crawford supports the right of businesses not to hire or house people they *suspect* might engage in sexual practices of which they disapprove; but he demands that those who are the *targets* of the discriminatory practice continue to buy products from those who indirectly support the right to discriminate. This indicates to me that he doesn't believe in free markets or consumer sovereignty. The advocates of Local Law C who promote this boycott have *barely* avoided the same kind of contradiction, since the law *did* provide a loophole for situations where an individual proprietor's freedom of association would have been compromised.

I myself would vote against Law C on the basis that freedom of association is an absolute right, and that you should be allowed to *non-violently* pursue some exclusivist, separatist destiny with your in-group (say, your family) if you so wish. I believe that corporations should be severely restricted in their freedom to discriminate, but would prefer that the reform be instituted more at the core of corporate law, rather than by tinkering around and adding yet another law onto the books in Tompkins County.

But I feel both loathing and pity for those poor, crippled, self-proclaimed "Christians" who scan the Old Testament and selectively proclaim the prohibitions they don't violate, while ignoring other harsh rules regarding diet, "cleanliness," and behavior. Some of them seem to share a belief I recently came across in a professedly "Christian" pamphlet called "AIDS—Here's the answer!": "Since our civil laws wrongfully protect homosexuals, we can't put them to death."

It seems Crawford doesn't quite appreciate that some people aggressively reject the right of homosexuals or other *nonconformists* to *exist*, and that asking the targets of such violently uncivil extremism to respond only with "civil" behavior is *asking too much*.

Dear Senator Moynihan,

Thanks very much for another of your (refreshingly) infrequent dispatches from the Senate. It's wonderful to the franking privilege used as an opportunity to share thoughts on the crucial issues of the day, and not as a cheap campaign propaganda medium.

Alas, it seems as if the American body politic is addicted to war. Just at a moment when we should be able to turn toward the concerns of peace, industrial productivity, education, the concerns of domestic government, American troops are committed to the defense of Islamic absolutist monarchies (the oil-rich ones, at least) on the other side of the planet.

What a convenient war this is! It's convenient for George Bush and the proponents of a U.S.-dominated global police state, who no longer need to field questions about the "Peace Dividend," and once again have a Great Satan to distract public attention from the collapse of the American polity. It's convenient for the Saudis, who finally manage to get U.S. troops deployed in their defense, which they can't manage themselves despite their wealth because their government cannot tolerate the political consequences (revolution, most likely) of fielding a modern mass army. It's convenient for Iraq, which has succeeded for once in an invasion, and has created the perception among the impoverished masses of the Arab world that it cares about their concerns.

This "war" is too damn convenient by a long shot. Where was U.S. intelligence, which even without analyzing the clearly desperate state of the Iraqi government and its hostile intentions toward Kuwait, should have been able to detect the troop movements which must have preceded the war. Why was April Glaspie was telling Saddam Hussein's government that we took "no position" on the territorial dispute, when clearly we had a position, that is, that this dispute must not be resolved by force? (And, oh yes, disclosing that George Bush's government envies Saddam his freedom from a free and critical press...)

Why was the Executive branch defending Iraq's Most Favored Nation trading status, years after Iraqi use of chemical weapons on the Kurds was confirmed, after Hussein announced that Iraq possessed binary chemical weapons, after the revelations about Iraq's attempts to import weapons ranging from a huge gun to triggers required for constructing nuclear weapons?

What I am about to say sounds extreme: this war looks a hell of a lot like well-staged media event. It comes at the right time, in a theatre in which we've been conditioned to accept unilateral action by the Chief Executive (providing escorts for "Kuwaiti" tankers, shooting down airliners full of civilians, blowing up Iranian oil rigs, etc.) . Saddam

Hussein needed a war to restore his image after the failure of the Iran-Iraq war (which he also started, likewise for the prospect of material gain and enhanced security for his Iraqi state apparatus).

It's funny to see, after this idea occurred to me, that it had also occurred to the high-ranking Saudi Arabian Wahhabite cleric Halawi. It's sad to say, but the thought that it's all a plot has consoled me immensely; with the bellicose rhetoric emanating from the White House, one would imagine that we are ineluctably driven to war for the cause of sacred principles, and the hard fact we are unprepared for this war, and furthermore, we cannot achieve *any* worthwhile strategic goal seems to be irrelevant.

In Hans Jurgen Syberberg's monumental film *Our Hitler*, Syberberg discourses on what he describes as the most damaging effect of Hitler on Germans and German society: through his abuse of the rhetoric of idealism, he rendered Germans incapable of responding to it. Once the rhetoric is implicated with the most horrid, the most unimaginable crimes, it can no longer inspire hope and faith.

Our politicians and other mass-marketers have degraded discourse in a similar manner. "Operation Just Cause." "The Peacekeeper" (MX). "The Strategic Defense Initiative" (sounds like a peace treaty to me—a more appropriate name would have been the "Near-space Global Domination Initiative"). "Strategic Weapons"—odd, that a flying bomb which has awesome *tactical* effect is proclaimed *strategic* in its own right; like a worship of raw power... as if sheer *quantity* of power could guarantee the *quality* of strategy.

Now we've got "The New World Order."

721 W. Court Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

The New York Times
NY, NY

re: Times article "Marijuana

Letter to the Editor:

I find it unsurprising that marijuana use is regarded as "uncool" among high school seniors. The trend toward alchohas been in evidence for well over ten years. Punks would give you a hard time in 1979 for smoking dope and wearing your hair long: pot was not *radical* enough. Real drugs fry the brain, and promote violence, not lassitude; long hair on men has undesirable peaceful connotations.

We've learned from their precepts, and now the less-cultured among our collegiate crowd believe it's *in* to urinate openly on the streets of Ithaca. Skulls are broken in drunken fights. Did we not invade Panama to defend this great tradition, that men young and free might openly express their alcoholic excesses? Gung Ho!

But eventually this wave of half-truths and unvarnished lies we call the War on Drugs will wash back into the Sea of Crises, to be succeeded by another era of frenzied experimentation when succeeding generations of youngsters fail at the "struggle for survival" which emblamatizes our kinder, gentler Depression. This won't conflict at all with the real aim of the Phony War, which is to gut the Bill of Rights and keep the citizens cowed, conformist, and willing to give their lives over to a frenzied yet vapid "productivity" characterized by the blind sacrifice of the ozone layer for the sake of cheaper hairspray, faster aircraft, and cooler automobile interiors.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eric Saunders