

by **ROBIN D. LAWS**

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Media Guide for an Exploding Culture

The Plex: Anna 6-18, Ashes of Time, Back to Back/Face to Face, Bandit Queen, Crumb, Fresh Kill, Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media, Exotica, Metal Skin, Nadja, Nayakan, Once Were Warriors, A Taste of Killing and Romance, Total Balaika Show, Tracking Down Maggie: (The Unofficial Biography of Margaret Thatcher, and (like we need to say it) Pulp Fiction.

The Tube: Homicide, The Larry Sanders Show, The Kids in the Hall

The World Wide Web (discover it before it discovers you!): Chicago Murder Sites (<http://www.mcs.net/~wallach/cms.html>), Role-Playing Resources on the Net (<http://fys-hp-l.risoe.dk/petersen/rpg/>), Thomas US Legislative information (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>), the CIA Server, yes, _that_ CIA (<http://www.ic.gov/>), and the Aeon Flux page (<http://sunsite.unc.edu/otis/notes/aflux/aeonflux.html>)

Our Favorite Heads: Sidney Blumenthal, Joe Bob Briggs, Noam Chomsky, Mark Chorvinsky, Harlan Ellison, James Ellroy, the GenCon Thai Restaurant, McLaughlin Group, Farm Team, Jack Germond, David Goodis, Matt Groening, Christopher Hitchens, Al Hunt, Molly Ivins, Michael Kinsley, Paul Krassner, Dennis Miller, Jack Nelson, the Rotating Zen Consumption League, Chuck Shepherd, Mark Shields, Evan Thomas, Jim Thompson, Hunter S. Thompson, Nina Totenberg, Charles Willeford, Juan Williams, Robin Wood, and the usual suspects at Alarums & Excursions.

Bitter Laughter Staunches the Tears: Newt casts himself as Spencer Tracy (and kids unwise enough to be born to the wrong parents as extras) in his remake of *Boy's Town*, coming soon to a Rupert Murdoch media outlet near you; Maggie T and son get away with the arms scam; Boris goes to Chechnya; short attention span award: the resurrection of Bob Packwood; and a final raspberry to Reality, which, driving a white Ford Bronco, rips off my stuff before it even hits the stands....

Ways and Means includes some important text that should be paid particular attention to. This text is bordered by "warning bars" like these.

Ways and Means includes some optional rules intended for more advanced players. These rules are surrounded by bars of question marks like these. Beginning players may ignore these passages until they are more familiar with Underground.

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rockets red glare

My head hurts, but President Foster's soothing tones are slowly calming me. So lilting, so soft, so free of content. It's funny - the more outrageously he lies, the more gentle he sounds. Like a lullaby.

"My friends, America is more than a place. More than an idea. America is a family. And we all know what families are for. The family is the essential unit, the basic bond between free people. It is protection against the cold, against the dangers of the outside world. And sad to say, protection against other families who would do us harm. That is why we must be strong, and to be strong, the members of our family must be strong."

Today's speech is about solving the problems of America's boosted vets. As if Foster somehow cares. The only boosted vets actually here in the hall with him, listening to the speech, are not in the audience. We're all the elite of the **SS-BD**. And we sure as spit aren't going to call him on the fertilizer he's spreading. **SS-BD: Secret Service Boosted Division. The section of the Secret Service staffed by genetically enhanced veterans. Although some SS-BD members serve in the Secret Service's legal enforcement arm, rooting out counterfeiting and computer crime, most are assigned to bodyguard detail for current and former high officials of the executive branch.** We're **in the ballpark** - we're taken care of. Unlike most **in the ballpark: D.C. slang for those connected to the power structure, with a vested interest in its survival.** of the poor schmuck boosts out there freezing in the dark.

"As the world becomes an increasingly dangerous place, we have assigned special duties to some of the members of this great American family of ours. We have asked them to face certain dangers. To see things that many of us would shrink from. Indeed, to risk making the ultimate sacrifice. And what for? To protect our family."

I scan the crowd. The software in my goggles identifies them all as friendlies. Senators, congressmen, cabinet ministers, lobbyists, and bagmen. I like these people. Some of the others in the SS-BD cultivate a contempt for those they guard. "If you didn't serve in the jungles, you don't know squat." Typical boost attitude. Me, I think these briefcase-toters are the pros. Friendly, smiling, and willing to slice their closest allies in the jugular without a moment's notice. Now that's icy. Us boosts, it's us who only know the beginner's rules. If you're a vet, you learned to depend on others for survival. In the jungle, your buds all wore the same insignia. Here, the sides change faster than your reload rate. D.C. makes the jungle look like kindergarten.

"Now there are some who would say that the wars the militant corporations fight on our behalf are not about protecting a family. The naysayers would tell you that these struggles are about protecting the wealth of US business interests. What these out-of-

the-mainstreamers fail to say is that wealth is strength. The ultimate well-being of our family depends on maintaining the paychecks that put bread on our table. In short, our boosted veterans fight for three things - jobs, jobs, and jobs."

Ain't too many boosts who've learned to swim in this here wading pool. There's really the only one - and he's seated on the dias behind me, making goo-goo eyes at the Pres. Clinton Gore, the famous Scarlet Headhunter. Secretary of Vet's Affairs. This speech is a big moment for him. The Pres is endorsing his agenda. Endorsing doesn't mean actually doing anything, of course. But it gets Gore on the newsvids tonight. And that's how we keep score around here.

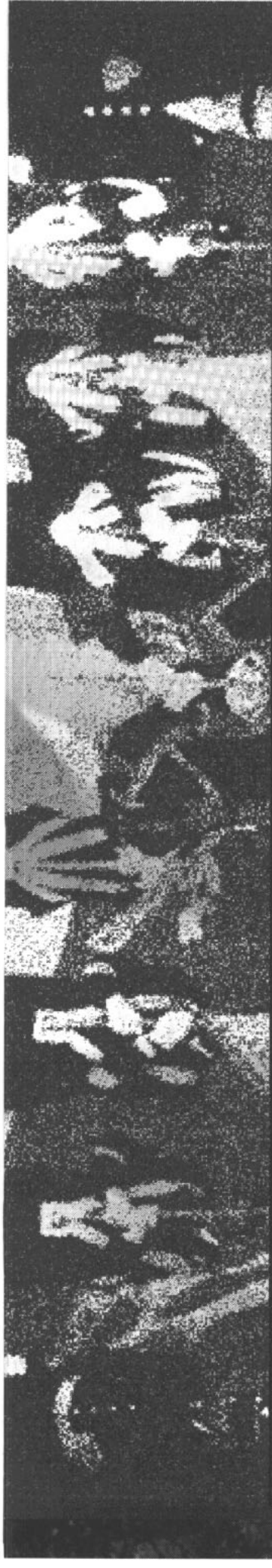
"During the First Cold War, we fought for something vague and shadowy called National Security. Now in the Second Cold War, we fight for your personal security. For your job. And for future jobs, for those of you who have been deprived of them by the craven trade practises of the Neo-Deutsch and Chinese. There are those who would tell you that in this era, an American can no longer depend on a job as his birthright. To those I say - not in my family! Not in my family! Not for long!"

An SS agent is trained to keep his eyes open. Watchful at all times. And I ain't just been watching for assassins. I been watching Foster, been watching Gore. Watching how the game is played. I'm not gonna be a centurion forever. I'm gonna be Emperor. Everything I see is a lesson in power - how to get it, how to use it. They don't know it, but these guys are my professors. I'll remember to thank them for the lessons as I toss them off the pile to make room for me.

"What is a family, you ask? What is it all about? Is it just a flag, and a set of common beliefs? No, I say it is more than that. Something our enemies will never have. Caring. Compassion. We live in a brutal world, but we are not ourselves brutal. Some of our number we must send into the fire. We must risk the few to protect the many. And therefore it is clear that the many owe a debt to the few. A debt we have been lax in paying."

Damn. Shouldn't have had all that coffee. Wanted to take the edge off the headache, be ready for duty. Distraction is death. I should stick to the liquid mud in the SS office. The fresh-ground stuff is lethal. Curse my gourmet instincts. I wanna twitch, let loose the excess energy. But we SS types are rocks, we're mountains, we're all stillness. Or we get canned.

"Why have we been lax in paying, do you ask? The reason is simple - the conflict is not yet over. It is a fact of life that our resources are limited. Limited by the very struggle that has eaten the best hopes of many of our young men



and women. We shall push on with our continuing war for the markets of the world, and we shall win! I say it again, my family - we shall win!"

I wonder if all the headaches I've been having lately mean my **pacifier** is acting up. My cortex better not be rejecting it. If I can't take the pacifier, that means getting bounced to enforcement. And that means getting ejected from the game. Last thing I wanna do is spend my life slogging after bill forgers and evil computer nerds. My plans mean I gotta stay in the ballpark.

pacifier: The Pastetm Pacifier, a brain implant that acts as a fail-safe against boost bodyguards who succumb to metagenic feedback trauma. See Notebook page included in this supplement.

"And when we win, that is when we shall be able to truly reward those who have suffered for that victory. The rewards are not yet at hand. The fight must continue. And it shall continue! We shall fight them in the shopping malls! We shall fight them in the warehouses! We shall fight them in the factories! We shall fight them on the airwaves! And, if need be, we shall fight them on the battlefield!"

Man, it feels like someone's pounding a nail into my forehead. I could try and argue them into letting me stay on without a pacifier, I guess. No way they're gonna go for that, though. Not after that incident with ex-Vice Limbaugh. They ain't gonna take no chances. Hell, I think having his arm torn off like that won old Rushy some sympathy, ramped up his approval rating. He may be able to ride that prosthesis of his right to the Oval Office. Not that this is the kinda argument that the SS brass is gonna buy, though... Hell, they bounced Dr. Praetorian to enforcement just for one lousy Rush Limbless joke. When I'm in charge, the first thing I'm gonna do is transfer that crummy bootlicker Rogers to the Yukon bureau. And bring the Doc right back to guard my butt. Yeah, that'll be a sweet moment. From guard to guarded. I can taste it already.

"I speak now to the veteran population. You have served us well. And it is true - not all of the promises given to you have been kept. But I assure you - they will be kept, they will be kept!"

Movement at entrance A7. My hand goes imperceptibly into fast draw position. The goggles identify the figure as a page. They tell me not to shoot him. My hand relaxes. I catch Kevin Costmore in my left peripheral, Eagle Eyes in my right. They're both untensing too. We exchange nods no one else will ever see. That page will never know he was a target for a zillionth of a second. I zoom in on his image. Not bad looking. Maybe I'll call him up, ask him out. I access his phone number, file it to memory. Wonder if he's ever done it with a boost before. Wonder if he can take it.

"And I challenge the boosted population to challenge us! Keep up the pressure! Do not let Washington succumb to the clutches of the lily-livered, of the appeasers, of the giver-uppers! Push us on to victory! The spoils are yours - so long as you do not let the cowards and peaceniks steal them from your waiting hands!"

I do another crowd scan. There's **Elsbeth Manning**, top contender for the NAS presidential nomination **Elsbeth Manning: Prominent NAS politician.** in '24. No expression on **See Notebook page included with this box.** that face. Wonder what she's thinking. I mean, sure, she's picturing herself up behind the presidential seal. Pretty much everybody in the hall is doing that. Wonder if she really would disband the SS-BD if she got in. I say no way. The NAS are major powerheads. How would they maintain authority without boosted muscle? They'd have to keep us on. They'd come up with some excuse once they got into office. They always do.

"Why should I wait, you ask? Why should I wait for that which has been promised me? I say, you should not wait! You should not! And in a just world, you would not have to. But this is not a just world, my family, far from it."

And that guy beside her, who's that? My goggles say Larry Jensen, a member of her staff. That's funny, the personal profile's been masked. Jeez, there's no chance he isn't in the database. What gives? **PRIMIS** has everything on everyone. Okay, that's weird, that's weird. Somebody's decided this guy Jensen is none of my business. Something tells me that makes him my business. Hmm, hmm. Interesting.

"That is why we must fight - to make it a just world."

PRIMIS: Personal Registration Information Management Intelligence System. A computer database program operated by the National Security Agency, collating all known information on all US citizens, as well as foreign nationals on US soil. SS-BD and other federal law enforcement officers access this database through their combat gear.

I run a threat analysis on Jensen. Comes back 0.0001%. So, is that based on the real poop, or is that calculated based on zero info?

Ouch, it feels like Systematic Overthrow are doing a soundcheck in my frontal lobes. There's no getting around it - I'm gonna have to beg off sick soon as Foster stops yakking. My concentration is shot.

"So, my boosted sons and daughters, with your inadequate pensions and poor job opportunities - "

Jensen, Jensen, there's just something screamingly wrong and bad about this Jensen guy not showing up on PRIMIS. I check the guy out in zoom mode. No way he's a boost. No visible enhancements. And more importantly - he don't have the micro-stare. Thin build, prematurely balding, looks like he wears contacts. I could break this guy in half without even thinking about it.

"- with your insufficient medical care and laughable housing. What should you do to put the situation right?"

His hand is awfully close to Manning's knee. Is that it? He's her new **luggage**? Funny there's no info on him then. **luggage: D.C. slang for Significant Other; signifies the OK** - let's construct a **politically less powerful member of a couple** scenario. Guy wants shooting-range access to the Pres. Puts the move on a Senator, gets on her staff, gets his access. I'd say this guy's threat level is way above 0.0001%. Nothing in the database? My paranoia is healthier than that. This guy's a plant. If you didn't water him, he'd turn brown and die.

"The answer is clear - speak to your younger brothers and sisters. Pass them the baton of our righteous battle. Send them to finish the job you started. And finish it they shall!"

OK, so if he's gonna take a shot, where's his piece? I run a triple oversample zoomscan for suspicious bulges. Nada. This doesn't make me less nervous. Au contraire. There's a piece missing here, and I don't see it. No way to alert Costmore or Eagle, either. I keep Jensen dead centre in the frame. He certainly doesn't look nervous. Not like he's gonna up and empty a clip into the bossman, that's for sure. Maybe I've been doing this too long. Maybe it's just a software glitch or something. Maybe I should go home and get some sleep the second Foster stops talking.

"For there is no family stronger than the American family. No family prouder, no family with greater drive and determination. The only thing that will defeat us is ourselves! Now is not the time to surrender! Now is the time to redouble -"

Jeez, Foster, wrap it up, wrap it up! Don't you know your behind is on the line here? Get off the frigging stage, man! There's something big time fishy happening, you stupid -

" - our efforts to make a great society better, to achieve the promise of life, liberty and happiness that our forefathers enshrined as our God-given Constitutional rights -"

Okay, stay cool. Remember, rock, mountain, stillness. Think, don't emote. Jensen's been masked from PRIMIS. Okay, who has the -

The figure's moving fast, split second fast, down the left aisle. Had to have gotten past Rugrat, State Farm, and Blinkers. They must be meat then - jeez! The goggles lock onto her, ID her as Fifth Amendment. Her enhancements scroll down the screen. She's a **dex monster**. She's jamming a new clip into a modified full-auto EP450. I'll be the **dex monster: SS jargon for a boost** only one fast enough to - **who relies on dexterity and speed.**

What th— ? The goggles slap a DO NOT SHOOT halo on her and status her as friendly! The software's diddled! Well, screw the manual, I'm not letting her perforate the bossman!

She's good. I squeeze off a shot from my Silver Bullet and it tags her in the shoulder, takes her down to the carpeted aisle steps. And she adjusts in mid-fall, firing away. But not at the podium. She plants a trio of slugs into the seat beside Manning - all in

an elegant isosceles triangle right into Jensen's chest. Very surgical. Very trained. Way above my performance level.

Split seconds after round three impacts Jensen, my second Silver Bullet round nails Fifth Amendment in the leg. The goggle readout does a one-eighty. Now it's pegged her as SHOOT HERE. I decide to be contrary as Eagle Eye and Costmore open fire on her. I stagger back against the podium. I'm not hit, but I'm reeling anyway. My head is on fire. So this is what metagenic feedback feels like... It's been a long time since I —

Fifth Amendment is now swiss cheese, but she manages to blow the back out of Costmore's skull as she goes down. The crowd on the podium is running for cover. In the audience, a couple of strays from Eagle Eye take out the senior Republocrat senator from Wyoming and the White House correspondent for USA On-Line. Manning isn't touched, but it looks like she's gone into shock.

The pieces all click into place. This was a fed operation right down the line; they wanted Jensen toasted for some reason. Probably a priority message to Manning telling her to back down on something or other. They got into the software, made sure we didn't hose down Fifth Amendment until her bullets were rattling around inside Jensen's chest cavity. Then it was time to send the signal to **Ruby** her, erase the evidence.

Ruby: D.C. slang term, verb

meaning "to assassinate an assassin one has hired." I radio up to Rugrat, State Farm, and Blinkers.

Dead air. So somebody I work for has sent a message to the loyal opposition, with the price being four of my friends. Plus the Fifth, who no doubt trusted whoever she got her orders from. Everything is swimming in front of my eyes. I tear off the goggles, so I can see the real world.

I do an eyeball of the podium. Everybody looks just as freaked as they ought to. You can see Gore tensed for action - he's back in the field. It's not till later he'll realize he's lost his top story. Foster is out of the hall already - Airforce One and Exit Strategy will have taken care of that.

It's Gurian, the Chief of Staff, who looks too calm. There's a grinning skull under his face. This is his deal. No question. Over what, I don't much care right now. My shooting arm is halfway to a bead on him when the feedback trauma reaches critical level and the containment shell of my pacifier breaks down. The last thing I see before the Pastetm oozes into my brain and dissolves it is Gurian's calm, assured expression.

I have been spun.

WASH

INTRODUCTION

Democracy didn't die, because in the end it wasn't necessary for the power boys to kill it. Conveniently for them, the people just forgot how to use it. Now it sits collecting dust in a corner of a warehouse somewhere in the Old City. Maybe someday someone will find it again, clean it up, and the power boys will quake in fear. But right now it looks like the people don't want to be reminded.

— Peter Argot, *How to Get Yourself Killed In Washington*

the belly of the beast

Washington D.C.TM
— Democracy City:
The city of
Washington has been
abandoned by the
power elite for security
reasons, and replaced
by a floating city now
called Democracy
City. (A floating city is
a massive platform
city above the old
urban sprawl,
supported by alien-
inspired anti-grav
devices.) D.C.TM is
trademarked by the
Edutainment
Consortium, a private
company that has
rebuilt new versions of
Washington's
monuments and
institutions as tourist
attractions.

So, Undergrounder, you finally made it. You've reached the place all roads lead to. The belly of the beast. The ninth layer of Hell. The top floor of Babel. The diseased liver of the nation. **Washington D.C.TM — Democracy CityTM** That's a laugh. But you'll find lots of laughs here. If your sense of humor is sick enough, that is.

You've probably been bashing your head against a wall trying to make your neighborhood a place worth living in, right? Maybe you're out from L.A. — or Toronto, or Chicago, or New York, or Miami, or Houston — doesn't matter. It's all the same, everywhere. The damp rot has set in across our nation. The cancer has permeated all the limbs, gone right to the brain. You saw it. People living out of shopping carts. Whacked out on juice and cheap booze. Blowing each other away over the style of their suits. Killing to cure boredom. Murder as a hobby. Yeah, you saw all that stuff, and you thought you'd do something to change it all. Take your boost-given brains and brawns and acid spit or whatever else and put it to good use. Clean the place up, just like the sheriff and his deputies in the ancient Westerns.

Then you found out it wasn't so easy, didn't you? You roll a Snap-TiteTM under one gang-banger's bed: and guess what? Another one takes his place in the juice trade before the coroner's office can clean up the mess. So you whack another hundred bobos and the gangs get the message and stay away. So the cops suddenly appear, and start their own little taxation plan in the area. So you expose the shakedown cops who rule your barrio, and all you get for your trouble is a whitewash from the boys upstairs. So you go after the guys upstairs. They get protected by the guys upstairs of them. Who get protected by the ... well, you get the idea.

WELCOME TO YOUR
NATION'S CAPITAL

WASH

WASH

Well, Undergrounders, you've finally caught a clue. You came here. The ultimate upstairs. This is where the decisions get made that keep your neighbourhoods **jammed** up. This is where the decisions got made that got us hosed into signing up for Slumberland. That got the docs installing the enhancements that messed with all our minds. That got our buddies shot to red ribbons in Paraguay, Latvia, Yemen, Malaysia. That exiled us off to a freak ghetto once we got back, instead of giving us that victory parade we were promised.

Yeah, you've finally found the HQ of the real bad guys. They're not like the villains we fought in the Slumberland VR program. They don't jam around with capes and masks and wigged-out codenames. They don't stick you in death traps and gloatingly spill their whole plot to you as you wriggle free of your bonds. They don't even bother with Punkbusters or EP450s. Their weapon is the stroke of the pen, the subclause in the amendment to the omnibus bill. The sound of death here is not the metallic patang of a round being ratcheted into the chamber. It's the whispering sound a briefcase full of money makes when it gets slid across a mahogany desk.

ok, so now what?

jammed: "Jam" is an all-purpose expletive in 2021 street slang, a term that quickly migrated to the nation's boardrooms. Jammed generally means "messed up"; this can be literal or figurative. As in: "Don't make me have to jam you, punk." "This situation is totally jammed." "Oh, jam, just leave me alone." Originally had a sexual connotation.

WORKING IN D.C. IS
DIFFERENT THAN
WORKING IN LA

First of all, you're gonna have to ditch a few old habits if you're going to survive here. Sure, we occasionally blow up something like the Department of Agriculture just to keep our reps up. But the real good and evil goes down all quiet-like in D.C. The players here have bodyguards up the wazoo — the cream of the crop, the least freaky boosts you can find on the open market. You're not going to get very far trying to pop into the Capitol Building with your DW 770/g on full auto.

HOW TO HANDLE
YOURSELF IN
WASHINGTON

Now, if you get yourself hired on as a bodyguard — well, then you're talking. There's more than one backroom operator here who got started as a watchdog and learned the ropes from there. Or sign on as an operative. There's lots of agencies here looking to hire someone who can work a flying harness or turn invisible. If you've got investigative skills, if you picked up a bit of scouting and spying during your days in country, you'll suddenly find yourself a hot commodity again. Now, it helps if there's no unsightly blemishes on your record. For example, if you've been caught wasting government officials, that's considered a Bad Thing around here. But even that isn't a permanent handicap. There are ways to jam with the security clearance procedure, if you know what you're doing.

SIDES CHANGE.
DON'T TRUST
ANYONE

The first thing to remember is — don't trust these guys. They're playing a game, one where the sides can change in an instant. Where the rules are unwritten, and change without notice. At the end of the day, everybody's playing for himself. And that's where we'll get them — because we've got solidarity, we're the Underground. Don't believe anybody but us. With anybody else, you're just another piece on the chessboard, and ripe for sacrifice. The thing here is never a frontal assault, it's always a blade in the back when you aren't looking.

But these guys don't trust each other either, and that's where the leverage comes in. Pit them against each other. Learn who's who, and who wants what. Dig up some secrets. The right bit of info blows up better than a grenade.

Power is like a stream — find out which way the current runs. Then decide what you want, and how you're going to turn the machinery of greed and blind worship of power to actually do something it's not used to doing — helping the people. Decide who you're willing to betray to get there, and you're on your way.

Nobody said it was easy here. This is no game for mooks. If all you want to do is toast bad guys, head on back to L.A. and just keep firing. Here you're going to have to crawl in bed with the snakes and not get bitten. And one day, if you really get into the way the city works, you might find yourself with an urge to rattle your tail and shed your skin.

If that day comes, we suggest the honorable thing — place the cold muzzle of your Urban Nightmare against your temple, curl your finger around the trigger, and squeeze.

purpose of this book

Consider this a primer on the way things work in D.C. A way of decoding the invisible battlefield, where ideology is a weapon, media exposure is the body count, and the spoils — well, the spoils are the same as wars anywhere, anytime. Cash and power.



The Peoples' Senate use a housing improvement loan to upgrade their security system

THIS IS A PRIMER ON
THE WORKINGS OF D.C.

WAGS

11

WAGS

WHAT YOU'LL FIND
IN THE WAYS
SECTION

THE NEW
DEMOCRACY CITY™
IS MUCH DIFFERENT
THAN THE OLD
DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA

THE LAY OF THE
OLD CITY

We start with a brief overview of Democracy City™ itself. Then it's on to the Institutions — the seats of power people kill over. Alliances — the groups who fight each other for control of the institutions, and the factions that fight to control the groups. We're talking fat cats, backroom boys, and the ones who pull the strings behind the scenes. After that, we got a basic lesson on Moving and Shaking — what strings to pull and when to pull them. Finally, we finish off with a quick look at the psych of the city. When your mindset matches this description, it's time to comparison shop for longterm psychiatric care.

Good luck, Undergrounders, and welcome again to D.C. Leave it better than you found it, huh?

the city

In the parlance of the pundits, D.C. no longer refers to "District of Columbia"; it means Democracy City™, the super-secure floating city that perches confidently atop the typical urban bleakness of the historic city of Washington, now known as **The Old City**. There is little commerce between the two cities. The inhabitants of D.C. are well-protected from incursions from the O.C. below. Most visitors to D.C. fly in and out without even stepping foot in the O.C. The deteriorating monuments and buildings of old Washington have been abandoned to the poor, the desperate, the homeless and psychotic. The Old Capitol Building, for example, is inhabited by a commune of squatters who refer to themselves as the Peoples' Senate. Most other public buildings have suffered a similar fate, including the offices of the executive wing and museums like the Smithsonian, which was stripped of artifacts and abandoned with the rest of the city. The old Lincoln Memorial was sold at auction to Hollywood producer Jo-Ellen Gold, and blown up for the climax of the hit movie *Urban Weapon 4*. The old Washington Monument was demolished as a security risk after several terrorists infiltrated Democracy City™ by scaling its height. The Old White House was burned to the ground in August of 2014, not long after the official opening of D.C., by Canadian nationalist terrorists calling themselves the United Empire Loyalists. They did so to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the original burning of the White House by British forces during the War of 1812, to the indifference and bafflement of a public with no knowledge of such **ancient** history.

The one famous landmark of the Old City to escape an ignominious fate has been the VietNam War Memorial, which is guarded day and night by a group of down and out vets known as The Recordkeepers. These quasi-deranged street vets recognize a kinship between themselves and the slain champions of the First Cold War. This connection became increasingly obvious after the notorious violence that erupted during a march of boosted rights activists to the Wall in 2019. The long black memorial is the only stretch of wall in the Old City to escape the territorial markings of graffiti artists. Several gang members with designs on this virgin territory have died at Recordkeeper hands, still clutching their cans of spraypaint.

The Old City: or, for short, "O.C." Also known as The Original City, because it is inhabited mostly by African-Americans, many of whom now refer to themselves as the "O.P.", or Original People.

ancient: due to deteriorating educational standards, only a minority of Americans are versed in the history of their nation. Consequently, any event preceding the debut of the television show *The Brady Bunch* is considered to have taken place during "ancient," and therefore irrelevant, times. Those few Americans who do know their history are likely to be members of the ruling class.



Irony in action - "Johnny Reb" works security at the last undefiled sculpture of Lincoln.

Note that the Society Parameters listed for Washington D.C. on p. 246 of *Underground* refer to the floating city, not the O.C. The overall Parameters for the entire vast sprawl of the O.C. are: Wealth 4, Safety 4, Government Purity 4, Quality of Life 4, Education 4, Necessities 6, Take Home Pay 10. This represents average figures for various O.C. neighbourhoods, each of which have their own Parameter figures. For example, the area of the old seat of government directly below Democracy City™ is known as Monument Valley; its Parameters are 2/2/4/2/2/2/10.

Responsibility for governing the O.C. has not been conclusively assigned. In a game of jurisdictional hot potato, several agencies accuse one another of abandoning their obligation to service the area. O.C. residents still elect a mayor and council, but these positions are largely those of figureheads. Neither the current mayor nor her councillors actually live in the O.C.

The Foster administration maintains that the Edutainment Consortium took on all liabilities for the O.C., including the responsibility to provide governmental services, as a condition of the contract to build Democracy City™. The administration has gone to court to force the company to comply with their contract. The Edutainment Consortium has disputed the terms of the agreement; no doubt the court case will drag on for a decade or so. In the meantime, a temporary court order has forced the federal government and Edutainment Consortium to work together to service the O.C. Cooperation between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Edutainment Consortium has been, to say the least, strained, and many neighborhoods go without basic services for weeks or even months.

This means that the *de facto* rulers of the O.C. are its powerful gangsters. A quartet of boosted mobsters conduct an ongoing turf war over the neighborhoods of the O.C., using many smaller gangs as proxies. Currently gaining the upper

PARAMETERS FOR THE
OLD CITY

LITTLE GOVERNMENT
IN THE OLD CITY

LACK OF
GOVERNMENT
RESPONCIBILITY HAS
LEFT THE OLD CITY IN
DISREPAIR

GANGS NOW RUN THE
OLD CITY

WAGS

WAGS

MUCH OF THE OLD
CITY'S POPULATION
IS MENTALLY
DISTURBED

MANY OF THOSE
MENTALLY ILL ARE
BOOSTED VETS

THE PURPOSES OF
DEMOCRACY CITY™

TOURISM AND
EDUTAINMENT ARE
A PREVALENT
THEME IN D.C.

hand is El Decameron, an alumni of the TWD 11th Airmobile with ties to California's notorious Santa Claws. Also in contention for the role of boss of bosses are the mysterious Blue Monk, the vicious Rat Bastard, and Dream Keeper, an eccentric thug whose servitors are all members of personality cult espousing a particularly fuzzy brand of New Age philosophy. It is rumored that the Blue Monk has CIA ties, but this may well be **disinfo**

For some reason, the O.C. attracts more than its share of the mentally disturbed. A significant percentage of the nation's deluded develop fixations on Washington. Typically they blame it for all of their ills. Many O.C. residents believe that they are the involuntary subjects of experimentation by the CIA, NSA., **ASS**, FDA, or other government agencies. They migrate here from all over the country to attempt to confront their tormentors face-to-face, or simply because they want to wrap themselves in their sense of persecution.

A growing percentage of the O.C.'s untreated mentally ill population is made up of boosted vets who have gone permanently around the bend due to effects of metagenic feedback trauma. Typical O.C. boosted psychos were given a patriotic persona during the Slumberland VR process, and therefore feel that Washington is their natural home. Some of them attempt to enter D.C., and are rebuffed. Unable to process this rejection, many of them fantasize that the O.C. is still the seat of government, and that they are government agents protecting democracy from the forces of evil. The role of evildoer is projected upon unwilling O.C. residents, who are sometimes killed by these deranged boosts. Running into these characters is a particular hazard of visiting Monument Valley. Some are lone wolves, while others have banded together in gangs. Each of these is invariably called The Freedom Squad by its members. Anywhere else, these lunatics would be taken off the streets, but here they have a safe playground. Safe for them, that is.

Democracy City™ serves two purposes. It is both the seat of government of the United States, and a lucrative tourist attraction run by the Edutainment Consortium.

The Edutainment Consortium is a company that was formed by an alliance of various corporations, with the specific purpose of building and maintaining Democracy City™. Each separate attraction in Democracy City™ was designed by a member of the consortium to promote its products or corporate image. Many attractions are based on the old monuments and historic sites of the Old City, but have been jazzed up to appeal to modern tastes and attention spans. For example, the Lincoln Memorial now features an **audioanimatronic** robot who recites the Gettysburg Address — after singing the latest MacRaney's jingle. Some monuments considered to be of little interest to a contemporary audience have not been included in D.C.. Among these is the VietNam War Memorial.

However, its basic design has been duplicated for several competing memorials of more recent Second Cold War conflicts. The codenames of slain boosts from

disinfo: Short for "disinformation", false information deliberately planted to do harm to another person or organization. Disinfo is D.C.'s primary industry.

ASS: Acronym for the Justice Department's Anti-Sedition Squad, in charge of monitoring the activities of individuals deemed a threat to the state. Curiously, its agents prefer to avoid the acronym and always use the full term for their department.

audioanimatronic: Complex mechanical mannequins capable of lip-synching taped speeches were first developed by the Dizzy company for its theme park attractions. In 2021, this technique has been refined to the Nth degree — the Lincoln robot even displays a slight nasal drip on wintry days.

WASH

anti-war activists: A token few public figures opposed to the war are still allowed access to the media to promote their views.

Some critics have accused the Federal Department of Deeds and Dissemination of approving only the least mediagenic and most irritating representatives of this belief system.

various conflicts are displayed on long walls of interactive computer screens. Visitors touching the name of any boost are then treated to a video display of that individual's death. Actual footage is used whenever available, but most of the displays are computer-animated reconstructions, complete with sound effects. There are three of these memorials operating inside Democracy City™, operated by Trans-World Devastation, Allied Mayhem Incorporated, and Disposable Heroes, Inc. The media-savvy TWI built the first memorial, with its competitors quickly following suit. Unlike most attractions of D.C., these charge no admission fees. Initially even **anti-war activists** applauded this uncharacteristic acceptance of moral responsibility on the part of the militant corporations. They were soon appalled to discover that the monuments' graphic depictions of the brutality of war only served to encourage young men and women visiting them to consider enlisting. Recruitment booths are conveniently stationed near the exits of all three monuments.

The Capitol Building and White House, along with most other government buildings, have also been redesigned to reflect the new realities of 2021. Most of the changes are to ensure security in an age of grudge-bearing boosts. Like most government buildings, they have anti-aircraft emplacements mounted on their roofs, ready to deal with any incursions by terrorist aircraft or flying boosts. Their walls are super-reinforced to render them safe from missile attacks. Rumor has it that both the Capitol and White House have been designed to withstand a direct hit from a tactical nuke, but officials refuse to either confirm or deny such reports.

getting in

The physical details of Washington are covered in Chapter Three of the *Means* book, but before getting to the nitty gritty of power, who holds it, and how to get it, a few specific notes on how to get into the sandbox in the first place are called for.

One of the prime concerns of the Edutainment Consortium is security. Their plans for the city had to pass rigorous safety requirements before winning approval from the administration and Congress. Since the officials concerned were looking out for their own skins, the graft and incompetence endemic to most big government projects was not present here. Security in D.C. may not be foolproof — nothing is — but it is very difficult to circumvent. Meticulous research, heavy-duty connections, remarkable skill and considerable luck are required to mount an armed incursion here. Almost all attacks on sites or individuals in D.C. since its construction have been covertly sponsored by one government agency or another.

There are two ways to enter D.C. — as a tourist, or on business. Both sorts of person are screened, presenting obstacles to would-be infiltrators.

Tourists entering D.C. must travel through a guard station where they are x-rayed for concealed weapons, fingerprinted, retina-scanned, and DNA tested.

MOST
GOVERNMENTAL
BUILDINGS HAVE
BEEN REDESIGNED
FOR SECURITY

GETTING INTO D.C.

SECURITY IN D.C. IS
VERY HIGH

WASH



MEANS

introduction

WAGS

VISITOR
REGISTRATION IS
DISGUISED AS AN
ATTRACTION

They do not object to this because the entire procedure takes place under the guise of a popular attraction entitled *The Price of Freedom is Vigilance*. Friendly audioanimatronic figures of Father Charles Coughlin, Joseph McCarthy, G. Gordon Liddy, Oliver North, and Edwin Meese guide visitors through the process as they explain that a free society must not extend its freedoms to those who would destroy those freedoms. This display is sponsored by Birch Tree Associates, producers of *Vigilance Team*, a vidnet action-adventure show featuring computer reconstructions of McCarthy, Liddy, North, and company.

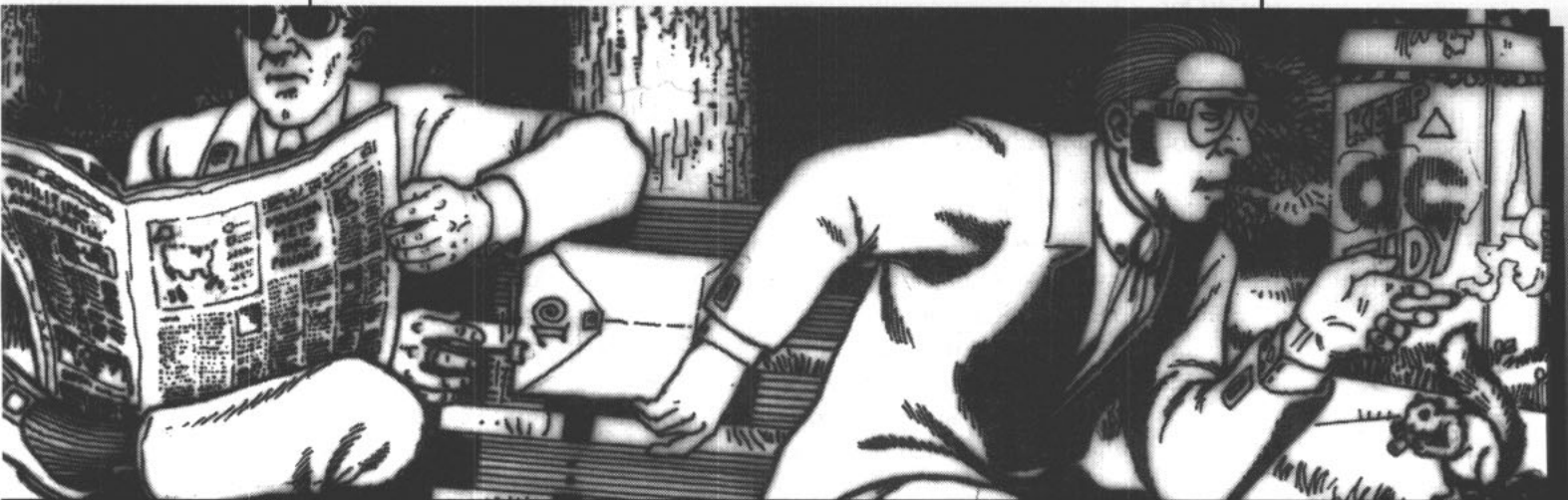
boosted agents of Edutainment Security: Typically six are on duty at any given time. Shift changes are staggered. Use the stats for Peace Force Officers on p. 232 of Underground.

EVERYONE
ENTERING THE CITY
IS CAREFULLY
SCREENED

Information on visitors to D.C. is immediately transferred to the ASS databanks. (Other government agencies may also have access to this data, with or without the knowledge and consent of the ASS.) The DNA information is cross-referenced with service records from the militant corporations, in order to positively identify any boosts entering the city. Individuals with outstanding criminal warrants are arrested on the spot by **boosted agents of Edutainment Security**. Others who have done nothing wrong but are considered by the ASS to have a high risk potential are politely but firmly denied access to the city; their admission fee is cheerfully refunded. Those who object to the bum's rush are somewhat less politely ejected by the above-mentioned boosted security officers. Sometimes the ASS will permit individuals on their watch list to enter the city; they're placed under surveillance by ASS agents. These are usually cases where the ASS wishes to give suspected dissidents enough rope to hang themselves, either providing grounds for an arrest, or leading to the identification of the troublemakers' contacts and accomplices in the city.

VISITORS MUST
WEAR SECURITY
BADGES

Visitors approved by the ASS are issued security badges which they must wear at all times. These badges are equipped with microchips and minispeakers. These are to ensure that tourists remain within approved boundaries.



The morning routine - a pleasant walk in the park, the morning issue and another envelope from the ASS.

WAGS

MEANS

members of the press:

This gives federal officials a speedy way of getting pesky investigative reporters out of their hair — offending journalists can be stripped of their security pass, effectively barring them from Washington. Rather than lose their access, reporters routinely self-censor their reports, omitting material damaging to the relevant screening agencies.

Tourist zones are separated from high security areas by a network of electric eye barriers. When visitors wander out of bounds, a beam from an electronic boundary activates the chip in their badges. The badges then issue a firm but polite audio warning to the errant tourists, urging them to return to approved areas. If the tourists do not comply, a non-boosted Edutainment security patrol is dispatched to the scene to herd them back in the right direction. These patrols can call for boosted back-up units if need be.

In some areas, the penalty for tripping an electric eye signal can be more severe than an voice-synthesized tongue-lashing. Tourists on the White House tour can be targetted for fire from an automated machinegun emplacement if they ignore warnings to return to approved areas. Visitors on the White House tour usually burst into spontaneous applause when one of their number is felled in this way.

Anyone seeking access to the high security areas of the city must also go through a screening procedure. Any location which is not a tourist attraction is considered high security. This includes not only obvious places where government business is done, such as administrative buildings and foreign embassies, but also private residences of the rich and powerful, and even certain exclusive shops and restaurants. The system is designed to shield the influential from having to deal with the unwashed masses. Although the proliferation of terrorist organizations means that members of the elite must always be on the lookout for surprise attacks, security is also used as a pretence to display the status of those who are in the ballpark. As Senator Alden Raitt (P — British Columbia) once observed, "You're nobody till somebody wants to kill you."

Elected federal officials are automatically granted access to all areas of the city. Federal appointees are extensively background checked by the FBI, ASS, FDDD, and NSA before being offered positions; access to the city is automatically granted if the applicant is deemed suitable for the post. Anyone else wishing to do business in the city must submit themselves to a full background check as well. This includes everyone from congressional staffers to **members of the press** to corporate lobbyists to tourist guides. Anyone with a shady past — this probably includes most PCs — must have a connection of some sort with one of the screening agencies to wangle access. Agencies have been known to blackmail applicants, granting them access but demanding certain favors in return.

The screening process produces a confidential dossier on everyone legally present in the city. These dossiers sometimes appear on the black market. Officials of the various screening agencies sometimes trade them for other information, or simply sell them for cash. PCs will find that this cuts both ways. On one hand, they may find that their enemies have access to their deepest secrets. On the other hand, they may be able to get ahold of similar information packages on their opponents. Screening dossiers may be extremely accurate or riddled with disinfo. Since the best way to ensure wide and immediate distribution of a document in Washington is to make it as secret as possible, officials wishing to smear others often arrange to plant damaging information in their dossiers. Corrupt officials of the screening agencies can make as much

ACCESS TO HIGH-
SECURITY AREAS IS
RESTRICTED

FEDERAL OFFICIALS
HAVE HIGH-SECURITY
ACCESS

RECORDS ARE KEPT
ON EVERY PERSON
ENTERING D.C.

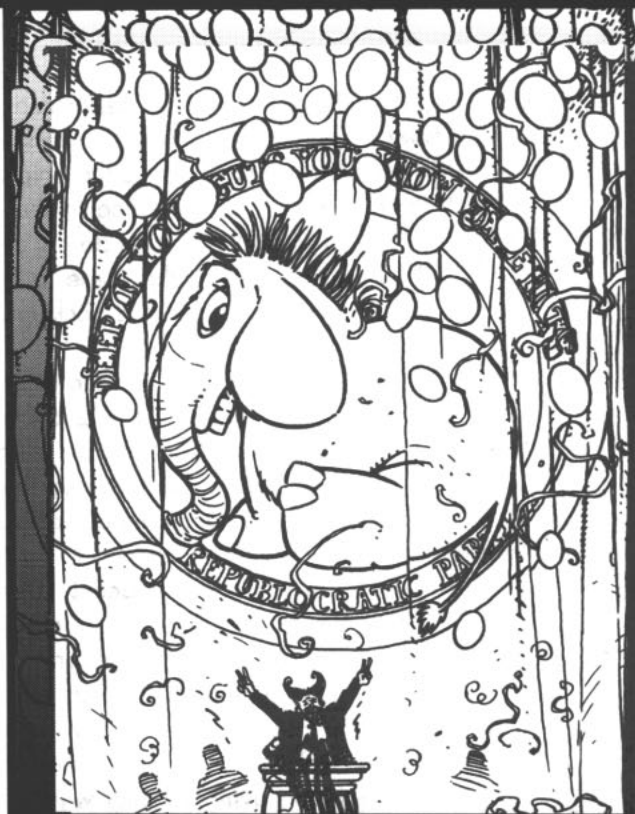
SECURITY BADGES
ARE COLOR-CODED
TO PRODUCE A
FACADE OF
"STATUS"

money planting false information in dossiers as they can selling them.

Those granted access are issued photo ID tags, which must be worn at all times. These come in a number of colors, each indicating a particular level of access. These go up the color wheel from violet to red, red being the highest level. In real terms, these distinctions mean nothing — a person with a violet access tag can go anywhere a person with a red one can. In status terms, the difference is enormous. Badges higher than blue, or second level, are rarely given out to individuals outside the government. Inside the government, vicious bureaucratic struggles are waged by individuals with low-level tags seeking to have their color level upgraded. A popular rumor has it that the Gates administration instituted this system in order to channel its officials' unquenchable appetite for intrigue down a completely pointless avenue, the reasoning being that if its appointees were devoting all of their scheming time to the question of their badge colors, they wouldn't be doing things to undermine the President's agenda. Whether or not it was planned to do so, the badge issue has certainly gripped the imagination of Washington's bureaucrats. At D.C. social functions, guests often sort themselves out by badge color, snubbing those with lower colors and fawning on the bearers of higher level IDs. Some officials have even wiggled out and gone on killing sprees after being denied a color upgrade. Others have exchanged privileged information, vast amounts of cash, or sexual favors for better badges. In fact, when a proposal by the Foster administration to cut costs by eliminating the different badge colors was leaked, it was howled down by Washington insiders. Those who had struggled for high colors did not want to surrender something they had fought so hard for, even if its benefits were **completely bogus**

THE HIGHEST
OFFICIALS GO
WITHOUT BADGES

However, real status in Washington comes for those who don't need to wear badges at all, because they are instantly recognizable without them. These are people not even the most clued-out security officer would be uninformed enough to challenge. For one thing, they're usually encircled by a knot of intimidating and official-looking bodyguards, often of the SS-BD. This rarefied circle includes the President, First Lady, the Vice-President, the party leaders in the House and Senate, along with perhaps a few others. In D.C. slang, these people are known as the **tagless**. While most of the tagless are high-level elected officials or their close aides, some private individuals qualify for the honor. For example, Frederick Furrier, head of the politically connected militant corporation Allied Mayhem Incorporated, is a sufficiently well-known in Washington to be considered tagless. The heads of competing firms are not so honored.



HOOPLAH!—The Republicratic Party National Convention

completely bogus:

Journalist Peter Argot has used the great Washington badge battles as a metaphor for superpower conflict in the Third World, where the more obvious it becomes that nothing will be gained from a given war, the more reluctant Congress is to admit defeat and withdraw.

tagless: A term therefore denoting the upper echelons of power. As in, "I may just be the junior Senator from Nowhere today, but one day I'm gonna be tagless! Then you'll be sorry you ever crossed me, you worm!"



CHAPTER ONE

D.C. 101

"Our government doesn't work because the founding fathers designed it not to work. It was a system called checks and balances, and the founders put it there because they didn't trust government not to turn into tyranny. If no one has the power to do anything, no one has the power to oppress. The founders, however, would no doubt pale in horror were they to look upon us today and see the result of their planning. Now we have the tyranny of the passed buck, where no one takes responsibility for anything, nothing gets done, and everybody points the finger at someone else. It's checks and balances all right — our politicians are depositing the checks and watching their balances go up!"

— From the inaugural address of President Raymond Milkovich, 1/1/09

institutions

Modern democracy, probably because it was designed by lawyers, is an adversarial process. Candidates for office go up against one another in a combat of ideas. One candidate wins, the other loses. Once the winning candidates for various offices all get together in their respective institutions of office, they then begin to pit themselves against one another, bringing the conflict of ideas to another level. Votes are taken, and some ideas prevail over others.

Although politicians might argue in theories and abstract terms — about rights and responsibilities, about freedoms and ideals — their real business is relentlessly practical. It's about money — deciding how much in taxes to take from the people, and where to spend the dollars they raise. Good and just ideas for places to spend money always exceed the available money by a factor of about ten to one, even after massive and unsupportable borrowing. When money is spent on any project, there are people who stand to get a cut. If a

LEGISLATION ISN'T
ABOUT RIGHTS AND
RESPONCIBILITIES, IT'S
ABOUT MONEY

means



chapter one

IN D.C., POWER IS MONEY

given chunk of money is spent on housing for boosted vets, it makes the boosts happy. But it's even more pleasing to construction contractors and the manufacturers of building supplies. If that money is instead taken and spent to subsidize the makers of vidnet educational programs, this makes educators happy, and perhaps even enriches the lives of the children who get to see these programs. It's even better for the vidnet producers, whose bank balances grow whether their programs are any good or not. It is the politicians who must decide which worthy project gets funded — and which business interest wins out. Politics is a struggle of competing business interests over a limited pot of money, and those politicians who control the purse strings are the ones with the real power. When looking to see who really has **spin** and who's just full of air, follow the popular D.C. catchphrase and "**follow the money.**"

Different positions in the complex Washington hierarchy have different degrees of direct or indirect control over the outflow of public money. It's an oversimplification to say that the power of an office is directly proportional to the tax dollars it controls. For example, ASS agents are very influential because they have information to use as a bargaining chip, not because they can decide which manufacturer to buy their paper clips from. But in general, the more influence an institution has over spending, the more desirable it is, and the more vigorously competing politicians will fight to capture it.

This chapter looks at prominent Washington institutions, who currently occupies them, and where their power flows from.

the foster administration

THE PRESIDENT

Americans have always devoted a great deal of political attention to their Presidents. The founding fathers designed a system with a rather weak Presidency, but this is hard to tell from media reporting of the White House and its occupants. The President appoints the heads of the bureaucracy and issues policy directives to its various agencies. He — and so far American presidents have all been male — also has wide influence over the conduct of foreign policy, powers which have been slowly expanded by various Presidents over the years. For example, although the framers of the Constitution intended for the Senate to have a veto over Presidential declarations of war, the move to commission militant corporations to fight America's wars has circumvented this check in the system. Now the President can essentially declare war by fiat, since technically speaking US forces are no longer involved in any conflict. He could be punished politically, if not legally, for embarking on an unpopular war, but so far the populace hasn't met a Second Cold War conflict it didn't like.

THE PRESIDENT'S POWER IS MOSTLY SUPERFICIAL

Compared to his broad war powers, the President still has surprisingly little influence over domestic policy. Legislation is the province of the House and Senate; the administration can draft legislation, but has no way of forcing even members of its own party to pass anything. He can issue orders to the bureaucracy, but its vast and feuding agencies are often resistant to change.

spin: D.C. jargon for power. Money equals spin, sex equals spin, Q rating equals spin. As a verb, means to target someone for assassination, the ultimate demonstration of one player's power over another. A spin doctor is a hired killer; spin control means a situation in which the official ordering the hit is sufficiently insulated from the spin doctor. In archaic usage, spin referred to the interpretation of an event by party spokesmen for the benefit of the news media.

follow the money: Common phrase used by insiders trying to understand a puzzling political maneuver by a respected or powerful operator. As in, "You wonder why Gibson is suddenly in favor of escalation in Peru? Follow the money." First uttered by Deep Throat, the inside source who clued reporters Woodward and Bernstein into the near-ancient Watergate scandal. Recently repopularized by the vidnet show Camelot: The Next Generation.

WEEK

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means

permacampaign:
Modern political
operatives now
recognize that control
of the President's
media image is the
central instrument of
power. The higher a
President's approval
rating, the more he
can do. Therefore, a
constant campaign is
waged to keep the
President's image
appealing to the
narrow demographic
that still votes.

Darryl Prince:
Complete details on
this Plutocratic party
mouthpiece can be
found in the
*Underground
Notebook*.

The credo of career federal officials is "Presidents may come and go, but we're here to stay." This is especially true in 2021, when most agencies are riddled by rogue units, and the chain of command is breaking down.

To a large degree, the breakdown of the bureaucracy is the result of the Plutocratic party's attitude towards it. Plutocrats, who believe that government operations are inherently doomed to fail, have controlled the White House for 12 years now, and have been quite content to see the efficiency of federal institutions erode over that period. Critics call this collapse of public enterprise the Plutocrat's self-fulfilling prophecy; it certainly furthers their argument that most of the functions of government should either be privatized or abandoned.

Without strong Constitutional powers, and with decreasing control over the bureaucracy, the power of the Presidency depends more than ever on manipulating the media. Legislators, even those of his own party, can be counted on to follow the President's wishes only when they fear him. They fear him when his popularity with their voters exceeds their own. In order to make sure that this is the case, Presidential handlers manage what they refer to as the **permacampaign**. In this mode, an appearance on the **Darryl Prince** show is more important than a summit with the Chinese head of state. The coverage of a summit is more important than the summit itself. In effect, when Americans elect a President, they elect a national TV host with a four-year contract and a four-year option to renew. If the host's **VQ rating** stays up, he



"Spell my name right."—Peter Argot goes out to collect his daily mail.

THE PRESIDENT'S
REAL POWER COMES
FROM THE MEDIA

chapter one

Lucas

can cajole the rest of the power structure into doing things his way. If not, gridlock results, and nothing gets done.

One of the interesting ironies of this situation is that in order to seem powerful and make legislators fear him, a President must act as if he has more influence over events than he really does. This becomes a problem when election years happen to coincide with downturns in the economy. Presidents have little direct influence over the economy. But it is Presidents who get blamed when things go sour. Turfing Presidents out of office is rather like the prehistoric pagan system of crowning a Corn King and then sacrificing him at harvest time.

Charles Foster: For more on the career and personality of the President of the United States of America, see the *Underground Notebook*.

VOTING IS STILL
STRONGLY
EFFECTED BY THE
ECONOMY

The low percentage of Americans who actually vote generally do so exclusively on the state of their pocketbooks when the economy is in bad shape. In good times, they might feel they have the luxury of voting on other issues, such as freedom of speech. The Plutocrats have managed to stay in office despite a stagnant economy by shifting wealth from the wallets of the many to the wallets of the few. As the gap between rich and poor widens, the educated, voting elite is doing rather well for itself. If the cost of this is that many more people slide into miserable poverty, so be it.

However, this is not the sort of situation that the elite wants to admit to itself. Even the most ruthless greedhead wants to feel blameless, if not philanthropic, when looking at the country's worsening problems. This is the key to the success of President **Charles Foster**; he's the feel-good politician of the decade. He's been able to convince his corporate supporters that they're doing the right thing by fighting for lower taxes and ruthlessly downsizing their work forces. It's hard to believe that pushing more people into poverty will be beneficial to the economy in the long run. But Foster manages to convince them with his classic and heartfelt "up by our own bootstraps" speech. Off the record, one former Foster speechwriter summed up his boss' political credo as: "Find out what people desperately want to believe, and then convince them of it."

THE PLUTOCRATIC
ECONOMIC POLICIES

The economic policies of the corporate backers of the Plutocratic party are actually a recipe for disaster. The US used to have a robust economy because it also had the largest consumer market in the world. If a single corporation slashes its payroll through massive and permanent layoffs, it benefits through increased profits. But if all of America's corporations engage in mass firings, as they are doing, they cut their own throats by severely reducing the number of people who can afford to buy their products. The Second Cold War is an attempt to replace the lost domestic market with foreign markets; but now that is nothing but a costly stalemate none of the parties can afford to withdraw from.

The challenge of the Plutocratic party is to continue to keep the wool over the eyes of voters, and convince them that the economic misery of the underclass is merely a sign of increased growth, that free speech is dangerous to democracy, and that America's problems are all due to the efforts of subversives and troublemakers. That glow up ahead is the dawning of a new day, not the

Lucas

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means

WEEK

O.C. 101

Clinton Gore:
can also be found in
the *Underground*
Notebook.

Bert Betton: is
described in a
notebook page at the
end of this book.

Stefanie Foster: AURA:
4. Artist (Performer):
6, Charm: 7. "Jokes
about the first lady are
as old as the hills, but
I assure you, I have no
role in policy-making.
No one elected me,
after all."

headlights of an oncoming transport truck. It is Foster's warmth and charisma that make this absurd ideological concoction as sweet as Popsi Cola™ — for the moment, at any rate.

In short, Foster is a strong President because his party holds strong positions in both House and Senate, and because Plutocratic legislators recognize his skills as a vidnet pitchman as unparalleled. The minute his VQ ratings go down, he'll lose his influence over the legislative agenda. Until that day comes, he will be viewed with awe and reverence.

The White House is not a monolithic entity that speaks with one voice, however. Serving under Foster is a large cabinet and staff, who have their own internal struggles for the President's ear.

The key to power within the White House is access to the President. Having control over a large bureaucracy with a massive budget means little if the President doesn't listen to the cabinet secretary in question. For example, despite his high media profile, Veteran's Affairs Secretary **Clinton Gore** has little influence within the White House, because he doesn't get to meet regularly with Foster. When he does get to see Foster, it's in the company of other secretaries and advisors.

Because access is so precious, the one who decides who gets in becomes very powerful indeed. As in most administrations, this role is taken by the Chief of Staff, a political operative who is in charge of running the day to day operations of the White House. Usually the Chief of Staff is required to play "bad cop" to the President's "good cop", and nowhere is this true truer than the Foster administration, where the position is held by the tenacious **Bert Betton**. He decides who gets in to see the President and when. Cabinet secretaries are therefore careful to curry his favor and stay on his good side, which is not always an easy thing to do. Betton disciplines White House staffers and manages political strategy. He is also, like all high-level appointees, required from time to time to appear in the media to advance or defend the President's agenda.

There are only a few people who can get to see Foster at any time, whether or not Betton gives the OK. Of course, the first lady, **Stefanie Foster**, heads the list. Mrs. Foster, in accordance with focus group research, has decided to play her role as first lady as a throwback to the ancient days when political wives smiled a great deal but said little. Plutocratic pollsters found that both male and female business executives dislike spouses who get involved in their mate's professional lives. So Stefanie sticks to safe and non-controversial charity work and public appearances on behalf of her husband. There are occasional rumors that Stefanie is the power behind the throne at the White House. These arise because those who've met Charles one-on-one have discovered that he isn't exactly an intellectual giant. Those who've been similarly close to Stefanie laugh at suggestions that she's a Lady Macbeth; she shows even less interest in the nitty gritty of issues than her husband does.

ACCESS TO THE
PRESIDENT IS ACCESS
TO POWER

BERT BETTON DECIDES
WHO GETS ACCESS TO
THE PRESIDENT

FIRST LADY, STEFANIE
FOSTER HAS
UNLIMITED ACCESS

WEEK



means

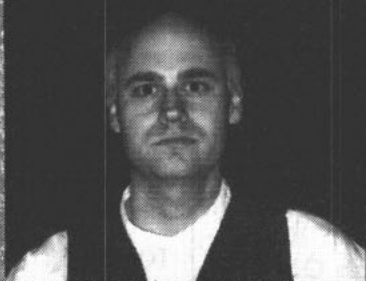
chapter one

GEOFFERY SNEED
ALSO HAS ACCESS

A more often mentioned candidate for the "real power in the White House" role is National Security Advisor **Geoffery Sneed**. He has an antagonistic relationship with Bert Betton. A clash early on let Betton know who was who, and he stopped questioning Sneed's assumption of twenty-four-hours-a-day access to the President. Betton would skewer Sneed if he had any idea how to do so safely. The more he looks into Sneed, the less confident he feels about tackling him.

Geoffery Sneed: The sinister head of the NSC is described in detail in the *Underground Notebook*.

Robert Brooks



U.S. Vice-President

INT: 4

Administration: 3, Politicking: 1

"Bert, Bert, I implore you, just let me have half an hour with him. Half an hour! I am Vice President of the United States, you know."

D.C. NOVELS AND SCREENPLAYS
Collector's Series

One person who's definitely out in the cold when it comes to access is **Vice-President Robert Brooks**. A former Senator from Oregon, Brooks was chosen at the Plutocratic convention to bring regional balance to the ticket. Brooks is a reverse image of the Commander in Chief; he's an intellectual and policy expert with all of the charisma of a used toothbrush. Once in Washington, he was exiled to a distant office and told to keep quiet. His chief duty is attending funerals of foreign heads of state. Brooks is hoping to use his time as Vice-President to assemble the connections for a run at the Presidency in 2028 — assuming that Foster wins again in '24. Lately Brooks is becoming increasingly worried about the chances of this happening. Unlike most of his colleagues, he thinks more than two years ahead, and sees mounting losses for corporate America as it loses more and more of its domestic market. He's afraid that the Plutocratic party's corporate backers will abandon it if this happens, and he wants to enact policies now to curb further job losses. His pleas fall on completely deaf ears in the Foster White House,

THE
VICE-PRESIDENT

however; staffers snicker that Brooks is turning soft. Actually, he couldn't care less about the people who lose their jobs; it's the business who will lose customers that he's worried about.

Somewhat more influential than the Vice-President are the various cabinet secretaries. They're in charge of seeing that the administration's directives to its agencies are carried out, and also act as policy advisors in their areas of expertise.

THE ATTORNEY
GENERAL

Victoria Darnhelm, Attorney General: is a rising star of the administration. Young and attractive (as politicians go), she has a hard-assed media persona that pundits lap up like milk. Recently involved with a failed hostage rescue mission that ended up with an entire school bus full of school kids being blown to bits, Darnhelm's popularity went up when she forthrightly accepted responsibility for the botched raid. Darnhelm efficiently manages all sorts of shady deals for the

Victoria Darnhelm



Attorney General

INT: 3

WILL: 3

AURA: 3

Gun Combat (Pistol): 3 Charm: 5

Detective (Law/Police Procedure): 3

Intimidation: 5 Leadership: 4

"Don't jam with me. I eat bobos like you for breakfast."

D.C. NOVELS AND SCREENPLAYS
Collector's Series

WICK means

Department of Immigration, Naturalization and Procreation: is detailed further in the *Underground Notebook*.

Plutocratic party's corporate masters, making her the most corrupt attorney general in history. Considering some of the competition in the past, this is quite an achievement. The heads of the FBI, the ASS, and **Department of Immigration, Naturalization and Procreation** all report to her.

Hamilton Volt, Secretary of the Interior: is a tired political hack who's been given the job of dismantling what's left of the National Parks Service and turning over its resources to private industry. With various rival corporations vying for access to the spoils, Volt has managed to enrich himself rather successfully.

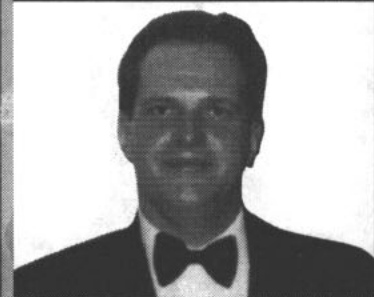
Henry Redpath, Secretary of Defense: Before serving in the Foster administration, Redpath worked as an executive in the conflict business, and was at different times a board member of both AMI and TWD. His chief duty is managing a small bureaucracy that awards contracts to various conflict firms and oversees the performance of these contracts. He also offers strategic advice to President

Foster, recommending particularly juicy wars to start. Unofficially, Redpath's chief job is to make sure that the conflict firms keep the money flowing into Plutocratic reelection campaigns. Redpath spends most of his personal time figuring out new ways to cheat on his wife.

Joanne Sussman, Labor Secretary: is in charge of weakening or circumventing what remains of labor legislation. She's a disorganized sort, and not much of a manager. But her role as dispenser of favors to big business makes her popular anyway. She's taking illegal gifts from the corporations, but someone with more ambition could squeeze out five times the bribes.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Hamilton Volt



Secretary of the Interior

INT: 1

Administration: 5

Leadership: 2

"Putting a dam there would wipe out the last of the jewel-throated snail darters. That'll cost you extra."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAPERS Collector's Series

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Henry Redpath



Secretary of the Interior

INT: 3

AURA: 2

Administration: 5

Business: 8

"Fred, I'd love to give you the Micronesia contract, but you should know Don is gonna underbid the pants off this current offer of yours. Get your accountants to number crunch this one again, or it goes to TWD."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAPERS Collector's Series

Joanne Sussman



Entertainment Secretary

Administration: 1

"Uh, let me get back to you on that."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAPERS Collector's Series

LABOR SECRETARY

chapter one

ENTERTAINMENT SECRETARY

Regina Deluxe



Entertainment Secretary

WILL: 4 AURA: 3

Artist (Performing): 5 Politicking: 4

Business (Entrepreneur): 3

"Today's news conference is sponsored by Nintendo/Fox studios, the people who brought you Urban Weapon 5."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAKES
Collector's Series

Regina Deluxe, Entertainment Secretary: is a singer with a sexy image who had a number of hits in the early '10s. Foster brought her on board to compete with the flashiness of Republicrat stalwarts Jody Yong — see p. 33 — and the Atomic Kennedy. Her job is to exhort the entertainment industry to produce material "in accordance with American values." Since the Plutocratic party defines this as aiming squarely for the lowest common denominator, the media giants don't exactly need to be coaxed. Really Deluxe's job is to coordinate appearances where Foster is seen with popular stars, and to use the White House as a platform for promoting high-profile products by the entertainment corporations. Deluxe has aroused the anger of radical conservatives from the NAS, and her supposedly cured juice addiction is often used against her in public debate. (Actually Regina still uses, but has so far been very careful not to get caught.)

SECRETARY OF STATE

SURGEON GENERAL

Dr. Irene Miller



Surgeon General

INT: 2 AURA: 5 Medicine: 4

Administration: 2 Psychology: 3

Genetic Engineering: 2 Charm: 5

"It's not the state's responsibility if you didn't engage in proper preventative care, now is it? Next caller, please."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAKES
Collector's Series

Stephen Sammakbashi, Secretary of State:

Born of Iranian refugee parents, Steve Sammakbashi is billed as the classic immigrant success story. The truth is a little darker — his father was a former SAVAK agent, a member of the brutal state security police of the former shah. Stephen followed in his father's footsteps, signing on to an entry-level job in the NSC after a sterling undergrad career at Harvard. His smarts and ambition won him the attention of Geoffery Sneed, who adopted Sammakbashi as a protege. Sammakbashi was instrumental in planning the overthrow of the Iranian fundamentalist regime, and was rewarded

with a higher profile at the NSC, from which he's jumped — with the continuing help of Sneed — to the top diplomatic position in the administration. He's a hawk and hardliner who can be counted on to follow Sneed's lead in all policy matters. In his personal life, he's a straight arrow who wouldn't dream of exploiting his office for personal gain. He's hoping that, like Sneed himself, he will be able to remain in place despite any change in administration at the White House. He's an avid gun collector and often speaks out on behalf of the National Assault Rifle Association.

Dr. Irene Miller, Surgeon General: Responsible for the Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. Miller has a high VQ rating due to her weekly phone-in show *Your Body, Right or Wrong?*, which is carried on CVC. Her mantra is that we must all learn to take responsibility for our own bodies, which is doubletalk for, "You're on your own, folks!" A

Stephen Sammakbashi



Secretary of State

DEX: 2 INT: 5 WILL: 4

Administration: 9 Gun Combat: 4

Leadership: 2

Military Science (Tactics): 9

"Of course we're losing the Yama conflict -- that's precisely why we can't withdraw prematurely."

D.C. NOVA'S AND SHAKES
Collector's Series

WEEK



means

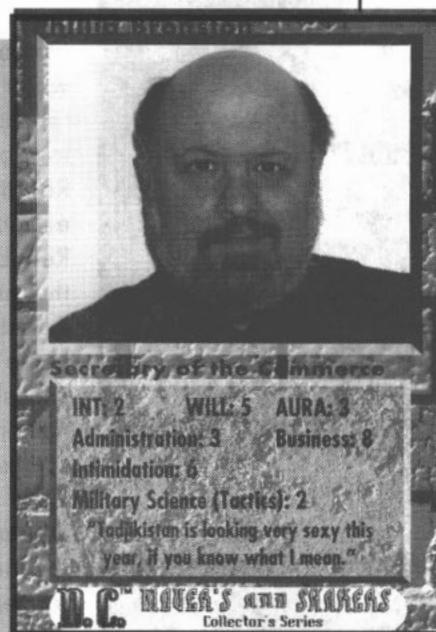
trade negotiations: In diplomatic circles, the term "opening trade negotiations" has become a euphemism for threatening to declare war unless the weaker party immediately offers sweeping concessions. "Free and frank trade discussions" are particularly feared by third world governments.

grandmother with a beguiling, folksy manner and cute, gnomelike appearance, Dr. Miller manages to impart a warm and fuzzy feeling without actually doing anything to help anyone beyond the giving of advice. Despite the frantic struggling of agencies under her command, she's working to cut most health programs for the poor with a minimum of media fuss.

Phillip Bronston, Secretary of Commerce: In 2021, the position of Commerce Secretary is considered a vital part of the national security apparatus, along with State, Defense, and the NSC. One of the powerhouses of the administration is the blunt and broad-shouldered Phillip Bronston, a former CEO of Multicorp, one of the nation's largest holding companies, with a piece of virtually any industry you care to name. It is Bronston's job to design marketing/warfare strategies to open up new markets for US goods. It's his research department, working closely with NSC and NSA intelligence analysts, that targets third world countries for **trade negotiations**. Of course, his old friends at Multicorp stand to gain if any of these operations ever goes right. Bronston is an in-your-face, no compromise kind of guy, still unused to being in a situation where he isn't surrounded by yes men. He was too rich when he came into government to bother dipping his hand into the till; he honestly thinks that he's performing a great public service by deigning to serve in government.

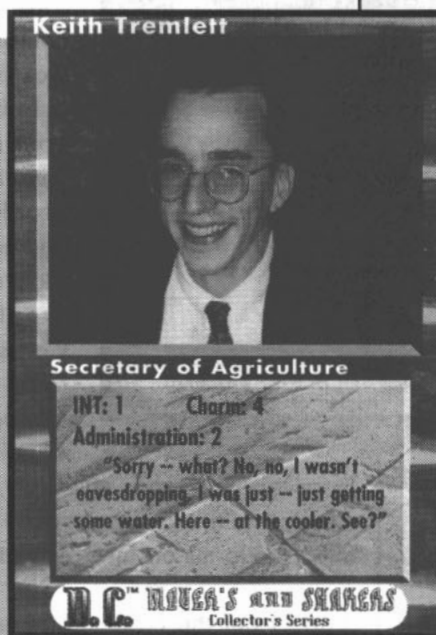
Keith Tremlett, Agriculture Secretary: is low man on the cabinet totem pole. The department was originally set up to deal with an economy based on the family farm. Now that agribusiness is merely another huge industrial concern, most of Tremlett's duties have been usurped by the more powerful Phillip Bronston. Tremlett, a former member of the House of Representatives, is just putting in time and keeping his ears open so he can get a lucrative book contract once he leaves office. He's keeping a mental file of all sorts of dirt on the administration, to inflate the value of his publishing deal. He's also becoming increasingly aware of how hard it will be to avoid being spun when he does go public.

SECRETARY OF
COMMERCE



Keith Tremlett

AGRICULTURE
SECRETARY



chapter one

Mercedes Radstrom



Education Secretary

INT: 3

Administration: 3 Artist (Writer): 7

"Maybe it's not the fault of the education system that test scores are in the toilet. We've been pouring money into public schools for decades, and it hasn't helped a bit. Maybe kids today are just stupid, ever thought of that?"

N.C. ROVER'S AND SHREWS
Collector's Series

EDUCATION

Albert Carnaghi



Treasury Secretary

Administration: 1 Business: 6

"Stay the course, that's our policy."

N.C. ROVER'S AND SHREWS
Collector's Series

SECRETARY

Treasury Secretary's chief job is to look authoritative and inspire trust on Wall Street, and this Carnaghi does quite well. His taste for inane entertainment is the only clue to his brained-out state.

Aside from the cabinet, there are a few other White House officials worthy of note:

Mercedes Radstrom, Education Secretary: is another Foster administration official whose job is to pay lip service to the importance of her department while actually doing her best to dismantle it. Unfortunately, she's a little too honest for the lip service part of the job — a former political commentator, she's used to speaking her mind. Her various controversial statements have gotten her in hot water with Republocrats, many of whom think that rebuilding the public education system is the only way to rebuild economic hope for the nation's underclass. Radstrom, openly contemptuous of public schools and especially their teachers, is a lightning rod for Republocratic criticism. Although spokespersons for the administration often distance themselves from Radstrom's more inflammatory comments, so far there's been no move to dump her. Ballparkers speculate that Foster — or Foster's handlers — want her on board to draw fire away from more important scams on the agenda.

Albert Carnaghi, Treasury Secretary: is in charge of the administration's economic policy. Carnaghi, a former banker with ties to the very beginning of the Plutocratic movement, was on the verge of a nervous breakdown just before he was offered a cabinet post. He secretly had an artificial brain installed just before the interview with Foster and the selection committee, and so impressed the President-elect with his composure and cool grasp of detailed facts that he was offered the job on the spot. Foster's people found out about the artificial brain only midway through the confirmation process. As they'd already had to withdraw three other cabinet nominees due to ethics problems, Foster didn't want to take the heat for another self-destructing appointment, and ordered the facts covered up. Anyone discovering them could do great damage to the administration. Although Carnaghi is not a font of new ideas or anything like that, he is a calm and collected manager who manages to maintain an image of trust and confidence despite an economy headed for catastrophe. The

Jordan Yaguchi



Political Advisor

INT: 4 AURA: 2
Administration: 10 Charm: 5

"The overnight approval ratings are down, chief. Better haul out the welfare reform speech again."

W.C. "MURDER AND SHARKS"
Collector's Series

Jordan Yaguchi is Charles Foster's top political advisor. He's the quintessential backroom boy, having been involved with Plutocratic politics from the beginning without ever having stood for public office. He's in charge of keeping the political donors happy and contributing, and gives advice on how to play Foster's image in the media, and in Congress. Jordan is a smiling, ebullient fellow with a vocabulary to make a longshoreman blush. He never sits down to eat, and subsists entirely on a diet of hyper-caffeine colas and snack chips. Staffers have informally voted him most likely to die of a heart attack before the next election. Jordan is gay and lives quietly with an airline pilot. This is not a secret, but rarely comes up in the media. The NAS may make his lifestyle an election issue in '24, but Foster is too reliant on his political savvy to dump him even if it costs him the homophobe vote. Yaguchi, like Sneed, has unquestioned access to the President. Each of them lets the other do his job without interference.

FOSTER'S TOP
POLITICAL ADVISOR

Reynaldo Alonso is the official press spokesman for the Foster administration. When things get hot, it's Alonso who appears before the White House press gallery to take the grilling. When things are running right, he steps aside to let the President bask in the glory. Alonso is extremely well paid for this thankless job, which he enjoys as a sort of game. In his heart of hearts, his favorite President was still Raymond Milkovich, and he secretly disagrees with many of the positions he's called on to defend. This just increases the challenge of performing well at his job. Alonso's professional pride prevents him from doing anything to hurt his bosses, no matter how much he might differ with their agenda. It would take some really damning evidence against Foster to short circuit this loyalty and get him to reveal some of the dirt under the Plutocratic carpet.

Congress

The United States Congress is the centre of spin in Washington. This is because it is the two houses of Congress — the House of Representatives and the Senate — who have jurisdiction over the national bank account. In order for money to be spent by the government, it must first be appropriated by Congress. Because of this setup, even the President comes as a supplicant to Congress. Even in matters supposedly reserved for presidential decision making alone, like the conduct of foreign policy, the Congress has the ultimate thumbs up or down. If Congress doesn't like the president's favorite war, they can refuse to fund it. Without tax dollars following to the conflict firms, wars don't get fought.

PRESS SPOKESMAN

Reynaldo Alonso



Press Spokesman

INT: 2 AURA: 3
Artist (Performing): 9

"We will not dignify that baseless accusation with any further response."

W.C. "MURDER AND SHARKS"
Collector's Series

CONGRESS IS
WHERE THE POWER'S
REALLY AT

chapter one

VOTES ARE
GENERALLY
BOUGHT AND SOLD

Unlike parliamentary systems, the US system doesn't impose party discipline on its legislators. Although members of the same party tend to vote along similar lines, they do so because of shared ideology or interests, not because the system compels them to. This makes each Representative and Senator something like an independent warlord. Operators who want to lobby for a particular action need to deal individually with each legislator, twisting arms and making deals to get the desired vote. They can't just go to a couple of party leaders and get a reliable promise of a party line vote. This makes lobbying Congress a phenomenally expensive operation, requiring extensive manpower and deep pockets. This is why boosted veterans and other dispossessed groups get short shrift in the congressional agenda — they don't have the bucks and connections to guarantee that legislation to benefit them gets passed.

Legislators generally want money in exchange for their votes. While some careless types deposit the funds in secret accounts for their personal use, most of



“Thous Shalt Not!:-The Marxist Brother and Neo-Popeye engage in their weekly theology discussion.

means

means

very low percentage of the American people: Voter turnout in the 2020 election was 15.2%. The typical registered voter is educated and well-heeled. The ever-increasing percentage of Americans below the poverty line have long since given up on the system, figuring it will do nothing for them. Their abandonment of the polling booth has made this a self-fulfilling prophecy.

the demographic: The slice of the population that does vote is referred to as the demographic, a term that has replaced the archaic "constituency." Some wags have argued that democracy has been replaced by a system of government called demography.

various loopholes: When called into question, lawmakers claim that these provisions are designed to save taxpayer's money, as a sort of privately funded pension scheme. Polls show that most voters remain opposed to direct public financing of campaigns, even though this would eliminate the spoils system, and even though the spoils system is in fact financed by taxpayers, as business interests are able to write off all contributions they make to legislators' reelection war chests at 100%.

them use money squeezed out of lobbyists to fund their reelection campaigns. With 600 vidnet channels to advertise on, running a campaign is a very costly proposition. Even though a **very low percentage of the American people** actually vote in elections, the media audience in 2021 is extremely fragmented. Politicians must advertise on a large number of narrow-interest channels in order to reach **the demographic**. Polls have revealed that most Americans, even those who regularly vote, can't name their Senators and Congresspeople when asked. The drastic shortening of the American attention span frightens most politicians, who pour more and more money into their media campaigns to keep their names in the public eye. Despite their fears, incumbent legislators are almost never turfed out of office. Because they have access to lobbyist money, they are almost invariably able to outspend challengers. Business lobbyists in general have no party of allegiance. They support incumbents. Seats usually change from one party to another only in races where the incumbent isn't running again, and all candidates are therefore newcomers with a roughly equal chance of scooping up dough for TV commercials. Despite this statistical truth, legislators, not by nature a chance-taking lot, typically live in fear of electoral defeat, and spend most of their time raising funds for the next kick at the can. Even retiring politicians are reluctant to give up the *quid pro quo* of money for votes: **various loopholes** have been installed in campaign finance legislation to allow retiring lawmakers to keep a large percentage of funds raised for campaigns as a retirement package should they decide at the last moment not to run again. Most such politicians, of course, know far years ahead of time that they're going to make this last minute decision, and put their fundraising machine into overdrive to make their declining years as comfortably feathered as possible.

Although all legislators are technically independent, some have more spin than others. Lawmakers with lots of spin use it to convince those with less to vote their way. Senators have more power than Congresspeople, because there are fewer of them — only 120 Senators as compared to over 400 members of the House of Representatives. Since all bills must win approval of both chambers, individual Senators' votes carry more weight than those of their House counterparts. Increased spin can also come from a high media profile — lesser-known legislators are reluctant to publicly cross well-known colleagues who might be more popular with their voters than they themselves are. Position within the institutions also means spin. Party leaders in each chamber have a great deal of influence, because they usually know each of their members' dirty secrets, and know best where to apply pressure when arm-twisting time comes. They also get on the vidnets more, so they have media spin, too. Being the head of a powerful committee or subcommittee can be extremely lucrative. Both House and Senate have committees of legislators that, among other things, hammer out the details of bills before they are voted on by the entire body. A spot on a committee that decides the minutiae of money bills is the legislator's equivalent of an oil strike. When the wording of an obscure clause in a tax bill can mean a difference of billions of dollars to any number of corporations, these members find themselves on the autodiallers of all of the biggest spenders in the business world.

SENATORS HAVE MORE POWER THAN CONGRESSPEOPLE

top legislators

The most influential members of the Senate are as follows:

SENATE
CHAIRPERSON

Jack Balsan (P — New Hampshire) is the chair of the Senate, meaning that he was voted top Plutocratic senator by other Plutocratic senators, who control the largest number of seats. The position of House leader has become rather less powerful than it used to be under a three party system, but Balsan manages to maintain his spin through sheer force of will. A short and stout man with protuberant ears, Balsan stands out like a sore thumb in a generation of mediagenic politicians. Balsan is much feared, due to his brilliant mind, demagogic debating style, and his fondness for bully tactics. It is rumored that Balsan has ordered the murders of several enemies. Although he doesn't bother to dispel any rumor that makes others fear him, no one has even been able to put details to these accounts. Though a political ally of President Foster, it is widely known that the two men do not get along. Balsan wants to succeed Foster the next time the Plutocratic presidential nomination comes up, and is carefully cementing his relationships with the tycoons who are the party's behind-the-scenes kingmakers.

SENATE MINORITY
LEADER

Gene Valmarana (R — Ontario) is Senate Minority Leader, elected as such by the Republicratic caucus, who control the second largest block of Senate seats. Unlike most politicians in his position, he isn't eyeing a shot at the presidency. He's a big supporter of the Atomic Kennedy, who he believes he can win the Oval Office in '24. In fact, Valmarana was instrumental in approving the construction of the Atomic Kennedy and has helped to plan his media strategy. He even makes occasional cameo appearances on *Camelot: The Next Generation* as a kindly mentor figure. As a result, Valmarana's Q ratings have shot through the roof, and even Senators of opposing parties are afraid to cross him in public. Valmarana is a classic member of the old boy's club, who believes in operating in a quiet, genteel fashion, and getting things done through consensus and reason. He prefers to sweet talk people into submission, but can slip the knife in when the occasion demands it. Very mediagenic, he looks like he was hired by central casting to play a distinguished elder statesman. Valmarana's party is on the rise, and folks on the Hill know he has a great deal to do with it. Both the Plutocrats and NAS would love to find a way to destroy him — they figure without Valmarana's advice, the Atomic Kennedy would probably falter.

Elsbeth Manning (N — Manitoba) is head of the NAS caucus in the Senate, and wields the balance of power between the two larger parties.

Some prominent House members include:

PLUTOCRATIC
LEADER OF THE
HOUSE

Nancy Epstein (P — New York) is Plutocratic leader in the House. Often compared to Margaret Thatcher — a comparison she dislikes — Epstein appears rigid and schoolmarmish in public. She is very strongly devoted to her

Jack Balsan: INT: 5 WILL: 5
AURA: 4. Administration
(Federal): 10, Business
(Market): 11, Charm: 6,
Intimidation: 10,
Leadership: 9, Politicking:
8. "You vote with the
Repubocrats on this one,
and you're dead in this
town, do you hear me?
You're a ghost!"

Gene Valmarana: INT: 3
WILL: 3 AURA: 6.
Administration (Federal):
12, Charm: 12,
Leadership: 9, Politicking:
11. "Abby is with us;
Penny, and Arthur, and
Fred, and Isela. You're
totally shielded if you come
out with us on this one,
Pete. This is not a voting
booth issue. And you know
it's the right thing to do, I
know you do."

Elsbeth Manning: See
Notebook page in this
sourcebox.

Nancy Epstein: INT: 4
WILL: 6 AURA: 4.
Administration (Federal):
10, Charm: 10,
Intimidation: 10,
Leadership: 12,
Politicking: 7.
"I dislike big government,
no matter if it's sucking up
your tax dollars or peeping
into your bedroom. My
colleagues of both
opposition parties each
want to maintain one half
of the monster while
promising to slay the other.
They just disagree on
which half."

Jody Yong: WILL: 6
AURA: 6. Administration
(Federal): 3, Charm: 12,
Politicking: 7. "Sorry,
your agribusiness bill
isn't a priority. Sure, it
protects our big donors
in the Midwest. But can
you dance to it?"

Esteban Zambrano: INT:
2 WILL: 6 AURA: 2.
Charm: 2, Intimidation:
8, Leadership: 12,
Politicking: 8. "It's time
we stopped letting filth
run this country. It's time
we got things back in
order. This country is a
spoiled child that needs
to have obedience
beaten into it."

pro-business views, but is equally hawkish on keeping the government out of people's private lives. She represents the strong libertarian influence within the Plutocratic party, which often puts her at odds with both the rightist elements of the Replubocrats and the NAS. Popular in the boardrooms of America, she is the most successful fundraiser in either House or Senate. Despite her unyielding image, she's actually fairly good at coalition building, with good connections to left-leaning Replubocrats as well as her fellow Plutocrats. She often clashes with Jack Balsan, who tends to build his Senate coalitions with the aid of the NAS. This means that bills shepherded through the Senate by Balsan are often much different than those overseen by Epstein, which leads to lots of behind-the-scenes headcrunching when widely varying bills need to be reconciled with one another. Epstein would dearly love to sink either Balsan or Elspeth Manning, with whom she has formed a mutual loathing society. She's also a bitter foe of the ASS, who have taken to harassing her aides and supporters.

Jody Yong (R — Oregon) is minority House leader for the Replubocrats. She was declared politically dead in the water during her last term in office, when it was disclosed that she was engaged in "intimate relations" with two of her boosted bodyguards. Yong became a staple of tabloid vidnet shows and a popular source of jokes for talk show comics. However, her notoriety actually served to increase her recognition factor, and she was reelected with the highest voter turnout in the nation. She speaks of her voters as "fans" rather than constituents. Yong has since continued to exploit her status as a gossip star, leaking titillating details of her love life to the national media. She even briefly dated the Atomic Kennedy, a liaison that many suspected was only another headline-grabbing ploy. She recently released her first pop album, scoring a modest hit with her song *Off the Record*. Yong's pure ambition is unsullied by any complicated political beliefs, which makes her an ideal broker for clashing interests within the Replubocratic party. Her instincts for how issues will play in the media are unparalleled, as embarrassed as more conservative members of her party may be by her personally. She is often mentioned as a potential running mate for the Atomic Kennedy; others push her to get back in the race for the position of first lady.

Esteban Zambrano (N — Mississippi) is head of the NAS caucus in the House. Zambrano was a chief engineer for the anti-immigrant campaign ads that carved an NAS swath through border states during the 2018 and 2020 elections. His Hispanic heritage allowed him to deny any bigotry on the part of the NAS, giving voters with uneasy consciences a moral excuse to vote NAS. Zambrano is a great admirer of the strongarm regimes of Central and South America and has a collection of memorabilia celebrating the career of ancient Chilean President Augusto Pinochet. He believes in a strong macho code and ruthless suppression of dissent. In his popular speeches, he compares the role of government to a tough, old fashioned father who isn't afraid to take his belt to his children if need be. Zambrano has many supporters in the national security apparatus. Some of them have even approached him and proposed a coup, with him as leader. So far he's turned down these offers, but this is probably due more to his concern that he doesn't yet have the support to pull it off rather

REPUBLOCAT
LEADER OF THE HOUSE

means

chapter one

THE ONLY BOOSTED CONGRESSPERSON

than any democratic qualms. He passionately hates both Epstein and Yong, finding them symbols of the moral degradation of America, and passes up no opportunity to cause trouble for them. He only grudgingly supports Elspeth Manning; he recognizes her savvy but is very uncomfortable deferring to a woman. His latest project is to whip up anti-boost and anti pre-frontal hysteria, figuring that the immigrant thing has already been milked for all it's worth. It's time to expand the NAS base northwards from the border states, he figures.

There is only one boosted member of Congress, **Tamara Devalos** (R — California.) Her district, the 4th, includes the **Jesse Hill neighborhood**. Although her election as a freshman in 2020 raised great hopes amongst her largely boosted demographic, she has so far been unable to deliver anything practical to help alleviate conditions in the boosted ghettos. Most of her time has simply been devoted to fighting even more oppressive measures against boosts as proposed by NAS members. She finds herself shut out by her own caucus, who have little interest in her concerns, since boosts have nowhere else to go — the Republocrats at least pay lip service to boosted concerns, while the Plutocrats pointedly ignore them, and the NAS paints them as demons. Tamara has surrounded herself with a staff of fellow boosts. Having decided that the laws are stacked against her, she's begun to launch a series of covert spying actions against her political enemies. These operations could reveal some juicy details that will give her leverage — or they might blow up in her face. One of her staffers, Ghost Dance, has Underground connections and is trying to decide whether or not to approach Tamara on their behalf.

the supreme court

The Supreme Court is a body of nine judges appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. They are the highest level of the judiciary; the last appeal for legal claims of all sorts. Often the decisions made by the Court define the laws of the United States and bring about great social and economic changes. The Court is the final third of the three elements of government designed by the founding fathers to create the system of checks and balances they built into the system to prevent tyranny. Its primary purpose was to hold both the administration and legislature to the limits of constitutional law.

In 2021, most **pundits** agree that the Supreme Court is an institution with its power on the decline. The Supreme Court saw the zenith of its influence during the end of the ancient period — the 1960s — when activist justices broadly interpreted what they saw as the underlying ethical consequences of the Constitution. Racial desegregation and the legalization of abortion were among the wide-ranging social changes brought about by the Court during the period. The Supreme Court became powerful by filling a vacuum, tackling the issues that legislators were too frightened to touch. Even after the activist judges of the 1960s were replaced by more cautious justices — and a sprinkling of activist conservatives — they were often called upon to deal with deadlock issues that elected politicians were either too divided or too wary to resolve.

Tamara Devalos
(formerly known as
Maenad): STR: 6 DEX: 8
SPD: 3 RES: 6 INT: 3
WILL: 3 AURA: 3.
Acrobatics (Dodge): 14,
Gun Combat: 12,
Vehicles (Land): 11.
Claws: 11, Leaping: 7.
"Nobody's begging for
the chance to give us
what we want. This is
politics. We've got to
take it."

Jesse Hill
neighborhood: described
in the *Streets Tell Stories*
sourcebox.

pundits: Also known as
jackals, vid vultures, Q
jockeys, Q-tips, and
balloonists, media
commentators are the
most powerful unelected
players in D.C.TM. They
are covered in depth in
the next section of this
chapter.

THE POWER OF THE SUPREME COURT IS ON THE DECLINE

means

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Now, however, this pattern has been reversed. Legislators used to be reluctant to try to amend the Constitution, because the process of doing so was extremely difficult. Constitutional amendments must be passed not only by federal legislators, but by a majority of state governments as well. For a long time, the required degree of political unanimity was almost impossible to get on any



No Power, No Hope—The People's Senate Subcommittee on Pain and Poverty hold their nightly meeting.

means

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issue, and constitutional amendments were more talked about than attempted. This feature of American law was no accident, but another obstacle to tyranny installed by the founders. Constitutions are supposed to be hard to amend, in order to stop powerful governments of the day from arbitrarily stripping the populace of their basic rights. Unfortunately, this particular obstacle has eroded in the political climate of the early 21st century. It has suddenly become easy to amend the Constitution, mostly due to plummeting voter turnout. Now that only the elite class votes, legislators at both the state and federal levels have more in common with one another on rights issues. Specifically, most of them agree that their demographic wants full freedoms for themselves and curtailed freedoms for the general populace.

The justices of the current Supreme Court see no point in striking down laws deemed to be unconstitutional. Since legislators at the state and federal levels now find it easy to get the amendments they want, any such rulings will quickly be countered by changes to the Constitution. As a result, there are many new laws on the books that are actually unconstitutional, technically speaking. **Civil libertarians** have learned not to challenge such laws in court, as this just ends up enshrining them in the constitution. Instead, they let them stand for the time being, hoping that at some undefined point in the future a saner political climate will return, permitting the laws in question to be struck down. This strategy has been described by political scientists as the "patient ostrich theory."

With their roles as guardians of constitutional rights shunted to the side, Supreme Court justices find that more and more of their caseload is devoted to commercial disputes between large corporations. Instead of protecting the masses from the elite, they've now become referees between competing elite factions. This may seem less important, but there's more money in it.

According to the Judicial Lobbying Reform Act of 2019, corporate representatives are now allowed to make their cases to judges — including those of the Supreme Court — in private as well as in open court. This reform was an initiative of the corporations, who argued that the stringent rules of court procedure restricted their free speech rights. In practise, this means that they can offer judges inducements to rule their way, just as they do with legislators. Ironically, this reform ended up losing the corporations money, because now they're forced into bidding wars for judges' favor when arguing civil suits. Now the company with the biggest inducement budget usually wins — after a long and grinding legal process that lines the wallets of both winning and losing lawyers. It has become standard practise for judges to pocket offers from both sides, and then announce in favor of the richest offer at the end of the process. A company can siphon billions into a judge's account and still lose. At present they're trying to come up with a way to amend their own Judicial Lobbying Reform Act without admitting that they've not only been bribing judges left and right, but are getting taken to a ridiculous degree. The justices of the Supreme Court have quietly announced their intention to strike down as unconstitutional any attempts to curtail the current system.

civil libertarians: An increasingly marginal group within the political elite still believes in outmoded concepts such as a right to free speech, equality of opportunity, and other romantic notions. There are even a few of them who serve as elected representatives or influential Q-tips. The media image of the civil libertarian, as either that of the ineffectual professor type or the Underground-style terrorist, prevents them from gaining the support of the very people whose rights they want to protect.

THE SUPREME COURT
NO LONGER
STRIKES DOWN
UNCONSTITUTIONAL
LAWS

THE COURT HANDLES
MORE CORPORATE
LAW

JUDGES PRIVATELY
TAKE BIDS TO RULE IN
A COMPANY'S FAVOR

means

means

LOSE

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supposedly charitable institutions: Thus, a notably crooked judge is referred to as a "charity", or being "charitable." As in, "We'll have no problem with the easement clause - Judge Briggs is a charitable woman, if you know what I mean."

Each of the justices ... boosted bodyguards: Boosts who work as guards for judges are known as Blackrobes. These are usually hired individually by the judges themselves, who can easily pull strings to arrange security clearances for them. Boosts with dodgy backgrounds find it easier to snag a Blackrobe job than most other positions in D.C. This makes the Supreme Court a good device for turning an existing Underground campaign into a D.C. campaign; the PCs start as Blackrobes and get their feet wet in a small and relatively self-contained corner of the Washington power axis.

Supreme Court justices: For simplicity's sake, all justices have roughly similar stats - INT: 3, AURA: 3, Administration (Federal): 6, Business: 4, Detective (Law): 7. Feel free to play with these numbers if such uniformity offends your sensibilities.

At present, the bribing of judges in civil cases, from the lowest level in the system to the highest, is a commonly recognized process. Bribes are often disguised as donations to **supposedly charitable institutions** run by judges. Although still technically illegal, it's almost impossible to get convictions against bribe-taking judges, since members of the judiciary are very reluctant to rule against their colleagues. Those jurists unfortunate enough to end up in front of a judge who won't play ball can still be confident that any convictions will be reversed on appeal.

The Judicial Lobbying Reform Act does not apply to criminal cases. Bribery in such cases is still rare, and judges who take bribes are seen by their colleagues as having stepped over the line. However, this point has little relevance to a discussion of the Supreme Court, which is now almost exclusively an arena for big money inter-corporate legal battles. The Supreme Court is widely thought to select the cases it will hear based entirely on their profit potential.

Because the justices are now players in D.C.'s money games, they now make enemies of the inevitable losers in the cases they judge. **Each of the justices has a squad of boosted bodyguards** on the payroll of their "charitable foundations." Three justices have been assassinated since the 2019 reforms, one of them by his own bodyguards. It is rumored that a number of conflicts the justices were deadlocked on (ie. half were paid off by one corporation, half by the other, with one justice on the fence) have been resolved by pitting the bodyguards of contending justices against one another in nonlethal combat. These rumors have yet to be proven.

Because of their system of bribe auctioning, the position of Supreme Court justice is reckoned to be far and away the most lucrative of all D.C. positions, even exceeding the profit potential of top congressional and administrative posts. Justices are now expected to kick back a portion of their profits to the political party of the President who appointed them. These kickbacks usually last as long as the President in question remains in power.

The Senate almost invariably confirms Presidential nominees to the Court. The fact that two of the three most recent members of the bench have come from the Senate Judiciary Committee, which vets nominees, is no coincidence. Appointment to the bench is the ultimate political plum, and any Senator worth his Rolex drools at the mere mention of such a possibility.

The current **Supreme Court justices** are as follows:

William Breland, Chief Justice: William Breland began his career as an idealist, if a somewhat conservative one. He has reluctantly begun to dip his hand into the cookie jar, but feels guilty about it. If he thought he had a chance of bringing down the corrupt new system, he'd take it. Characters who decide to expose the dry rot in the Supreme Court could find a covert ally in Breland. The problem here is that he is very pessimistic about the fate of the Court in

JUDGE BRIBING IS NOW COMMONLY RECOGNIZED

LEGAL LOSERS ARE NOW TARGETING JUDGES

SUPREME COURT JUDGE IS THE MOST LUCRATIVE LAWMAKING POSITION

LOSE 11 means

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particular and the nation in general; the PCs would have to break through his hard outer shell of cynicism and despair before getting any help out of him.

Thomas Davis - A former Plutocratic senator, Davis is a slick old smoothie who is venal to the core. He's already got more money than he can spend, but is addicted to the game, and gets a real rush from squeezing bigger and bigger bribes from corporate lawyers. He enjoys double-crossing people, and has accumulated a thick portfolio of enemies over the years. He currently holds the record as the justice to survive the highest number of assassination attempts. PCs taking jobs as his bodyguards will be kept on their toes; his blackrobes tend to drop like flies.

Anne Desarthe - Desarthe is unusual because she actually rose through the ranks from local judge to federal judge to Supreme Court justice. She has a meek, unassuming persona, which she uses to hide her true agenda. Secretly a passionate pursuer of social justice, Desarthe covertly uses her supposedly phony charitable foundation to dispense actual charity! She anonymously funds scholarships in several devastated inner city neighborhoods with the money she extorts from the corporations, considering it a form of voluntary taxation. If the PCs exposed her, they'd ironically be doing more harm than good. On the other hand, if she became convinced that she could trust them, they'd find her an unusually altruistic patron.

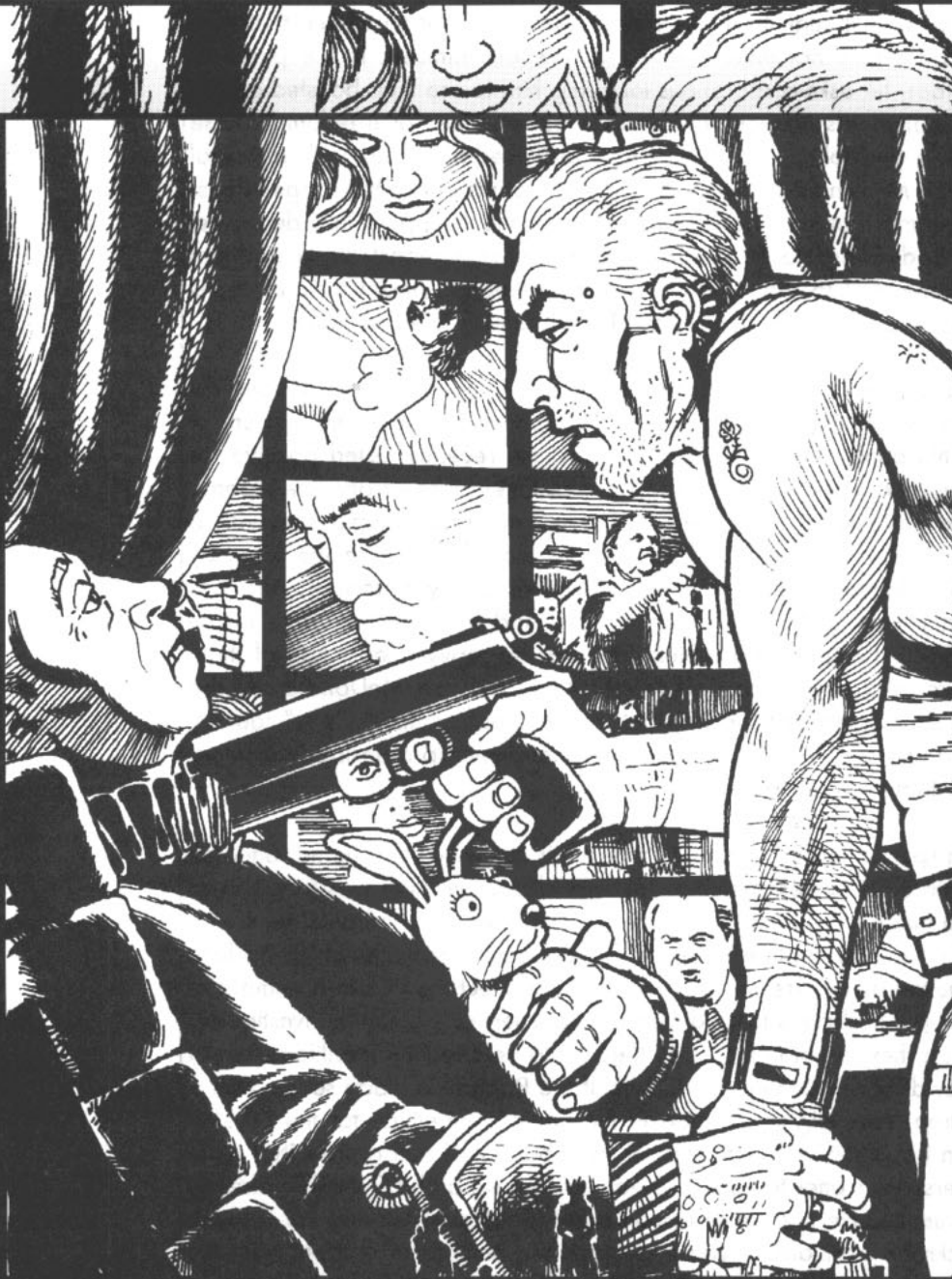
Claire Wiles - The oldest member of the Court, Wiles is the only remaining appointee of the Milkovich administration, as well as the only African American of the nine justices. She has grown despondent about the state of the court. She used to gum up the process by actually voting on the merits of cases, but has learned to shut up after a too-convincing assassination attempt. Still refusing to take bribes, she now routinely abstains from all decisions. As long as she follows her "keep quiet" policy, the powers that be don't consider her a threat, leaving her Blackrobes little to worry about. The leader of her bodyguard team, **Big Mamou**, has set up a lucrative side business spying on other justices for various corporate interests. She would not take kindly to new squad members poking their noses into her beeswax. Wiles is unaware of Big Mamou's activities.

Frances Swarbrick - Another former Plutocratic Senator, Swarbrick is still a devoted political partisan. She spends the bare minimum possible time at the Court; she's too busy maintaining her position as a behind-the-scenes political power broker and election strategist. She ploughs most of her bribe money back into the Plutocratic electoral coffers. Discovery of this fact could be very useful for PCs seeking to embarrass the Plutocratic party. They'd better be careful, though: Swarbrick has the connections to sic highly trained ASS hit squads on them with a single phone call.

Fay Vithana - Vithana is a former attorney-general from the Gates administration who was appointed to the bench as a reward for her successful cover-up of a kickback scheme involving the awarding of contracts to Allied

Big Mamou: STR: 14
DEX: 8 SPD: 4 RES: 4
INT: 2 WILL: 3 AURA:
3, Acrobatics / Dodge:
14, Gun Combat: 14,
Administration (Federal):
5, Weaponry / Blade:
13

Mayhem Inc. She has since devoted her time to the enrichment of her own purse. She knows where lots of Plutocratic party skeletons are buried in D.C.; her information could bring the whole party down. But she'd have to be given a good reason to spill it, right now she's making unbelievable money as a protector of the status quo, which makes her more than loyal.



Social Call-Local C.I.A. Muscle reminds FBI Underchief "Ponce de Fruitloop" about the anti-trust laws.

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Joseph McDonald - A former NAS Senator and member of the Judiciary Committee, McDonald was appointed to the bench as part of a complicated deal to ensure NAS support for Plutocratic budget deals. McDonald is an open bigot and male chauvinist. Like many of his type, he's actually frightened of the strong women on the court, and generally keeps a low profile to avoid confronting them. Although he has no objections to the bribe system that now drives the court, he's not much interested in spoils himself. In the place of monetary bribes, he asks corporations lobbying him to use their boosted agents to take out individuals McDonald identifies as "enemies of freedom." These usually include outspoken civil libertarians and media pundits with a liberal slant. Although McDonald tries to keep his fingerprints out of these operations, he does sometimes get his Blackrobes to lend logistical support. In order to get hired as a bodyguard to McDonald, boosts must demonstrate a political viewpoint somewhat to the right of Vlad the Impaler. Jingoistic and racist statements are a plus in the job interview. Female boosts need not apply.

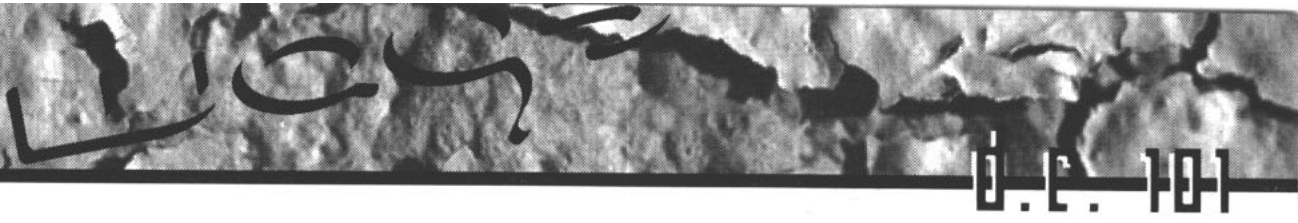
Samuel Fucci - A former Plutocratic Senator and colleague of McDonald's on the judiciary committee, Fucci is trying to funnel the maximum amount of dough into his bank accounts before he dies. He recently tested positive for the HIV virus, and wants his family to be well taken care of after he's gone. Although he contracted the disease after having unprotected sex with a member of his staff, he's convinced that he was dosed with the virus by agents of a political enemy. He's become increasingly paranoid, and has decided that it was probably McDonald who had him infected. He's in the process of hiring twice as many Blackrobes as he really needs; half of them are to protect him, the other half to get the goods on McDonald. At the moment, he's still sane enough to want to get proof of his "killer's" identity before ordering him spun, but he might eventually end up ordering McDonald spun even without evidence.

? - The ninth spot on the Supreme Court bench is currently unoccupied, after the untimely death of its newest member, John Trevillion. Trevillion was found dead a month ago outside the home of his parents in White City, Alabama, where he had been visiting. The death is assumed to have been boost-related, as his face had been melted away. Trevillion's murder could affect the PCs in a number of ways: they might find clues to lead them to the killer, and become investigators of the crime. If they're not in D.C. yet, they could be hired by Trevillion's family to look for evidence in Democracy City™. If the PCs are already set up with a political patron, they might take part in the fierce competition for the coveted job Trevillion has unwillingly vacated, as their boss, and half of the city's other power brokers, goes after the post. Or you could have an NPC the PCs already know and trust receive a surprise appointment to the post, so that the PCs are offered blackrobe positions. If you want to run a number of sessions with the Supreme Court as a background, the empty spot on the court is a good mechanism to do this; the PC blackrobes learn the ropes as their patron does, so they can slowly acclimatize themselves to the situation. Should you decide to feature Trevillion's murder as more than a background detail, there should be no

which

40

means



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zero sum game: A political maneuver in which there is a clear winner and a clear loser, also known in D.C. jargon as a Big O. It is customary for the winner in such a struggle to proclaim to reporters that the resolution of the conflict is, "A win-win situation." It is customary for the loser to refuse comment and plot dark vengeance.

logistical favors: These usually take the form of secret investigations of targets of the congressman's choosing. Characters who arouse the fury of a powerful legislator may find themselves under the close scrutiny of bureaucrats from their enemy's favorite agency. When congressmen want someone hit, it's bureaucrats of their pet agency they call on for the task. Any legislator without a solid agency tie is either a neophyte or a loser.

shortage of suspects, as Trevillion was a tad too idealistic for his own good. The corporation of your choice, Joseph McDonald, or the very administration that appointed Trevillion are all likely culprits.

government agencies

The centers of government we have detailed to this point are far removed from the experience of most citizens of 2021 America. To the average American, state power is represented by the hordes of government employees who staff the countless and ever-expanding tangle of government agencies. It may be their elected representatives who are ultimately responsible for jamming them up, but it's the bureaucrats who actually do the dirty work.

Field agents are in place throughout the country to remain ever vigilant to the threat of the people waking up and using their democratic rights. But within the confines of D.C., government agencies are not so much concerned with keeping individual citizens in check as they are with keeping each other in check. Here dozens of competing agencies are locked in a continual turf battle. The score in this endless, many-sided competition is usually measured in terms of agency budgets. But things do sometimes get out of hand, and employees of one agency may on occasion end up exchanging small arms fire with representatives of another.

Once bureaucrats have risen to the top spot in an agency, they have pretty much reached the limits of power for an unelected official. Sometimes an official will get a cabinet appointment or get parachuted into a bigger and more prestigious agency, but this is rare. This means that the only way for top bureaucrats to keep playing the game is to expand the size of their agencies. Power and influence is measured by the amount of money the elected officials are willing to kick their way to fund their operations. This is a **zero sum game**: an expanded budget for one agency means a reduced budget for another. This means that the D.C. officials of the various agencies are all busy trying to bring the others into disrepute, so that their rivals' budgets will be cut to allow, indirectly, for increases in their own.

The proliferation of competing agencies with overlapping duties is due to the rise of big money politics. It is considered prestigious for legislators to get the administration to fund an agency of their devising. Crucial votes are bought with the promise of new bureaucracies. For example, the ASS was created as a payoff to NAS legislators for their cooperation on money bills. Ties between sponsoring congressmen and their agencies often continue long after the agency sunk its roots firmly into the D.C. scene. These congressmen can expect **logistical favors** in return for continued support in budget battles on the Hill.

Almost all agencies now have a police arm, which investigates wrongdoing and brings those who break their regulations to justice. This is true even in cases

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE PRACTICALLY AT WAR WITH EACH OTHER

THE LIMITS OF POWER IN AN AGENCY

MOST AGENCIES HAVE A POLICE ARM

means



chapter one

where the **existence of an enforcement unit seems completely absurd**. For example, the **WCA** maintains elite squads of boosts to punish people who water their lawns during droughts. The watercops, as they are called, do have to throw their weight around and hassle hapless citizens in order to keep up their pretense of having a legitimate purpose. This merely masks their real concern, fending off investigations and sabotage attempts by other agencies, and launching same against their competitors.

existence of an enforcement unit seems completely absurd: Some of the many agencies with heavily trained and equipped police arms are the FDA, the FCC, the DCEMU (Disease Control Emergency Management Unit), the ADCEMU (Animal Disease Control Emergency Management Unit), the CSTB (Consumers' Standards Testing Board), the CTMA (Computer Technologies Monitoring Agency), the SSSB (Statistical Study Standards Bureau) and the IDAB (Infrastructure Development Advisory Board.)

WCA: Water Conservation Authority, the agency supposedly in charge of maintaining the nation's water supply. They are the implacable foes of the EWSC, the Environmental Water Standards Council, who have responsibility for water quality, as opposed to its availability. WCA and EWSC often end up sabotaging one another's efforts; with the EWSC routinely shutting down wells and reservoirs that are supposedly tainted, and the WCA opening up water facilities that are clearly unsafe.



Bringing us all a little closer—Th NSA does its bit for NAC/ECM relations.

WCA

means



prior restraint order:
Individuals whose
applications for free
speech are turned
down are warned that
speaking without
authorization is an
indictable offense.
FDDD enforcement
units are dispatched
throughout the country
to investigate
violations. FDDD
resources are more
limited than those of
the ASS, and low-
priority violations are
usually ignored.

As in most cases where political gamesmanship turns deadly, actual hits rarely take place in D.C. itself. Espionage rather than open warfare is the norm in the capitol. Most inter-agency violence takes place at the local level. This allows agency heads to plausibly deny their involvement when their operatives are exposed. Most operations are conducted on a strict "If you're caught, we'll deny all knowledge of your activities" basis.

Although these routine denials are widely reported, no one with any knowledge of Washington believes them. This makes it easier for agencies to frame each other. It is not unknown for one agency's covert unit to pose as members of a second and launch an operation against yet a third agency. When these plans work, they get the second and third agencies at one another's throats, diminishing both in the eyes of congressional budget committees. When they fail, blame falls on the second agency, fulfilling at least half of the objective of the actual guilty parties.

As this example demonstrates, this constant spying becomes confusingly complex. Often operatives themselves don't know who they're really working for. Are they acting on orders from the top of their agency? Are they taking orders on behalf of ambitious underlings in the agency trying to topple their boss? Or are their instructions coming from a mole planted by another agency to embarrass the one that signs their paychecks? Washington insiders relish the stories of mazelike intrigue this constant struggle inspires. For example, there's the story of the boost who decided to betray his boss and headed to a rendezvous with a top official from his agency's most despised rival organization. When he got there, he found himself face to face with the very man he'd set out to betray! His boss was himself a double agent, working for two agencies under different identities. The two had a good laugh and went out to a bar to figure out who to jam over next.

Some of the most active agencies in the budget wars are as follows:

federal department of deeds and dissemination

The FDDD's official function is to issue free speech permits to applicants across the country. Complete information on the FDDD, or Triple D, as it is called, is included in *The Underground Notebook*.

The Triple D's main rival in town is the ASS; the FDDD and ASS often differ over what sort of speech is seditious. It is possible for someone to be granted a permit by the FDDD to say something that will put them on an ASS watch list. This works both ways: the FDDD is just as likely to issue a **prior restraint order** to an applicant for proposing to say something the ASS would not object to at all.

Sometimes the differences between the two agencies are merely arbitrary — a case officer from either bureau can take a dislike to someone's prose style and

COLD WAR-LIKE
TACTICS OF ONE
AGENCY AGAINST
ANOTHER

THE FDDD CONTROLS
HOW FREE SPEECH IS
USED

THE FDDD AND THE
ASS FIGHT OVER THE
"SEDITIONOUSNESS" OF
SPEECH



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start a file that will hound him for the rest of his life. However, there is also a difference in ideology between the two agencies. The FDDD has a more mainstream view of sedition than the ASS; they pounce on critiques of the elite and the general power structure. They want to preserve the status quo and stifle controversy. Thusly, they'll censor far rightist conspiracy theorists as vigorously as left wing rabble rousers. Anti-boost religious fundamentalists are also held in check by the FDDD.

The head of the FDDD is **Marion Whales**, a cautious and thoughtful battler in the budget wars. She projects an aura of detached, diplomatic affability. She has ties to Plutocratic and moderate Republicrat legislators.

anti-sedition squad

Full information on the ASS can be found in *The Underground Notebook*. Technically an arm of the Justice Department, the ASS is in practise an independent entity. The head of the squad, **Luke Harshaw**, a ramrod-straight zealot with the demeanor of a drill sergeant, often acts against the wishes and interests of Attorney General Victoria Darnhelm. As mentioned earlier, the ASS was created to mollify NAS legislators. Harshaw knows he can defy Darnhelms' policy directives, at least to a point, because of the backing of those senators and congressmen.

The job of the ASS is to root out subversive activities and prosecute violators for treason. Few ASS enforcement operations get to the prosecution stage; field agents can never get the decisive evidence of treason necessary to go to the courts. The main reason for this is their focus on entertainers and artists rather than spies and saboteurs. The ASS is much more uptight about the definition of "subversion" than the FDDD; they closely follow the hard-right line of the NAS. Attacks on fundamentalist religion are considered indistinguishable from attacks on national security.

Harshaw discreetly helps the anti-boost movement and views Eugenix as a major enemy. This is despite the fact that the ASS relies heavily on boosted operatives. Harshaw doesn't want to exterminate all boosts, but he does want to keep a tight rein on them. He realizes that boosts are necessary to US success in the Second Cold War, and a vital part of the state security apparatus.

Most ASS operatives are sophisticated infiltration experts; the enhanced need not apply. Boosts working for the ASS are used only as backup for operations where combat is expected. They're either jingoistic jarheads or self-hating types who wish they'd never gone to Slumberland. Neither psych profile makes for cautious field agents. When the ASS does get into firefights, casualty rates are high. The mortality rate of ASS boosts is ramped up by an alarming suicide rate.

The sloppiness and violence of the ASS is tolerated by the administration because Harshaw usually picks on marginalized groups with no connection to

Marion Whales: INT: 6, WILL: 4, AURA: 3.
Administration 9, Charm 10, Detective 6.
Accompanied at all times by a bodyguard of 4 boosted FDDD agents; wears Heavy-Kev during public appearances. For bodyguards, use the Peace Force Officer archetype on p. 232 of *Underground*. "I'll definitely take that under advisement."

Luke Harshaw: INT: 2, WILL: 6, AURA: 6.
Administration: 9, Charm: 7, Detective: 3, Gun Combat: 6, Intimidation/Interrogation: 12, Leadership: 12.
Accompanied at all times by a phalanx of 6 boosted ASS agents. Wears Heavy-Kev outside his home and the ASS offices, carries an EP450. "And what have you done to combat subversion today?"

THE ASS HUNTS
DOWN AND
PROSECUTES
SUBVERSIVES

THE HEAD OF THE
ASS SECRETLY
WORKS AGAINST
BOOSTS

THE ASS OFTEN
EMPLOYS BOOSTS

weeds

means



can't purchase
dossiers on
individuals: Officially,
that is. Census Bureau
employees have been
known to sell
individual dossiers for
their own personal
profit. Characters
passing P/F
challenges of their
Administration
(Federal) skills are
assumed to know an
employee willing to
sell such files.
However, it is almost
impossible to buy a
dossier on anyone
with any spin in
Washington. The
powerful can easily
arrange to have their
dossiers classified.

Judith Roanoke: INT:
6, WILL: 2, AURA: 3,
Administration: 9,
Charm: 9,
Leadership: 4.
"I think you might
want to reconsider
that threat, Senator,
when you keep in
mind what you were
doing at the Titan
Motor Lodge on
January 12, 2008,
between 11:35 am
and 1:47 pm. Hmm?"

the power structure. If he overstepped this boundary, President Foster would be willing to sacrifice NAS votes in the Senate and send Harshaw packing.

census bureau

Full information on the Census Bureau can be found in *The Underground Notebook*. The Census Bureau has expanded considerably in the past decade, and now maintains extensive records on the comings and goings of all American citizens. This information is available to any federal agency that requests it, and is often used as intelligence by police arms of the various bureaus.

It is considered a crime to fail to submit information to the bureau, or to give false reports. The Census Bureau's enforcement arm checks up on suspected violators. Boosts are targeted for particular attention, as the government is very interested in keeping tabs on this very volatile segment of the population. This of course means that the police arm needs to maintain a staff of boosted agents to take point position in confrontation with vets who break the census laws. This is actually pretty useless, since the bureau gets better information through electronic surveillance than it does through census forms. But having an enforcement arm is sexy, an important status symbol for a D.C. agency. Also, since almost everyone outside the elite ignores census reporting, almost everyone outside the elite can be assumed to be guilty of at least one federal offense. This can be very handy when shaking down witnesses or just generally jamming someone around.

The Census Bureau is one of the few government agencies to turn a profit. It sells its sophisticated demographic information to advertising agencies as market research, for a hefty fee. Private business interests **can't purchase dossiers on individuals**, just broad studies of large population groups. Because of its success, there has been some talk of privatizing the bureau. Several big conglomerates have been lobbying hard for the right to purchase the agency. So far, the administration has refused, citing national security reasons.

Head of the Census Bureau is **Judith Roanoke**, an experienced bureaucratic infighter with a cheerfully cynical sense of humor. She plays all sides in the influence game, doing favors for legislators of all three parties, and ingratiating herself to the administration. Those who spurn her cooperation suffer the exposure of the skeletons in their closets — she has the dirt on everyone, as the Bureau monitors communications within all other agencies as well as in society at large. Her position is considered one of the most secure in town, sure to survive even if the Republocrats take the White House in '24.

NSA

The National Security Agency is now the centrepiece of the national security apparatus. It is the foreign affairs equivalent of the Census Bureau, monitoring

IT IS ILLEGAL TO GIVE
FALSE RESPONSES ON
YOUR CENSUS REPORT

THE BUREAU SELLS
ITS INFORMATION TO
ADVERTISING
AGENCIES



chapter one

THE NSA IS UNDEFEATABLE IN BUDGET ALLOCATION

private and public telecommunications around the globe. It pays special attention to the military and commercial concerns of the USA's primary rivals, China and Neo-Deutschland.

The NSA is considered unassailable in the bureaucratic budget wars. No other agencies even bother to mess with it; they'd be shredded into dog meat if they tried. No one wants to cross much-feared National Security Advisor Geoffery Sneed, who vigorously guards the agency's prerogatives. Its operating budget is secret, but when you consider the fact that the Census Bureau is thought to have a \$150 billion dollar budget, and think about what it costs to monitor communications throughout the globe without the cooperation that the Census Bureau gets from domestic phone companies — well, the figure must be staggering.

THE NSA NOW HANDLES COVERT OPERATIONS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Now that the CIA has been privatized, the NSA has taken over its role of managing covert operations on foreign soil. The actual operations are usually subcontracted through highly secretive subsidiaries of the major conflict firms. Boosts who serve in these departments are rarely discharged — they enter a covert division right out of Slumberland, and remain in place until retirement. The boost program hasn't been in operation long enough for any of these operatives to reach retirement age, but it is likely that many of them will then go on to jobs in influential think tanks, or simply cross over into government jobs in the security apparatus.

THE NSA SELDOM WORKS IN THE US

Officially, the NSA does not get involved in operations on US soil. This is, surprisingly enough, almost true. Sometimes it bends that rule a bit, but only to engage in counterintelligence against foreign agents operating in the US. That's supposed to be the FBI's job, but the NSA doesn't trust them to do it properly. This creates resentment within the FBI, of course, but the NSA doesn't consider this a problem. The institution has a collective god complex, and believes that messing with investigations into domestic subversion is a **turkey shoot**, a game played by amateurs. Consequently, characters with NSA connections won't be able to get domestic intelligence. It is very **difficult to get quality NSA connections**, as this is one agency that is highly efficient as well as monolithic.

The head of the NSA is **Rodrigo Albeniz**, a brilliant thinker, polymath and manipulator with a close relationship to Geoffery Sneed. Reporter Peter Argot has claimed that the two complete one another's sentences at White House briefings. Albeniz would be tagless if he didn't maintain a worm's height profile; many players in the city wouldn't recognize him if he stood next to them in an elevator.

fbi

The FBI is a law enforcement agency with responsibility for investigating and apprehending those who commit federal crimes, including crimes of espionage

turkey shoot: Slang term used by NSA types and other operatives of the state security apparatus, denoting a contemptibly easy operation that looks good to the stupid politicians but is of little actual value. Agents typically feel that most field initiatives of rival agencies are turkey shoots.

difficult to get... connections: Characters must score an A in a Standard Challenge of their Administration (Federal) skills to have an NSA connection, and may try only once.

Rodrigo Albeniz: INT: 6, AURA: 6. Administration: 12, Computer Science: 12, Detective: 12, Genetic Engineering: 12, Invention/Repair (Electronics): 12, Languages (Chinese, German, Spanish): 12, Military Science: 12, Psychology: 12, Science: 12. Almost never appears in public; has a private bodyguard of 6 boosts.

"I had precisely the same thought myself, Geoffery..."

WIDE

means

Catherine Hartman:
DEX: 3, INT: 2, WILL:
5, AURA: 3.
Administration 4,
Detective: 7, Gun
Combat: 9. Hartman
carries an EP450, but
has decided, for
image reasons, to do
without a bodyguard
detachment. This may
prove to be an error;
several of her own
people have toyed
with the notion of
having her spun if she
interferes with their
profit-taking.
"You may have
forgotten the proud
history of the FBI,
Peterson, but I sure as
hell haven't!"

extent of the rot: A
campaign in which
the PCs take the roles
of FBI field agents
could center around
the effort to clean out
the agency. If the PCs
are not themselves
corrupted, they could
join forces with
Hartman in an effort to
bring down the
entrenched officials
who run the place for
their personal gain.

committed by foreign operatives. The rise of violent crime in the US has ramped up the FBI's need for resources in a major way. However, unlike the NSA, the FBI is not a sacred cow in Washington. In fact, it's become the standard whipping boy agency, a beleaguered institution under attack from all sides. Other agencies are always pressing to have special responsibilities taken away from the FBI and transferred to their own departments. When they — or their congressional patrons — win these battles, the result is usually a duplication of jurisdiction. The FBI retains its old responsibility, but that same area of crime is also parcelled out to the hungry outside agency.

Morale in the FBI is at an all-time low, and its top officials have become corrupt as a result. The ancient image of the FBI as the cleanest of the clean is now an ironic joke. Since they no longer feel they can change anything, FBI officials have decided to simply cash in. This of course merely feeds the demand by other agencies with agendas to take the reins from the FBI's hands, since they can't be trusted to nail criminals, subversives, or terrorists. The rot is spreading from the top down. Some FBI detachments out in the rest of the country are still staffed by gung-ho, honest cops. Others, run by cronies of the top D.C. officials, are glorified extortion rings. Field agents from these offices are much more likely to alert their enemies of upcoming raids in exchange for cash than to risk their necks.

Recently installed as FBI chief is **Catherine Hartman**, an idealistic prosecutor bent on returning the agency to its former glory. Her staffers are fighting her every step of the way. Infighting within the agency is going to prevent her from being a player in the inter-agency wars for the foreseeable future. She's begun to smell the deep stench of corruption within the ranks, but as yet doesn't know the **extent of the rot**

Cia

The Central Intelligence Agency was privatized in 2011, as one of the first actions of the Stevens administration. This was done in order to dispose of a governmental white elephant; the NSA had already taken over most of the CIA's functions as electronic intelligence became so sophisticated that old methods of intelligence gathering became obsolete. Geoffery Sneed, whose NSC had taken over many CIA functions, had a major hand in the dismantling of the agency.

This means that the CIA is not really part of the bureaucratic infighting any more. However, most people refuse to believe that the CIA is no longer part of the government structure, just as they refuse to believe that the Shadow Team has been disbanded. In the popular imagination it is still the locus of sinister secrets in Washington. Most paranoids develop delusions about the CIA instead of the NSC or Census Bureau, the organizations they should *really* be worried about. Conspiracy theories blame the CIA for everything from causing metagenic feedback trauma and flashbacks in boosted veterans to implanting subliminal messages in Systematic Overthrow records.

THE FBI'S ROLE HAS
CHANGED LITTLE
SINCE THE 20TH
CENTURY

FUNDING AND
MORALE IN THE FBI
HAVE DROPPED OFF,
RESULTING IN
CORRUPTION

THE CIA IS NOT A
PRIVATE
ORGANIZATION

THE AGENCY STILL
LIVES IN THE SHADOW
OF ITS FORMER
REPUTATION

chapter one

The CIA is now just a think tank with a fancy pedigree, offering advice on marketing strategies for the Third World to America's top-grossing corporations. It pretends to still engage in dangerous covert operations, but this is mostly a **public relations scam**. Boosts with connections to the intelligence community know that getting hired on for a CIA operation is a good way to get killed.

The head of the CIA is **Ellen Ward**, a bright and confident manager. Her background is in business rather than intelligence.

NSC

The National Security Council, is yet another example of duplicated effort. Founded as a sort of quasi-cabinet department answerable only to the President of the day, it has grown with cancerous speed during the early 21st century. It now occupies a vast building known as the Quadrangle in Langley, VA, also home to the CIA. The NSC is the personal empire of National Security Advisor Geoffery Sneed, and carries his aura of determination and ruthlessness. Its stated function is to advise the President on national security matters; its actual function is whatever Sneed wants it to be.

Right now, this means taking up the slack for the FBI, particularly in the area of suppressing domestic subversion. Unlike the ASS, Sneed's organization is clearheaded enough to focus on genuine threats to state power. Instead of targeting rap groups and outspoken actresses, it concentrates on foiling both armed insurgents and political activists who have a chance of achieving changes through democratic and peaceful means.

Sneed has never bothered to get legal powers for his enforcement agents, but this doesn't stop them from mounting operations against Sneed's enemy list throughout the US. It just makes them more feared, because they are accountable to no one but Sneed himself. The bearing of authority of the **MIS** operatives is enough to identify them as hard-ass government agents even to the politically ignorant.

Sneed has also reserved for the NSC the duty of investigating any UFO sighting or crash reports. If any more alien craft appear, Sneed wants to be firmly in charge of the recovery process. He's determined to keep any discoveries of further aliens, alive or dead, an airtight secret this time. Anyone in any other investigative agency with functioning brain cells knows to keep their noses completely out of the UFO area. Naturally, government sources firmly deny that the NSC's UFO hunting division exists at all. A dummy agency, the **AAV** receives UFO reports from the public and passes them on to the NSC.

the media

In Washington circles, it is often said that the news media has great power over political events. This is not as true as many want to believe. It's usually political

public relations scam: The CIA makes a useful red herring for PCs who are newcomers to the D.C.TM scene; their role in urban legendry is so pivotal that most disinfo is set up to implicate the CIA in whatever plot or scandal is at hand.

Ellen Ward: INT: 4,
Administration: 1,
Business: 5.

"Projections for coffee grinder sales in Burkina Faso for the next ten years? It's risky — but I'm sure my people could swing it."

MIS: NSC field ops are unofficially known as the Men In Shades, or MIS, because of their obligatory mirror-lensed eyewear. They're also fond of dark, expensively tailored suits. The term is not used within the agency; instead, they're acronymed as NFO — NSC field ops. This doesn't mean they dislike the vague dread that the term MIS inspires, though...MIS agents should be portrayed as the scariest of the scary. They may or may not be controlled by members of the notorious and supposedly defunct Shadow Team. We do not recommend allowing PCs to become NSC field ops.

AAV: The Agency of Alien Visitation was set up purely to screen out obvious kook reports and obscure the NSC's role in this vital security matter. Agents in training from various federal security units are assigned to the AAV as part of their schooling. They learn to manufacture and disseminate disinfo by concocting false reports to keep the UFO buffs confused, not a notably difficult task.

THE NSC
CURRENTLY
FOCUSES ITS
ATTENTIONS ON
DOMESTIC
SUBVERSION

SNEED'S NSC IS IN
CHARGE OF
HANDLING UFO
REPORTS

WEEK

48

MEANS

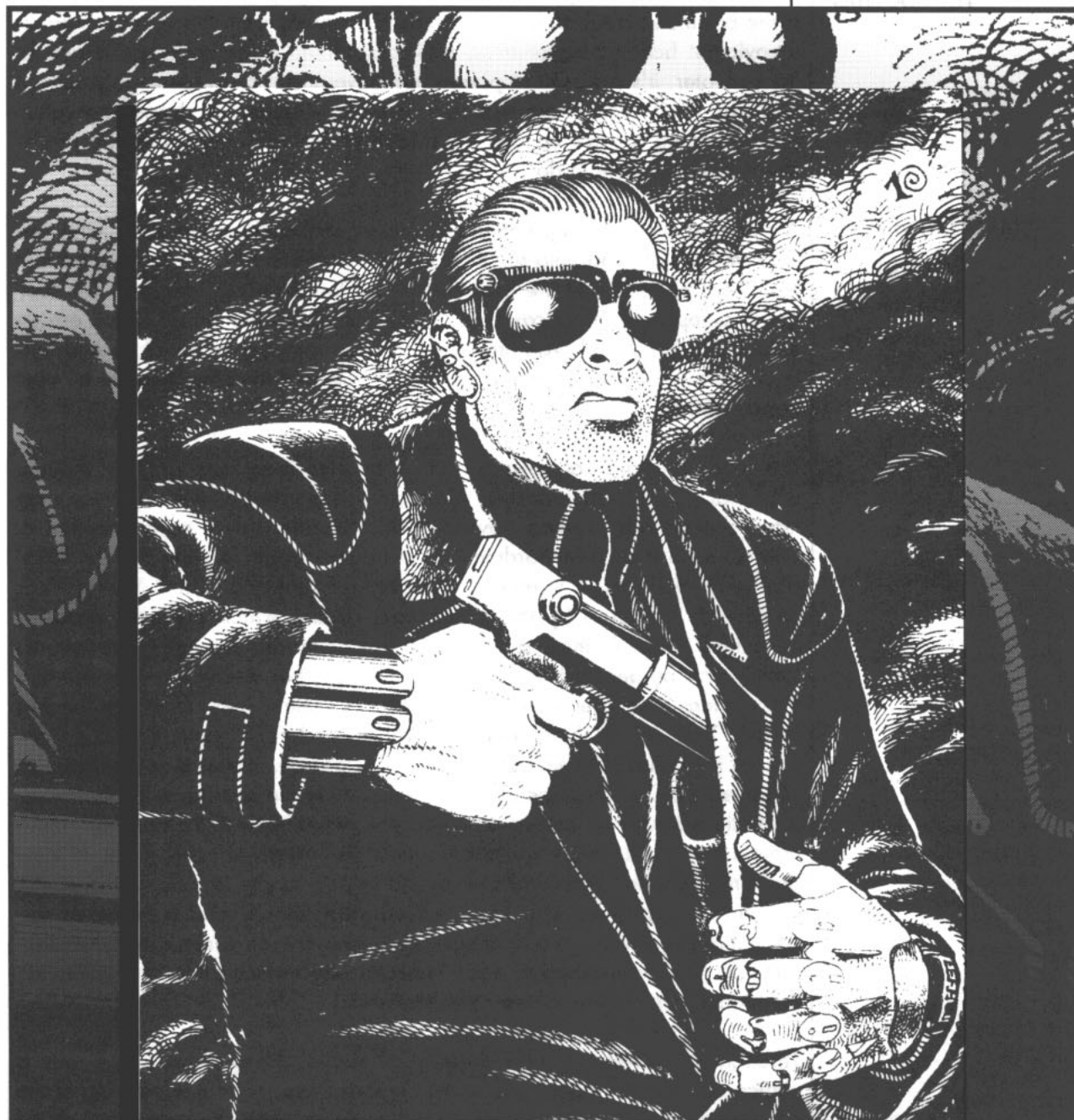
WISDOM

O.C. 101

news jockeys: Common term used as a synonym for "reporter", and as a replacement for the archaic "anchorman." Often shortened to NJ. As in, "Flora Gardner has the most important qualification of a great NJ - her hair never moves."

losers in search of scapegoats who think the media is a powerful force. Instead of really having spin themselves, the **news jockeys** are more like referees and scorekeepers in the ongoing power game. Although the majority of the population ignores them, people in the ballpark pay close attention to their reports in order to determine how well they're doing. This sometimes influences decisions made by politicians and officials, but rarely makes a decisive difference on election results.

THOUGH THE MEDIA HAS NO REAL POWER, IT KNOWS WHO DOES



Nacht und Nebel-Neo-Deutsch counter espionage agent Fredrich Langmesser is looking for a few bad men.

WISDOM

49

means

chapter one

THE MEDIA AND
ENTERTAINMENT
NETWORKS KEEP
UNEDUCATED
VOTERS OUT OF
THE BOOTHS

An important distinction needs to be drawn between the news media and the broader entertainment complex it is a part of. When one looking at the entertainment complex, it's vital to note that it plays to two different audiences, the underclass and the elite. The vast pop culture industry, by churning out unending streams of mind-deadening pap, has a big influence on election results. Specifically, it encourages apathy, detachment from the political process, and just plain stupidity in a largely uneducated audience. It is the big media's job to keep the underclass away from the voting booth. In ultraviolent fiction programming and tabloidized news coverage aimed at the nonvoter, it's even OK to present the government as irredeemably corrupt and evil. If all choices are depicted as equally unworthy, despairing voters are just going to give up and go away. Which is exactly what the power structure wants them to do.

EDUCATED VOTERS
ARE GIVEN
A DIFFERENT
MESSAGE

A different sort of programming is aimed at the educated elite, who are expected to vote and help run things. They need first of all to be assured that their best interests and the best interests of the state are identical. The feel-good, sycophantic broadcasts of the popular interviewer Darryl Prince are an example of this sort of programming. It is important that the elite love and trust the government, because these people still vote and therefore need to be kept happy with the status quo.

The second function of news aimed at the elite is to keep political thought within acceptable boundaries. Although this portion of the audience may have accidentally learned how to think critically if they paid attention at school, a constant bombardment of a narrow point of view distorts folks' ability to do so. For example, the general futility of Third World War conflicts is obscured by the mainstream media, which presents atrocities committed by the Chinese and Neo-Deutsch as horrific outrages, and ignores similar acts perpetrated in the name of the US. No one who points out that these micro-wars are not only immoral but useless gets access to the big media. The "us vs. them" outlook is reinforced so often that most people accept it as part of their basic frame of reference. It was Adolf Hitler who observed that any lie repeated often enough would eventually be believed. It's believed even by the news execs who promulgate it. It's not that media editors and producers wish to broadcast an anti-government point of view and are prevented from doing so by the FDDD; they're all part of the power structure themselves, and know which side their bread is buttered on. Deciding to go with the official line is no longer even a conscious decision; after all, the current crop of news media powerbrokers grew up swallowing the hidden assumptions of their predecessors.

Through the narrow focus of the official media, the elite are given only a choice between the right wing of the corporate party and the left wing of the corporate party. At least, they were for many years. Even the rise of the Plutocratic party and the merger of the Republican and Democratic parties was really just a reshuffling of long-established interests. Now the NAS has

weeds means

Triumph Armbolack: is detailed in one of the notebook pages included in this box.

heads: Derived from the old term "talking heads", this term is reserved for opinion specialists who merely comment on stories dug up by the NJs rather than generating news themselves. An elite few in D.C. juggle the roles of both head and NJ, but these jobs require separate and unrelated skills. The NJ must be able to maintain a network of sources and slog through the legwork of detailed research. The head must be able to spew forth opinions that have the appearance of outrageousness while remaining within the unspoken limits of political discourse. In rules terms, the NJ needs lots of units in Administration and Streetwise skills, while the head has a hefty score in Artist (Performing Arts.)

Torture Reinstatement League: An alliance of big media and NAS interests, the TRL seeks relaxed police brutality statutes covering interrogations, and want the proceedings televised both as a deterrent to others, and as a sure-fire source of great Nielsen ratings.

begun to upset the cozy media applectart by pitching their appeal to the underclass the mainstream parties have so carefully alienated. NAS commentators like **Triumph Armbolack**, using the flashy techniques of entertainment TV, have started to mold the fears and anxieties of the poor and dispossessed into support for their agenda. Frightened former members of the middle class who have slid into poverty are looking for easy solutions and someone to blame for their accelerating sense of vulnerability. The NAS is using age-old propaganda techniques to turn fear into hatred — hatred of other races, other nations, and (lately) boosts and pre-frontals. One would think that poor people would have some sense of solidarity with others in the same boat, but the opposite is true. The less people have to lose, the more willing they are to sanction or even take part in anti-minority violence.

Stasticians have discovered that the rise of the NAS is tied into a little noted change in voter habits during the 2020 elections. Most NAS supporters were first-time voters, many from poor neighbourhoods with notoriously low turnouts. It was this surge in new voters that prevented the overall turnout from dipping below 16%, as even fewer elite voters showed up at the polls.

The larger parties are alarmed by the NAS's nasty trick of seeking out underclass voters — it's dirty pool! They've responded with mass market programs of their own, notably the Republocrat's *Camelot: The Next Generation*, starring the Atomic Kennedy. The Plutocrats have had less success in scoring a hit; their *Family Values Sing-Along Hour* was recently cancelled due to anemic ratings.

These are not the programs people in the ballpark watch, though. They're faithful watchers of the vidnet narrowcast channels *News Jockeys for News Junkies* and CNN-SPAN. These channels are the domain of the **heads**, political commentators whose pronouncements determine who's up and who's down in the eternal rat race.

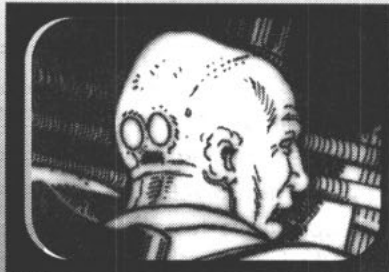
Since both political channels broadcast news and panel shows 24 hours a day, there is a great demand for entertaining heads. A pool of about fifty heads rotates back and forth between the different panel shows. With some minor differences, most panel shows share an identical format. Some allow four heads to gang up on a political figure, others balance public figures and reporters, and others have no official guests at all. Most head shows use themes to differentiate themselves: there are shows in which the heads are all female, all African-American, all female African-American, all female African-American vegetarians, and so on. Various special interest groups, such as the National Assault Rifle Association and the **Torture Reinstatement League** also sponsor panel shows in which all of the heads lean toward their favored position. These shows are shown on infomercial channels and not considered influential by Washington insiders, since the positions they'll take are predetermined.

NAS SUPPORTERS ARE
TARGETTING THE
UNEDUCATED
AUDIENCE

"TALKING HEADS" ARE
IN HIGH DEMAND

weeds means

Boosted Head Shows



There are even two head shows catering to the interests of the boosted. These are of marginal importance to the power elite, but may be favorites of politically-minded PCs. One of these is *Analytic Smell*, a typical panel format in which four boosted heads and a moderator kick

around the issues of the week. Regular panelists include Dr. Spin, Filibuster, Ms. Megaphone, and The Pollbearer. The Beacon of Liberty — see Notebook page at the end of this book — occasionally appears as a substitute when one of the regulars is unable to appear.

The other boosted head show has a wider audience; as well as being carried on CNN-SPAN, it's rerun on one of the entertainment channels later in the week. It's called *Crossfiring Line*, and is notable because of its two-part format. In the first part of the show, a guest boost and one of the show's hosts debates a controversial issue with another guest and the other host. Roughly halfway through the show, the debate invariably degenerates into a boosted tag-team brawl that trashes the studio. Guests are discouraged from using lethal force, and the show has a fairly low casualty rate. The show's usual hosts are the Arc-Weld Angel, Demagog, and Blubberdog. Arc-Weld Angel is classified as the spokesman for the left, which in the context of the mainstream media means the Repubocratic party. Demagog and Blubberdog rotate the rightist position, with Demagog usually taking the NAS line and Blubberdog carrying water for the Plutocrats.



John McLaughlin: is technically a boost, though he goes to great pains to diminish this fact. The famous political commentator was one of the many celebrities to undergo the faddish cryogenic freezing process in the late nineties, and was one of the first to be revived and enhanced for battle. After an unspectacular service record, he managed to reassert his old career. Observers have noted surprisingly little difference between his old persona and the new, post-brain-freeze McLaughlin.

The undisputed megalith of head shows is *The McLaughlin Group*, fronted by bellicose moderator **John McLaughlin**. This, and another dozen or so top shows, are considered the real bellweather of political success. No one head has overwhelming influence; they're paid to have quirky opinions. But if the entire body of heads show unanimity on someone's career, it is taken as gospel. When all five participants in a recent *McLaughlin Group* show declared that scandal-plagued Senator Stanley Chipperwood (R - New Hampshire) would not serve out his term, Chipperwood threw in the towel and announced his resignation.

Thus it is to the head shows that D.C.'s players look to for fallout whenever anything happens in town. It's the collective decision of the heads that

smudge: A piece of political dirt or damaging information that has no immediate benefit for its discoverer, but is nonetheless filed away for later use. As in, "I'm not worried, I got some prime smudge in my safety deposit box." Also used as a verb, meaning to release such information. Census Bureau chief Judith Roanoke is thought to possess the city's finest collection of smudge.

determines whether a story has "legs." A story with legs is one that will continue to get major media play for a long period of time. A "one-hit wonder" is a story that will appear for one week's worth of jabbering and then vanish without a trace. Politicians and officials caught with their hands in the cookie jar or their pants around their ankles always hope that their stories will be one-hit wonders. Their enemies do their best to give them legs.

The way to give a story legs is to release it in dribs and drabs, so that there's a new development every day. This is what makes leaking a skill requiring finesse and artistry. If an extremely incriminating document is released all at once, it may still not have legs, since there's no new news to hit the top of the charts everyday. Officials may be able to stonewall their way through such scandals. But if the leaker is clever enough to tease the NJs and heads by letting out one detail at a time, each one closer to the heart of the story than the last, the scandal seems to build in intensity on each given day.

The NJs and heads are therefore the weapons that a true D.C. player uses to deliver the *coup de grace* at the end of a long campaign against an enemy. Once the damaging evidence is amassed, it must be released for maximum impact. The attacked individuals often use the news media to fight back, usually by leaking more spectacular information on somebody else — possibly unrelated to the original scandal — to push their own troubles out of top slot. Most politicians and bureaucrats keep their ears pricked up for **smudge** at all times, in case they need it later as an insurance policy against being nailed in the media themselves.

The result is that Washington scandals tend to come in waves. One politico gets caught and leaks his smudge file to divert attention. The unsuspecting victim of the smudge then has to release *her* smudge file, implicating someone else in an unrelated matter. The someone else then scrambles for his own smudge, and so on.

(GMs can use this mechanism to explain why a juicy scandal uncovered by PCs doesn't result in a permanent change, like the resignation of the offending politico. If they get such info in the course of the story, but don't spend reward points to bring about the appropriate Parameter Change when they release it, the story promptly vanishes when the bad guy releases a smudge file with an even more interesting scandal in it.)

In order to release smudge, one must have a contact in one of the major players in the D.C. news establishment. There are only five news sources of any importance to ballparkers.

The New York Times and *Washington Post* continue to be the newspapers of official discourse. A story given "front-page" treatment in either publication is guaranteed to have legs — local publications and news broadcasts all around the country decide what is a big story by the play given it by these publications. Note that the term "newspaper" is now just an archaic holdover:

WHO DECIDES WHAT
STORIES ARE "HOT"

HOW STORIES ARE
MADE "HOT"

THE MEDIA IS USED AS
A WEAPON IN D.C.

ELECTRONIC
"NEWSPAPERS" ARE
ALSO IMPORTANT

chapter one

both publications are now delivered electronically via computer to readers' homes. Readers access only stories they're interested in, printing them out or reading them on a terminal. Front-page stories are those with point and click icons on the publication's welcome screen. These stories are the most likely to be accessed as readers click their way through to the comics and advice columns. A story that doesn't get a front page icon is even more effectively buried than something on page D19 of an ancient newspaper. NJs for these and other papers fight viciously for the limited number of front-page icons on any given day.

Peter Argot: Complete details on Washington's most famous crusading journalist can be found in the *Underground Notebook*.

THE NEW USA ON-LINE

The upstart *USA On-Line*, an amalgamation of several commercial computer information services, has also become influential. Unlike the old-line publications, *USA On-Line* offers news as only one of a number of dial-in services. It is possible here to comment on breaking stories, in bulletin board fashion, as well as read them. Users are encouraged to "vote" on issues of the day. Thus *USA On-Line* serves as a sort of instant call-in show / opinion poll of the elite and educated, who are the only people who can afford its high fees of \$40 per minute. Staffers on the Hill and in the White House carefully monitor the swaying of opinion in *USA On-Line's* forums. During elections, candidates even stage conferences to woo voters on the service. *USA On-Line* is owned by the same media conglomerate that publishes the *USA Alive* newspaper. *USA Alive* is not accorded much respect in Washington. It's aimed at the down-market reader, simplifying stories broken in the major papers for mass consumption. It still appears in the antiquated paper format.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DAILY NEWS SHOWS

The 6:30 news shows on both CVC and FBC are the last of the five outlets that decide what is and isn't important in D.C. Because the quality of the reporting is glib and superficial, it's not the content of the reports that matters. It's the placement — if both networks put a story at the top of the news, it's probably got legs. This is good for politicians if the report furthers their agenda, disastrous if it tags them with smudge. If CVC and FBC run with different lead stories, it shows that there is no obvious big story. Neither one is likely to develop legs.

THE ARGOT REPORTS

Peter Argot's late night show on FBC, a mixture of live interviews and taped investigative pieces, is a curious case. Unlike most big media productions, it thumbs its nose at the party line, and is loathed by most ballparkers for its anti-authoritarian attitude. Nonetheless, it is watched carefully — if Argot jumps on a story, particularly a scandal, it increases the chances that the figure under scrutiny is going to end up as political toast. On the other hand, a successful appearance on *The Argot Report* can stop a negative story cold. If the figure in question manages to go toe to toe with Argot and make a good case, the other media outlets usually start to downplay it, and it loses its legs. This is known in D.C. circles as "pulling a Daniel", a reference to the Biblical story about the lion's den. Those who come out the worse for wear in such encounters have sometimes been known to make threats about Argot losing his own legs. So far he's survived all attempts on his life.

WEEK

means

CHAPTER TWO

ALLIANCES

FLORA GARDNER: Your first political involvement came with the old Republican party, as an aide to Virginia governor Raymond Wells.

CHARLES FOSTER: Yes, he was a big influence on me.

FG: Yet you ran for that office yourself — against your mentor — as a Democrat.

CF: Yes.

FG: And then when you got a chance for a Senate run, you turned around and switched allegiances a third time — to the Plutocrats!

CF: So what are you getting at?

— Excerpted transcript of *The Gardner Report* interview with President Charles Foster, 12/08/20

covered: D.C. slang for "powerful", meaning someone who has enough smudge, connections, or legal security to be inoculated from attacks by others.

People who are covered have their roots buried deep in the power structure, and are hard to dislodge. As in, "You're not big enough to take on Senator Balsan, boy — that man is covered."

Many outside observers, looking at the various levels of struggle in D.C. — between branches of government, between institutions in the same branch, between individuals within each institution — wonder how anything gets done at all. The reason for this is that smart political operators are able to build alliances with others who have similar interests across institutional lines. D.C. is not a total dog-eat-dog world. Powerful people still need the help of others to make things happen. Ambitious types need to find **covered** patrons to pull them up onto the ladder of success. While it's true that allies can be quickly tossed overboard by their partners at the first sign of weakness, alliances remain necessary to steer any agenda through the complicated and unwieldy system of government. While many disaffected voters still believe in the old *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* myth of the one honest man who will someday ride into the crooked town and clean it up, no one person — no matter how charismatic — can get anything done on a solo basis. With alliances come compromises; no two operators have exactly the same agenda. By the time a politician can assemble enough allies to start moving on a plan, that plan has probably been watered down considerably to accommodate the slightly different desires of the new team. But given a choice between compromised success and success for the other guy, the real operators pick compromise every time.

SMART POLITICIANS
BUILD ALLIANCES



Thanks to form 1501/Z-13/A-Young Jonny Endocrine (the youngest licensed political activist at 13) exercises his right to free expression.

NEW POLITICIANS FIND OTHERS WITH SIMILAR GOALS

The first thing a smart new would-be player in Washington sets out to do is to find others whose goals are compatible with their own. These deals are often made in the backroom, and leave some awfully strange bedfellows in fervent embrace. Most often deals are made through common party affiliation between branches of government, but there are other power centres hidden in the Washington landscape. Party loyalties are no longer as binding as they once were; with two new political parties having formed in the past decade or so, it is no longer uncommon for politicians to jump from one party to another as the political winds change. Parties even raid each other for promising legislators.

WICKS

alliances

Fortune 35: Fortune magazine, now published only in electronic form, used to highlight the top 500 American companies in an annual special issue; to be a Fortune 500 company was to be a player in the US economy. Now, with increased conglomeratization and amalgamation of giant firms, there are only 35 wholly-companies of note in the US. These companies are responsible for a staggering percentage of America's declining gross national product.

Generous cash bonuses — under the table of course — are not unknown when a rising young congressman or senator throws in with a new party.

After a look at the three dominant parties in 21st century American politics, we peer into the secret worlds of the players who don't usually appear in the media.

plutocrats

Right now the dominant party in Washington is still the Plutocratic party, though its days at the top of the charts may turn out to be numbered. The Plutocrats grew out of the United We Stand movement founded by ultra-rich political hobbyist H. Ross Perot in the wake of the 1992 Presidential election campaign. Doomed by a basic internal contradiction, United We Stand was a populist movement with an autocratic leader. As Perot became increasingly frustrated by his inability to break through from fringe candidature to the mainstream, he increasingly turned to what he saw as like-minded big businessmen to add stature and heft to his fading public image. With political aide Margaret-Mary Vincent, now head of the NAS, at his side, United We Stand began to shift its emphasis from being a megaphone for upper middle class outrage to a role as spokesman for the big corporations. Its central theme was that government should be run like a business, and the taxpayers seen as shareholders. Behind the rhetoric, however, Perot's fellow fatcats saw the organization as a way to wheedle more taxpayer subsidies and tax loopholes for their own interests.

Conspiracy theorists now claim that an appalled Perot was about to clean house and toss out his big business supporters before that fatal day in 1998 when he was felled mysteriously Margaret-Mary Vincent took over the organization, and intensified efforts to transform it into the voice of America's owners. They were redefined as the people who owned big assets, not as ordinary taxpayers.

Although Vincent has since jumped ship to the NAS (see page 60) the apparatus she constructed is still going strong, controlling the Oval Office and the largest number of seats in Congress. Its segment of the demographic is the group once labelled "country club Republican." They're mostly white, invariably well-off, and connected to the corporate power structure. They're generally indifferent to social issues — if a given proposal will make their stock portfolios perform better, they're for it. If it hurts their finances, they're against it. If it does neither, they consider it a waste of time.

There is little distinction between the CEOs of the **Fortune 35** companies and the movers and shakers of the backroom side of the Plutocratic party. The secret of the Plutocratic party's success has been twofold. First, its corporate masters outspend the other parties during the permacampaign, buying plenty of airtime to keep the voting public aware of just what a lousy job their rivals would do if they ever got control of the nation's purse strings. Trying to do a positive selling job on the Plutocratic record is tougher than reinforcing the

THE PLUTOCRATS
SPRANG FROM THE
BELIEF THAT
GOVERNMENT
SHOULD BE RUN LIKE
A BUSINESS

MARGARET-MARY
VINCENT TAKES OVER

THE PLUTOCRATS
REMAIN STRONG
AFTER VINCENT
LEAVES

PLUTOCRATS
SUCCESS COMES
FROM CAMPAIGN
OUTSPENDING

WICKS

means

SUCCESS ALSO COMES FROM WORKPLACE CAMPAIGNING

fears voters have about the other parties, and the Plutocratic ad wizards generally don't bother attempting it.

The other tactic the Plutocrats have used successfully is workplace campaigning. As mostly people with high-paying jobs vote, and the majority of those people work for Fortune 35 companies, bosses make sure their employees know that a vote for the Republocrats or NAS could hurt the economy and cost them their jobs. Though few people believe this, the thought of losing a good job in an economy where the social safety net has rotted away almost entirely is a terrifying one, and employees usually vote as instructed just in case.

It is these powerful vote-getting mechanisms that guarantee the loyalty of elected Plutocrats to their corporate donors. To hitch one's wagon to the Plutocratic platform is to get a bit of a political free ride — assuming the candidate gets past the primary stage. Plutocratic politicians are careful to spout the **canned slogans** of the party whenever they make TV appearances, hoping to get the attention of the CEOs who decide who gets funded for primary campaigns.

canned slogans: Samples include, "To restrict the freedom of our corporations is to blindfold the soldiers in our economic war." "People choose to be poor." "It's the economy, jamhead."

I. F. Pratt: INT: 5, WILL: 3, AURA: 3. Business 11, Intimidation 9. "Politicians are like horses — don't bet on one till you've looked in his mouth."

THE CURRENT HEAD OF THE PLUTOCRATS

The current kingmaker in Plutocratic circles is **I. F. Pratt**, corpulent chairman of the Axis Mundi Holding Company, an enormous megaconglomerate with holdings throughout the military/industrial/entertainment complex. Notable among these is the CVC vidnet channel, long recognized as the unofficial propaganda arm of the party. It is Pratt who quietly interviews potential presidential candidates before the primary season begins; he then discreetly passes to other Plutocratic donors the names of the handful of men — and they're always men — he considers worthy of support. Nothing stops candidates disliked by Pratt from running, but they won't get significant funding. And without funding, primary campaigns go nowhere. It is widely believed that Pratt nixed the budding 2020 presidential campaign of Vice-President Limbaugh due to a perceived snub given him many years ago when Limbaugh was still a media commentator.

National Security Advisor Geoffery Sneed is a frequent dinner guest at Pratt's high-security personal compound outside Toronto. He is known to visit especially often before the presidential primary season.

republocrats

THE DOWNTRODDEN REPUBLICRATS COME BACK

After going through many rough years, the Republocrats are finally beginning to smell the aroma of victory in the air. This is due more to Plutocratic failings than Republicrat successes, but politicians never look too hard at a good thing. The Republocrats still have no distinct image with the voters; they're seen primarily as "the other guys." However, since the Plutocrats are beginning to be seen as being responsible for ongoing stagflation, just being someone other than a Plutocrat may turn out to be enough to squeak into the White House. Pollsters now figure they're sure to gain in the 2022 midterm elections.

The Atomic Kennedy:
is detailed in full in the
Underground
Notebook.

The reason that Joe and Jane Voter don't know what the Republocrats stand for is that few Republocrats know what they stand for either. Historically, the party formed from a marriage of convenience. Many fiscally conservative Republicans ducked under the Plutocratic tent when it became apparent that they would otherwise face disaster at the polls. Others remained loyal to the Grand Old Party — mostly because they'd already clawed their way up to senior positions and didn't want to start over again as middle-rankers in a new party elite. And many simply were unable to stomach the idea of joining a party that had cut the legs from beneath theirs. Then the 2012 elections blew the rump Republicans out of the water — along with nearly as many Democrats — and made it quite apparent that there wasn't room enough in the system for two conservative parties. There were further defections from the Republican camp to the Plutocrats; those who remained forged a surprise alliance with the equally wounded Democrats.

This alliance was based on strategy, not on ideology. Politicians who had fought each other throughout their careers now clung to each other to hold back the tide of Plutocratic initiatives. Liberal former Democrats now sit cheek-by-jowl with diehard fiscal conservatives from the defunct Republican party. For many years, the Republocrats simply took the role of naysayers, trying merely to hold onto their existing seats. Repeated failures to come up with a coherent platform were papered over. Despite their inability to agree with one another on policy, the remaining members of the two traditional parties needed each other to maintain their status in Congress.

Now that things have begun to turn around for the Republocrats, they've begun to trumpet their lack of a substantive platform as a virtue. They claim now to be the pragmatic party, a group of people devoted, in the words of Congresswoman Jody Yong (see p. 33) "not to what we believe, but what works." They claim to be above old-fashioned political bickering, promising to find new and creative solutions to old problems. In media appearances, Republocrats make plenty of vague but optimistic comments about the future, allowing disaffected voters of all stripes to attach their hopes to them.

The other factor giving the Republocrats an upward trend is their media strategy, as typified by the wildly popular vidnet adventure show *Camelot: The Next Generation*, starring once and future Presidential candidate **The Atomic Kennedy**. By abandoning traditional political talk shows in favor of a fictional format, the Republocrats have successfully sold themselves to lifetime nonvoters from the underclass. This has led even some of the old Republicans to adopt a more left-leaning approach, in keeping with the down-market demographic of these new voters. It has prompted the Plutocrats, in turn, to design new ways to suppress voter turnout in underprivileged areas. Some of the old fogies in Congress are alarmed by the fact that many voters seem to be supporting them solely because of their opposition to the Martian Menace, the program's fictional villains. But most Republocrats are happy to get whatever support they can, no matter how misguided.

THE REPUBLICAN-
DEMOCRAT MERGER

A MARRIAGE OF
SURVIVAL

LACK OF SUBSTANCE:
A VOTER PLUS

CAMELOT: THE NEXT
GENERATION, BOOSTS
REPUBLICAN
RATINGS

WICK

means

chapter two

WAG

REPUBLICRATS USE
C:TNG TO
SHOWCASE
CANDIDATES

The success of *Camelot: The Next Generation* has made Senator Gene Valmarana — see p. 32 — the chief Republicratic power broker. He's the one with the connections to get candidates guest shots on the show, which are proven to provide a boost at election time. Most of the Republicratic campaign war chest now comes from the sale of **Atomic Kennedy merchandise**, particularly the expensive uniforms and manuals of the Kennedy Youth, a scout-like organization founded to indoctrinate the Republicratic voters of tomorrow. Valmarana controls the dispensation of these funds as well. Some of his colleagues are trying to figure out how to wrest his lock on these powerful levers from him, but for now they're reluctant to cross him.

Atomic Kennedy merchandise: Popular items include lunchboxes, pajamas, pillowcases, coffee mugs, limited edition assault rifles (just like the ones fired on the show), trading cards, calendars, toys, Atomic Kennedy condoms and Kennedy's Choice Rye Whiskey. The Christmas at Camelot recording is a perennial favorite during the holiday season.

NAS

FORMER
PLUTOCRAT
MARGARET-MARY
VINCENT MOVES
TO THE NAS

The undisputed head of the National Anti-Socialist party is Margaret-Mary Vincent, who **leapt from the Plutocratic party** after having been instrumental in its founding. Vincent's political instincts are acute, and she did for the NAS — at the time of its founding a rag-tag bunch of unpopular extremists — what she had previously done (or to) the Perot movement. She turned it into a media-savvy organization attuned not only to its own vehemently expressed beliefs, but to the opinions of worried voters. Vincent realized that there was a growing constituency for a party built on bigotry and fear. Fear is an increasingly common commodity these days, as the middle class continues to go the way of the dodo bird. Formerly well-off suburbanites accustomed to voting are seeing their neighborhoods crumble around them as they creep into poverty. Many have completely given up on the chance of any constructive change. It is a similar sense of malaise and humiliation that led to the growth of fascism in Germany in the 1930s. And Vincent is betting that the same will happen here. People are looking for scapegoats and easy solutions, and the NAS is ready and willing to provide them.

leapt from the Plutocratic party: Or was she pushed? Rumors persist that the corporate heavy-hitters Vincent set out to court eventually pushed her aside when her overweening ambition grew inconvenient to their plans. An alleged tape recording of the falling out between Vincent and I. F. Pratt is legendary among Washington NJs, any of whom would give their eye teeth to snag it for airing.

VINCENT BUILDS
NAS SUPPORT
STRUCTURE

The other two parties have a large grass roots organization and a support structure underlying their elected officials in Washington. The Plutocrats have a base of corporate support; the Republicrats have the lucrative Atomic Kennedy franchise. But the NAS leadership is still a comparatively small cabal of people. There is defeated presidential candidate Mary-Margaret Vincent, who maintains offices at the Golden Heritage Institute, a far-right think tank in Washington. Then there are the various NAS congressmen and senators, plus their staffers. Outside of this, there is no solid organizational structure. This is something Vincent is working to put in place.

Ora Pro Nobis: A peculiar hate group, the Ora Pro Nobis is a group of radical conservatives of Filipino descent, with connections to the right-wing regime of the Philippines and the NSC. Some of them are even boosted. Despite qualifying on several fronts as NAS bogeymen, they are a vital part of the operation. It is OPN operatives who perform the nastiest bits of wetwork (assassinations, dirty tricks, and the like) for the party.

HATE GROUPS
SUPPORT THE NAS

Secretly, extremist hate groups such as the KKK, the Posse Comitatus, and the **Ora Pro Nobis** provide organizational support for NAS candidates. This would be a slight embarrassment to the party if discovered, and Vincent wants to set up local party units that she can control more closely. The main obstacle to doing so is money; Vincent really misses the days when she had access to the Perot bank account.

WAG

bo

means

WAGS

alliances



Keeping D.C.TM clean—Two members of the police arm of Democracy City's Department of Streets, Sanitations, and Interment.

left: Remember, this is a relative term. The Republocrats are to the left of the other national parties, but are considered to be firmly part of the establishment by revolutionaries like the Underground.

Like the Republocrats, the NAS expect to make electoral gains in the coming years by appealing to habitual nonvoters who are alienated from the system. Pollsters and political consultants suddenly find it extremely difficult to predict where the country is going. Experts consider the White House to be up for grabs next time around, with too many random factors to predict a result. Some feel that the Plutocrats will continue to squeak by, as they did in 2020, by splitting the protest vote between the other two parties. Others predict that the Plutocratic middle will vanish as voters split off both to the **left** and right, with the results a toss-up between the NAS and the Republocrats. Still others predict a shift of corporate support to the Republocrats, which will give them a solid victory. The theory here is that the corporations would rather have the Republocrats running the show than the extremist NAS, and would abandon the Plutocrats as a write-off.

Pundits are looking carefully to the run-up to the 2022 midterm congressional elections, to see which party suffers the most defections. If even a party's own

THE NAS IS MAKING
ELECTORAL GAINS

WAGS

means

D.C. LOBBYISTS
HAVE A GLORIFIED
REPUTATION

elected officials don't trust its future, it can be assumed to be headed for disaster. This method of analysis determines which ship is about to sink by examining the outflow of rats.

lobbyists

Critics of D.C. often lay much of the blame for its ills at the feet of lobbyists, paid consultants who represent the interests of clients to elected and appointed officials. Despite their expertise at PR, lobbyists do little to dispel the notion that they exercise undue influence over the process. After all, people hire them because of their perceived clout. In reality, though, lobbyists are no more than well-trained messenger boys in expensive suits. No official in his or her right mind makes decisions based on which lobbyist has the smoothest line of talk or the snazziest cuff-links. The officials want to know what's in it for them. This means that the influence of lobbyists at any given moment depends on the offers they can put on the table. Which in turn depends on what their clients are willing to offer. Lobbyists are nothing more than go-betweens and a **convenient misdirection** from the real source of Washington corruption, the collusion between big business and big government.

Lobbyists are in effect selling an illusion to their clients: they claim to have better access to the right officials than their competitors. Lobbied officials never turn away lobbyists with an offer to make; they want as many bidders for their favor as possible. Lobbyists don't so much represent a point of view as submit a series of sealed bids in exchange for an amendment to a bill or regulation. A good lobbyist is a good bargainer. If an official is already comfortable with a lobbyist, the lobbyist has an advantage, but usually not enough of one to justify the enormous fees most of them charge. In cases where the interests of the disadvantaged are up against the interests of a single corporation, there is no real need for lobbying. The corporation is going to win without much of a struggle. Heavy lobbying really comes into play when the interests of different conglomerates conflict. These situations are not uncommon, and keep the various lobbyist firms in business.

THE EFFORTS OF
LOBBYING FIRMS

The firm of Vallee & Nash is considered by newsjocks to be the most prestigious of the lobbying firms, employing over 1,000 lobbyists and support staff. Their reputation actually outpaces their current usefulness. Vallee & Nash has never really recovered from the implosion of the old-line parties, and is still playing catch-up trying to forge relationships to Plutocratic operators. They may be behind the curve on this one as well; the forward-looking firms are currently putting out feelers to the NAS instead of the fading Plutocrats.

An prime example of this is the firm of Brown, Parker, Wesley and Collins, which has already cemented relationships with crucial Republocratic and Plutocratic powerbrokers. Now it's working on covering the bases with Margaret-Mary Vincent and her people. To this end, they've created the division of **White and Sons** to represent clients to the NAS. White and Sons employs

convenient misdirection: Whenever public clamor for a clean-up of Washington gets too intense, Congress begins to toss around ideas to clamp down on lobbyists. Such proposals sound good but never get to the action stage. Most voters work for big companies who employ lobbyists themselves; it's always the other guy's lobbyists who are considered to be corrupt.

White and Sons: No one connected with the division is named "White." The partners of Brown, Wesley, Parker, and Collins simply thought that the NAS would like the ring of the name.

WAGNER

alliances

Albert "Fuzzy"
Wagner: INT: 2,
AURA: 2. Business 4,
Charm 3. "Access to
Senators for a tenth of
the price. How do we
do it? Volume!"

only Caucasian lobbyists, and encourages them to express the fervor of their Christian beliefs, real or feigned, when dealing with NAS legislators. The firm was recently the defendant in an anti-discrimination lawsuit covertly sponsored by Vallee & Nash. Brown, Parker won the suit by arguing that minority employees had the same or better opportunities within the parent firm that white folks have in White and Sons.

Other top firms include the Plato Institute, a think-tank turned lobby group; Frisell and Baron; and Palmerston Associates. Many of these break down into separately-managed divisions. This structure allows for employees of the same parent company to represent rival clients in the same matter.

A recent entry into the D.C. influence market is Weasels R Us, billed as a cut-rate lobbying organization for the average citizen. Run by **Albert "Fuzzy" Wagner**, and made famous by late-night vidnet ads, the firm is not taken seriously by ballparkers. Wagner seems to make an acceptable living fleecing individual citizens and small interest groups by claiming to offer cheap access to politicians. Only legislators willing to stoop for nickels and dimes are willing to meet Weasels R Us lobbyists. Some of the more conspiratorially minded Washingtonians figure that Weasels R Us must be a front for some more sophisticated operation with an as-yet unrevealed agenda.

WEASELS R US: THE
COMMON MAN'S
LOBBYING FIRM

corporations

Corporations really run this town, but they've learned over the years to keep their profiles low. They're happy to step out of the limelight and let snoopy NJs and violent political radicals concentrate on their lackeys. To the conglomerates, the real value of lobbyists is that they disguise who exactly is bidding on what. This not only keeps anti-corporate nuisances off their backs, but keeps their competitors in the dark as well.

THIS IS WHERE
THE POWER'S AT

All big businesses need legislative breaks and special deals from government. Of special interest to *Underground* GMs is the relationship between the conflict firms and Washington.

AMI's Frederick Furrier has deep connections in Washington; it is widely recognized that his political skills are what wins AMI its large share of conflict contracts. Furrier's connections span the political spectrum; he is a personal friend of both leading Republicrat Gene Valmarana (see p. 32) and the Plutocratic chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee Lewis Atherton (P-Missouri.) He has also lately been seen dining with NAS Senate leader Elspeth Manning. But perhaps his most important connection is to National Security Advisor Geoffery Sneed, who retains his post in the White House as administrations come and go. Furrier and Sneed were classmates at Yale, and have aided each other throughout their parallel careers. AMI also wins points with officials in all three branches of government by providing its most formidable, least psychotic boosts as bodyguards and investigators. They usually

AMI'S D.C.
CONNECTIONS

WAGNER

by

means

TWD'S D.C.
CONNECTIONS

arrange these posts for demobilizing soldiers, but will on occasion assign top, active-duty special ops when the task is both temporary and delicate.

TWD's relationship to Washington is not so personal. Its parent company, Avant-GarbageTM, deals with officialdom through the lobbyists of Brown, Parker, Wesley and Collins — see above. It considers the winning of conflict contracts to be only a part of its wider strategy of **vertical integration**, and is omnipresent on the Hill. In one senatorial office, a Brown, Parker lobbyist will be making offers to an Armed Services committee member about a conflict contract. At the same time, across the hall, you'll find another Brown, Parker representative trying to swing a deal with a Senator from the telecommunications subcommittee for a relaxation of FCC requirements surrounding the vidnet broadcasts of footage from the anticipated microwar.

DHI'S D.C.
CONNECTIONS

DHI takes a similar approach, but doesn't budget for the constant *blitzkrieg* of representation TWD is famous for. It employs the *passe* Vallee & Nash firm for its lobbying efforts, and concentrates on contracts rather than ancillary merchandising deals connected with them.

SGM'S D.C.
CONNECTIONS

SGM has its own full-time staffers lobby for contracts, in keeping with its low profile approach to business. Its team is small but very good at what they do.

"SQUEEZERS" LOBBY
FOR A SINGLE ISSUE

special interest groups

Although it is unusual for companies like SGM to employ its own full-time lobbyists, it is common for special interest groups, also known as **squeezers**, to do so. Squeezers are organizations either focussed on a single issue, or representing the interests of a particular demographic group.

Examples of the former type, large and small, include NARA (National Assault Rifle Association), ACAC (Anti-Cannibalism Action Committee), AASX (Agnostics and Atheists for a Secular Xmas), and NRMC (New Religion Moratorium Coalition.) Most groups on one side of a controversial issue are opposed by a counterpart equally devoted to the opposite end of the argument. The Privacy Management Research Centre (PMRC), a radical conservative foundation devoted to curtailing privacy rights as a threat to national security, is fought tooth and nail by Step Off, Peeping Toms!, Inc. Out of Our Genes (OOG), a group that wants to outlaw genetic research and enhancements, is opposed by DNAFT (DNA For Tomorrow), a lobby group funded by the genetic research industry and militant corporations. These groups not only lobby in Congress and at the White House, but appear on head shows to angrily spew slogans at one another.

These single-issue groups have more profile than power; the percentage of voters willing to make any of these issues the sole determinant of their vote is usually pretty small. Groups who make a great deal of noise but have little leverage over legislators are known as *bleaters*. There are a few issue-oriented groups who qualify as full-fledged squeezers, however. One is the NRPF, No

vertical integration:

Avant-GarbageTM wants to control every aspect of war coverage, from fighting the conflict to making the vidnet programs, to owning the channel. It also manufactures its own vid-discs and owns a chain of retail outlets to distribute them.

squeezers: Special interest groups as so called because they usually represent a pool of voters instead of just a pot of money. They can threaten to discourage their members from voting for a legislator, an act known as "squeezing." What portion of the official's metaphorical anatomy is involved is left to the reader's imagination.

WAP

alliances

Rights for Pre-Frontals. This is a radical conservative group that radically opposes any further privileges or programs for Pre-Frontals. They have a well-funded and vocal sector of the electorate in their pocket. Many Republicratic and Plutocratic politicians know that the only thing keeping a big chunk of their demographic from fleeing to the NAS is their own continued opposition to expanded rights for Pre-Frontals. The Pre-Frontal rights group, WAP (We're Almost People), is accordingly little heeded.

It's demographic groups who are truly feared on the Hill, because they can mobilize voters with sophisticated e-mail campaigns. The most terrifying is the AARP (Angry Aged Rich People), who represent well-to-do senior citizens, the



Budget cuts—Officer Boldmeister informs the UnderLieutenant of Group 4 that they must perform a delaying action while the rest of the company tries to scrape together enough air fare for them to “bug out.”

WAP

by

means

most reliable voters of all. They vigorously guard all of the entitlements they've squeezed out of the system over the decades. A surprisingly large chunk of tax dollars goes to various direct and indirect payments to wealthy retirees, while benefits to poor senior citizens have been clawed back to nearly zero through regressive taxation measures. Head of the AARP is **George Quentin**, who is known behind his back as "The Silver Fax", a reference to his head of white hair and his ability to inundate a congressman's office with outraged faxes and e-mailings at the drop of a cost of living increase. Only the most covered of legislators are willing to defy him.

Other demographic squeezers include the National White Caucus (NWC), Justice for Men Foundation (JMF), and the Womyn's Issues Forum (WIF.) They're less powerful than the AARP, since their concerns often cancel each other out. There are groups for pretty well any class, racial and cultural combination in America. The influence of a given group corresponds directly to what percentage of it votes regularly.

foreign powers

LEGISLATORS PAY
LIP SERVICE TO
BANNING FOREIGN
POWERS

When the voters get riled over the influence of lobbyists, one of the reforms that is often proposed — but never quite enacted — is that foreign powers be barred from lobbying individual legislators. Many congressmen and senators argue that the only proper way for foreign governments to deal with the US government is through diplomatic channels. That's in public; in private they're as happy to collect campaign funds from lobbyists representing offshore clients. This is considered acceptable, if unseemly, so long as the governments involved are allies of the US government, and the matter under consideration does not involve national security. For example, it's OK to talk to lobbyists representing the Estados Unidos Mexicanos about trade tariffs. To talk to them about NSA surveillance of their official communications would be scandalous. And to have any contact with the Chinese or Neo-Deutsch would be virtually guaranteed **political suicide**

FOREIGN EMBASSIES
IN D.C. SERVE AS
HAVENS FOR SPIES

All nations of the world, including those the US is fighting the Second Cold War with, have embassies and diplomatic representatives in Washington. It is considered an obvious point of fact that both the Chinese and Neo-Deutsch diplomatic staffs include a number of spies. Politicians also expect the NSC to plant well-trained and equipped spies in US embassies abroad. The problem with this tit-for-tat spying is that it's hard to officially punish foreign spies when they're caught. If the US expels diplomats, the offended side as a matter of course expels an equal number of US diplomats from its own capital. This absurd face-saving ritual can escalate into rounds of expulsions. All three powers try to complicate matters by setting off expulsion contests between their rivals.

The NSC, like its counterpart agencies in the rival powers, therefore maintains an itchy trigger finger policy in regards to counterintelligence. Rather than expel spies with diplomatic credentials, they arrange for their bullet-riddled

George Quentin: INT: 3, WILL: 3, AURA: 5. Administration 11, Business 5, Intimidation 11. "Regular voters are the shareholders of America. And we deserve the full dividends we're entitled to."

political suicide: Or possibly literal suicide. It is whispered that Senators Anne Iverson (R - Iowa) and Angel Barbachano (P - Cuba), who were both shot to death in their home districts on New Year's Day, 2020, were in communication with Neo-Deutsch war department officers.

W.C.S.

alliances

diplomatic immunity:
Now used as slang for
false sense of security, or
something that causes
same. As in, "He thinks
the stuff in the Connors
file is going to protect
him, but it's just
diplomatic immunity."

a tool of foreign powers:
Unfortunately, they can't
seem to get their story
straight on whether the
Underground is controlled
by the Chinese or Neo-
Deutsch. At different
times, the administration
has accused both powers
of financing and staffing
the Underground. The
"guilty party" is usually
the nation that has most
recently scored an
embarrassing military
success against US
forces.

Liberty's Torch: STR: 6
DEX: 9 SPD: 3 RES: 7
INT:2 WILL: 2 AURA: 0.
Acrobatics: 13, Detective:
4, Gun Combat: 15,
Thief: 15. Electrical
Discharge: 7, Extra Limb:
20. "The rampant
oppression of the
proletariat by the forces
of monopoly capitalism
must end! Violence is not
only justified, but
mandated!" When
Liberty's Psychosis,
Multiple Personalities,
manifests itself, she
believes she really is a
leader of the
Underground.

bodies to be found in a back alley or vacant lot in the Old City. The official explanation of such incidents is that the diplomats in question have mistakenly wandered into a bad neighborhood. This has given new meaning to the term **diplomatic immunity**. On the other hand, spies without diplomatic credentials are tried and imprisoned, and in many cases are later swapped for US agents in jail abroad.

the underground

Although the Underground does maintain a real presence in Washington, its enemies in the national security establishment credit it with even greater resources than it actually has. The funny thing about creating an elaborate domestic spying complex — the Census Bureau, the ASS, the NSC, and so forth — is that it makes its operators more, not less, paranoid than it otherwise would be. Because the Underground is unusually capable when it comes to eluding the scrutiny of state security officers, it preys on the minds of politicians and officials. When they manage to succeed in penetrating even the vaunted security of Democracy City™, as they did recently when they blew up the Department of Agriculture building, their abilities take on mythic proportions. If the Census Bureau can't detect them, they must be everywhere!

This paranoia is heightened by the propaganda techniques politicians use to discredit the Underground and one another. Politicians universally label the Underground as merely **a tool of foreign powers**. Both members of the Underground and D.C. players with enough of a connection to the security apparatus to know what's really going on consider this position laughable. But it is considered a necessary lie — government propagandists do everything they can to prevent the Underground from being seen as a popular movement. The best way to do so is to arouse jingoistic feelings in those who would be the Underground's natural supporters. To further reinforce this, Undergrounders are usually portrayed as foreign-backed subversives in fictional entertainment programming.

It is also not unknown for politicians to accuse one another of having contacts with, or sympathies for, the Underground. Although the NAS specializes in this sort of smear, the other parties do their share as well. The great thing about accusing someone of Underground sympathies is that the charge is impossible to prove or disprove. Such allegations tend to become especially common whenever election day rolls around.

The NSC has even created an Underground cell of its own in an attempt to dispel their fears about it. This phony cell was originally intended to gain credibility in resistance circles, make a liaison with real Undergrounders, win their trust, and then bust them. The Underground knew about the plan before it had even been put into effect. The NSC boys didn't know this, and went ahead with it. The fake cell, run by **Liberty's Torch**, set about committing minor acts of sabotage and spinning a few "expendable" D.C. players — ie., people the

THE UNDERGROUND
PRESENCE CREATES
PARANOIA IN D.C.

POLITICIANS USE THE
UNDERGROUND FOR
THEIR OWN ENDS

THE NSC CREATES
ITS OWN
UNDERGROUND CELL

W.C.S.

means

chapter two

W.C. Sullivan

PCS MIGHT ENCOUNTER THE NSC'S CELL

NSC wanted done anyway. Ironically, Torch's cell has done much more overt damage in town than the real Underground cell here. Although the NSC now assumes that Torch's cover has long since been blown to whoever really represents the Underground, the operation remains active. It's useful to have a hit team whose crimes can be blamed on the Underground. The Torch cell numbers six members, four of them boosts. The boosts have all been given cover jobs as security officers for the National Air and Space Museum. At the moment, the fake group is also being used as part of a sting operation against Republicratic legislators; Liberty's Torch has been ordered to put out feelers to see if any of them want Underground contacts. So far no one's taken the bait.

If PCs try to get into the Underground from D.C., and their attempt to find a contact isn't subtle enough, they'll probably end up meeting Liberty's Torch instead of the real article. Her orders are to string along would-be members of

the group until the NSC has enough information to blackmail them. Then they're either targeted for assassination or used as expendable dupes on NSC operations.

The head of the genuine Underground cell in town is Brainpan, a researcher for the vidnet trashnews show *Investigative Copy*. He is described in detail in a notebook page included at the end of this book. His organization is a small one. Since boosts aren't allowed to just run about the city unsupervised, his operatives are all part-timers. Most of them are bodyguards to officials and businessmen, and spend some of their time outside the city. Brainpan's operation is aimed at research more than active insurgency.



Proposing budget cut-backs—Senator Paulson forges another slim year for nuns and orphans.

W.C. Sullivan

means

W.C.S.

CHAPTER THREE

Moving and Shaking

Why do they call it the Ways and Means Committee?

Why, that's simple, Genifer.

**D.C. is all about ways of getting spin —
by any means necessary.**

— line from *Camelot: The Next Generation*, broadcast 17/8/21

OK, so you've arrived in D.C.. You've walked bravely into the belly of the beast. You've scoped out the puppets from the power brokers. Let's say you've got some spin — or you think you do — and you want to use it on someone. Now what? What do you actually do? How things get done — and not done — in Washington.

legislation

The big jackpots in the D.C. sweepstakes are still found in the lawmaking process. Almost any piece of legislation has an economic impact on somebody. And anybody who is somebody is going to be up on the Hill using their maximum spin to get the kind of legislation that favors them.

Bills can be proposed by the administration, or by any Congressman or Senator. Most bills are drafted but then go nowhere. Many of these doomed bills are intended as such; they're written and publicized to score points with a

BIG MONEY IS TO BE
MADE THROUGH
LAWMAKING

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THE PROCESS OF DEBATING LEGISLATURE

vocal segment of the electorate. If a bill is going to be seriously debated, it needs to be sponsored by other legislators from the chamber of Congress it's being proposed in. The more prominent and numerous the sponsors of a bill, the greater the chances of its getting debate time.

BOTH THE HOUSE AND SENATE DEBATE BILLS

Similar bills may be debated simultaneously in both the House and Senate. Usually these are different in detail. Eventually both chambers must pass the same bill, which is then passed on to the President for signing or veto, before it becomes law. This is an extremely convoluted process, allowing for considerable finagling. Bills are never passed as first proposed — the lawmaking process is a festival of amendments.

This process runs as follows: the bill is drafted either by the administration or by one or more legislators. Administration bills usually get debated, but by no means are guaranteed to pass. Bills originating from House or Senate members get debated only if they have enough sponsors lined up. The party leaders in each chamber decide which bills get debated, negotiating privately to allocate floor time. Bills whose drafters and sponsors have little pull with the leadership get **blasted**

blasted: A term deriving from war coverage. Boosts with the telepathic blast enhancement are recognized as being particularly lethal, because their attacks hit automatically. Ballparkers have adopted the term to refer to proposals, trial balloons and bills that are pronounced dead out of the starting gate by the party leaders. As in, "Balsan just blasted the welfare reform provisions."

BEFORE BEING DEBATED, BILLS ARE SENT TO COMMITTEES

Before debate, bills are referred to committees or subcommittees composed of legislators with special expertise in the matter in question. Legislators suffer from chronic information fatigue, and find it difficult to assess the merits of most proposals. Therefore they tend to learn one or two fields well, and rely on colleagues who likewise specialize in other areas they're not familiar with. This gives the committees and subcommittees a great deal of power. If a bill passes their approval without great controversy, the House or Senate at large is likely to vote for it on the assumption that they know what they're doing. Although amendments to a bill may be made at any stage, ones proposed during the committee process are more likely to stick, for precisely the same reason. Thus, members of the Armed Services Committee are going to have much more say over the exact detail of a bill pertaining to the militant corporations than other colleagues. Accordingly, they're going to get the lion's share of campaign donations from AMI, TWD, and company. Appointments to powerful committees are much-coveted for this reason. For example, the most desired House committee appointment is to the Ways and Means Committee, which determines how government money is spent. Appointments to committees are made by party leaders, who get a number of seats on the committee roughly proportional to their party's standing in the legislative body. This is one of the main sources of the leaders' power. Though in theory a leader can remove someone from a committee, they're in practise cemented in place until they choose to leave.

THE HOUSE AND SENATE DUPLICATE COMMITTEE EFFORTS

The House and Senate duplicate effort on some committees. Finance handles matters concerning the economy at large. Foreign Relations, Transportation, and Banking are largely self-explanatory. Legal Terrorism committees work on legislation establishing the ground rules for licensed terrorists. The Armed Services Committees specialize in enabling legislation authorizing particular warfare contracts.

ways

means

moving and shaking

uninformed voters: i.e., poor and minority voters. The Voter Turnout Reduction committee is currently being subverted by both opposition parties, who want to dismantle it. This is because both of them have recently switched media strategies to appeal specifically to uneducated voters.

the relevant committee or subcommittee: This is determined in private negotiation by the party leadership. Subcommittees may engage in jurisdictional battles over given bills. These take place behind closed doors, as subcommittee members appeal to their party leaders to throw bills their way. These fights usually occur when there are campaign contributions to be wrung from corporate donors. Subcommittees may also fight to avoid dealing with particularly controversial bills.

Other committees are unique to one body or the other. Ways and Means is a House committee. The Senate Judiciary Committee votes on Supreme Court nominees.

Still other committees are Joint Committees, panels in which legislators from both chambers attempt to get their act together and create similar bills. Some joint committees are more concerned with administration than legislation, but we'll discuss them all together anyway. The joint committee on Aging attempts to keep the influential AARP lobby group (see p. 65) happy. Budget Oversight is responsible for continual wrangling over determining what percentages of the budget get spent on which general areas. Corporate Army Recruitment works on legislation coordinating recruitment efforts with the militant corporations. Ethics investigates charges of impropriety against Senators and Congressmen in order to decide if they need to be whitewashed, slapped on the wrist, or turfed out. Foodstuffs works on legislation pertaining to the quality and quantity of the nation's food supply. Independent Corporation Interaction is an equivalent of the Foreign Relations committees dealing specifically with conglomerates that have declared themselves nation-states. Perks and Speaking Fees establishes legal ways for legislators to cash in on the system; its members are very popular with their colleagues. Publicity block-purchases media time for legislators. Voter Turnout Reduction was set up to handle legislation to discourage **uninformed voters** from turning up at the polls.

Your head spinning yet?

Then there's the subcommittees, which cover even more specialized areas and proliferate like rats. Subcommittees may be either joint subcommittees, or made up entirely by members of one chamber. Their spheres of influence may or may not relate sensibly to the main committee they're attached to. Feel free to make up the most absurd subcommittees possible. Examples of subcommittees include Ammunition Testing, Animal Companion Wellness, Breast Augmentation, Carbonated Beverages, Computer Communications, Gratuitous Video Game Violence, Legal Gambling, Music Appreciation, Sexual Practise Regulation, Collectable Trading Cards, and so on.

Where were we? Right... legislation. Once a bill receives the thumbs up from **the relevant committee or subcommittee**, having been altered in the process, it goes to the entire chamber for debate. Obscure bits of legislation are likely to be passed if the committee likes them; controversial ones can provoke big and public fights. Amendments may be stuck to the bill at this point as well. There are no relevancy rules for amendments. A bill regarding language education might be amended to provide for the building of a beer museum in Milwaukee.

Once both chambers have passed a bill, an ad hoc committee, usually including party leaders, then negotiates a compromise version which both chambers will pass. If the stars are right, that is. Then both houses go back and vote on the new version of the bill.

SOMETIMES JOINT COMMITTEES ARE FORMED

ONCE A COMMITTEE HAS LOOKED AT THE BILL, IT MOVES ON FOR DEBATE

AFTER DEBATE, AN AD HOC COMMITTEE BUILDS A COMPROMISE

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If both votes pass, the President has two choices. He can pass the bill in its entirety, or veto it. Although Presidents have been fighting for years for a line-item veto — the right to strike out particular provisions while passing the rest of the bill — Congress has even more vigorously fought to prevent him from getting

one. Thus, he has to pass the beer museum if he wants the language education bill. If the President signs the bill, it's law. If he vetos it, both Houses can overrule him with a two-thirds majority, which is very difficult to get.

filibustered: A filibuster occurs when a minority member refuses to yield the floor and continues talking for hours until the majority party finally gives up in disgust and abandons whatever measure he's opposing.



Your Freudian slip is showing—"Read my lips: No new taxes... well, none from out of left field... you know, nothing you wouldn't expect... um..."

PCs who get involved in D.C.™ politicking may find themselves lobbying either for or against a given bill. Because the system is so complicated, it's much easier to kill a bill than to get it passed. A bill can be choked off when it fails to gain sponsors, doesn't get the support of the party leadership, dies in committee, or is **filibustered** or defeated on the floor of the House. One popular way to kill a bill is to amend it to death, by adding provisions that either contradict the intent of the bill or simply contain so much blatant unrelated pork barrelling that the President will be forced to veto it. Fights over bills are usually fights between entrenched interests— corporations who profit from the way

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MOVING AND SHAKING

something is currently set up — and hungry interests, conglomerates who want a piece of the action. Successful lobbying involves getting to legislators and convincing them by fair means or foul either to add amendments, or to vote a certain way in committee or on the floor of the House or Senate.

We recommend that GMs decide which bills get passed by fiat, based on what makes sense according to the political needs of the administration and party leaders. If a roll is required, assume that passing *any* bill is Phenomenally Difficult and therefore has a Difficulty of 15. The odds go higher when more controversial bills are concerned. Use a P/F Challenge to determine the result, with the most prominent supporter of the bill rolling either Administration, Charm, Intimidation, or Leadership, as seems appropriate. Add 1 to the roll for each \$5,000,000 spent on campaign donations to Congressmen and Senators *in excess of the amount spent by the other side*. Add 1 to the Difficulty for each \$5,000,000 increment if the forces against the bill outspend the forces in favor of it. Determination by dice should probably only be necessary when a PC is the most prominent supporter of a bill. This should happen only in an extremely long-running D.C. campaign in which the PCs have risen to the positions of party leaders or high-ranking administration officials.

LEGISLATION IN GAME TERMS

regulations

Just as important to big money interests are regulations. These are rules that are set by appointed officials in the executive branch. They're usually much more detail oriented than legislation. They're also more likely to be directly related to commercial activities. For example, one regulation from the Food and Drug Administration might apply to the acceptable length of lobster tails sold in the US market. This seems pretty obscure but might make a big buck difference to conglomerates with seafood import divisions. If a conglomerate that catches most of its lobsters off the eastern seaboard has a bad year and ends up with a lot of short lobsters, it might decide to lobby the FDA for a change in the regulation. If they get their wish, it could mean just as big a windfall for them as a favorable tax provision passed by Congress.

LEGAL REGULATIONS

It is easier to get a regulatory change than a legislative one, since the process takes place entirely behind closed doors. Appointed officials in a clear hierarchy decide whether to make the changes or not. The Plutocratic party is a firm believer in regulatory relaxation; one of its primary goals is to make life

REGULATIONS ARE EASIER TO CHANGE

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CORPORATIONS SOMETIMES COMPETE FOR REGULATION CHANGES

easier for its corporate sponsors. **The Vice-President's Council on Competitive Vigor** is a body of prominent businessmen and federal officials set up specifically to hear requests to alter particular regulations. If the VPCCV requests that a regulation be changed or deleted, the heads of federal agencies are likely to go along. Sometimes they complain to their respective cabinet officials, who may or may not care enough to appeal to the President for a retention of the given regulation. It is difficult to persuade Charles Foster to retain a regulation that the VPCCV wants blasted.

Things get complicated when competing corporate interests get involved. To return to the lobster tail example, a conglomerate that uses genetic technology to farm lobsters of exactly the regulated length would be unhappy to see a regulatory change. If the current regulation remains in place, they have a chance to eat up their competitor's market share. If they get wind of the changes, they'll lobby the VPCCV, FDA officials, and administration officials. In all likelihood, the corporation willing to pony up the biggest chunk of campaign funds will get their way.

The defeated corporation may or may not give up at this point. There is always recourse to Congress — the corporation can lobby to have the regulation changed into a legislated mandate. If the lobster fishing conglomerate loses the regulatory fight, they'll lobby to have the regulation stricken by law. If the lobster farming corporation loses, they'll fight to have Congress have the regulation enshrined in law. The best way to reverse an administration decision on a regulation is to amend an unrelated piece of legislation that the President really wants to sign — see *Legislation*, above.

Bureaucrats tend to fight to retain regulations, since these are the basis of their power. The lobster inspectors and their superiors will be upset if the lobster length rule is dropped, because they've been making good money taking bribes to pass short lobster tails for years.

Altruistic activist PCs might also fight to keep regulations that protect the average person from unsafe products, dangerous environmental practises, and the like. It is much harder to keep or create a regulation that favors the citizen over the corporation.

A corporation that wants a regulation stricken, and faces no opposition from other corporate sources, faces a P/F Challenge of Average (0) Difficulty. The challenge is taken by the head lobbyist for the change, against her Administration skill. Add 1 to the challenge roll for each \$5,000,000 the corporation is willing to donate to the party that controls the White House. If competing corporations are fighting each other over a change, have representatives for each make Challenges; the highest result wins.

The Vice-President's Council on Competitive Vigor: Ironically, the Vice-President no longer sits on the Council, because he was a bit too squeamish about blasting some of the environmental regulations that the corps wanted spun. He was removed by Bert Betton, but the name was left in place to avoid public embarrassment.

moving and shaking

Politicians who want to make an active change: Actually, Presidents usually try to control the agenda even when their goal is to do nothing. They focus on issues they have no real intention of dealing with, arranging photo opportunities and giving speeches to distract from their general inaction. A favorite for decades has been a perennially declared "War on Drugs." The key here is to avoid pushing any one issue too hard, or a real demand for action will be accidentally created.

as inattentive as usual: Even the so-called educated elite that votes regularly pays little heed to politics, except during the final weeks of an election campaign. Outside of Washington, only a few people follow politics, and for them it's a sick sort of hobby, akin to rubbernecking at traffic accidents.

controlling the agenda

It is important for players in Washington to do something called "controlling the agenda." This is usually seen as the territory of the successful president, but lobby groups or Congressional leaders can play the game too. **Politicians who want to make an active change** in some area need to control the agenda, by manipulating the news media into presenting their issue to voters as a pressing matter that needs to be attended to. As usual, this is a process designed to increase the fear level of Congress. If voters suddenly come to believe that a sweeping change in, say, the treatment of boosted vets, is crucial to the country's welfare, they'll begin to pressure their Congressmen and Senators to act. If enough legislators who are inclined to oppose the measure in question begin to feel that they'll be punished at the voting booth, they'll swing their support to the other side. This fear of election day retribution, if convincing enough, will even counter the effects of big money corporate offers. All the campaign money in the world won't sway an aroused and angry electorate.

Those who wish to control the agenda win if their issue of choice is a top story for weeks or months at a time. If the end is to widen police powers, a steady stream of frightening stories in which the voting class is the victim of violent crime is the required means. Those who want to maintain the status quo have an easier job. They win if news coverage is just its usual random hodge-podge of unrelated stories, and the voters remain **as inattentive as usual**

The problem with controlling the agenda is that the media isn't responsive to the same kind of arm-twisting as other D.C. players. Bribes don't work with NJs, because if they run stories the audience isn't interested in, they lose much more money due to lost ad revenues brought about by low ratings. Sometimes corporate sponsors lean on news executives to slant coverage their way. They may also buy blocks of time to present "documentaries" that push their point of view. But these are of limited usefulness, since they're rarely as sexy as regular news reports.

The trick then, is to convince NJs and their bosses that the stories players want them to cover are the stories their audiences want to see. Charm, rather than bribery or intimidation, is the lever to use. This is why politicians try to keep a cordial relationship with NJs, who they would otherwise see as deadly enemies. They spend a great deal of time wining and dining them and generally helping to bolster the newsjocks' already inflated view of themselves. Since hanging out with the powerful helps NJs maintain the delusion that they're powerful themselves, they often find themselves getting sucked into the worldview of the people they're supposed to be keeping honest. The bigger NJs are in their field, the more susceptible they are to this brand of sycophancy. This doesn't mean that an NJ won't kick a politician when he's down. But when he's up, big NJs are likely to buy the politician's priorities. Heads as well as NJs are courted in this way, as having an issue discussed on a panel show is another sign that it's at the top of the agenda. As a general rule, heads are even more susceptible to flattery than NJs, and more likely to fawn on players merely for being powerful.

PLAYERS IN D.C. USE THE MEDIA TO INFLUENCE VOTERS WHO INFLUENCE LEGISLATORS

THE MEDIA ISN'T AS EASY TO CONTROL AS OTHER PLAYERS

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HOW PCS CAN CONTROL THE AGENDA

Only players who have accumulated a wide network of NJ and head contacts can attempt to control the agenda. To make something a top story for the day, characters must make a Standard Challenge against their Charm skills. Determine Difficulty by the sex appeal of what would otherwise be the top story. Boring things like international treaties and corporate takeovers pose a Difficulty of 0. Minor financial scandals and natural disasters pose a Difficulty of 2. Major financial scandals or minor sexual scandals pose a Difficulty of 5. Major sexual scandals have a Difficulty of 9.

An A result makes the PC's choice the top story. A B result gets it after the first story, but nonetheless on the front page or first segment before the commercial. A C result gives it minor play; a D result gets it buried in the back pages or in a small blurb on air. An F means it isn't covered at all.

Alternatively, GMs can roll for a number of NPCs attempting to get their stories at the top of the agenda on the same day as the PCs, and award the prize to the highest roll. And there's nothing to stop them from deciding by fiat according to what seems believable.

a ratio of about ten to one: In primary contests where incumbents are up against challengers from their own parties, the ratio is more like twenty-five to one. Parties don't support challengers to sitting politicians. Exceptions exist where the party wants to get rid of a loose cannon, but these are extremely rare.

elections

THE REALLY IMPORTANT ISSUE IN D.C. IS GETTING RE-ELECTED

Any event in Washington is just a warm-up to the real endgame — getting reelected. This is the thought always uppermost in the minds of legislators and administration officials. Even second-term Presidents, who are forbidden by law from running again, work to see that their party remains in control of the White House.

HOW POLITICIANS MANIPULATE VOTERS

Getting elected is mostly a matter of knowing the desires of the voting class, and pushing their buttons via media commercials. The same methods used to market soup, electronic equipment or recordings are used to sell politicians. Emotional manipulation is the main technique. The basic emotions of the voting class in 2021 are fear and anger. Incumbents specialize in fear commercials, portraying a vote for their opponents as a leap into the unknown. Challengers target the anger of the electorate with the obvious corruption and inaction of Washington officials. The fear versus anger contest would be comparatively even, except that incumbents can outspend challengers by **a ratio of about ten to one**

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Elections run in two phases: the primary and the main event. During a primary, candidates from the same party square off against one another for the right to run in the main event under the party banner. Incumbents almost never lose primaries.

PRIMARY AND MAIN ELECTIONS

During the main event, candidates from the three parties square off against each other, with the winner taking the Congressional seat or the Presidency. The process is the same at the state and local level (though they're outside the focus of this book).

Elections occur on the first Tuesday of November. Congressmen face reelection every 2 years, Senators every six. Senatorial elections are staggered, with roughly a third of the seats being up for grabs on any even-numbered year. Presidential elections take place every 4 years; the last one was in 2020. There are no laws limiting when a politician can start



Rejected!—Members of the NSC head back to D.C.TM after “serving notice” to the People’s Senate.

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THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

campaigning for a position. Challengers for President usually start raising money for primaries about three years before the next election, and announce their candidacies a year before the first primary, which is in early spring of the election year. States determine when their federal primaries are held, and keep moving them around to gain a strategic advantage over other states, by forcing candidates to make promises specifically to them. Currently the first Presidential primary is on the first Tuesday in March, in the smallest state in the union, Prince Edward Island.

HOW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS GO DOWN

The Presidential primaries are a particularly complicated ordeal. Each state has a number of delegates proportional to its size. The candidates must win a majority of delegates to get their party's nomination for the main campaign. Incumbent presidents usually cakewalk through the primary season. Winning even a slim majority in a state captures all of its delegates. Although the result is **almost always predetermined** before the primary season is over, the nomination is officially made at a party convention during the summer. Conventions are treated as sources of free media time by the parties, who run them for maximum entertainment value. Presidential campaigns by the anointed nominees begin right after their conventions end.

Getting involved in an election is a great way for PCs to experience the political system. There are an almost infinite number of variables determining the results of an election campaign; what follows is a simplified system that GMs should feel free to complicate at whim.

ELECTIONS IN GAME TERMS

At the start of a primary or main event race, decide who the candidates are, and what proportion of voter support they have at the outset. Challengers never win elections, incumbents lose them. Although voters usually think most politicians are corrupt and ought be tossed out on their butts, they usually support their own representatives — because they're doing sleazy stuff on their behalf. So start with a **hefty margin of support for the incumbent**. The incumbent makes a Standard Charm Challenge against a Difficulty of 0. The Challenge Grade determines the percentage of voter support the incumbent begins with.

INCUMBANT SUPPORT TABLE

Challenge Grade	Support Level
F	40%
D	60%
C	65%
B	70%
A	75%

In primary campaigns, incumbents get a 20% bonus on top of the support level shown on the chart. Although support above 75% is almost unheard of in a three-party system, GMs may award higher starting levels for general elections if circumstances warrant. Lower support levels for notably unpopular F graders are also possible through GM adjustment.

almost always predetermined: It is theoretically possible, in a race between multiple candidates, for no single one of them to have a majority of delegates at the end of the process. This would result in multiple balloting at the convention itself, with unpredictable results. NJs always hope for this dramatic scenario to evolve, but it never does.

hefty margin of support for the incumbent: Assuming there is an incumbent. Otherwise, decide by fiat who the leading contender is, but subtract 20% from the leader's support level. This reflects the more level playing field of a no-incumbent race.

means

means

another 17.5% of the support: Note that the three-party system means even more of an advantage for incumbents than the ancient two-party system.

The GM then determines, through fiat, who the most popular challenger is likely to be. This character makes a Standard Charm Challenge on the following chart, to determine what percentage of the *remaining available support* she splits with the other challenger(s). It is possible for the result of the Challenge to establish that she is in fact less popular than another challenger. Difficulty of the Challenge is 3.

Challenge Grade	Percentage of Remaining Support
F	20%
D	40%
C	50%
B	55%
A	60%

CHALLENGER
SUPPORT TABLE

Example: Senate Republocratic leader Jack Balsan is up for reelection, having already breezed through the primary process without serious opposition. His Charm is 6, and he gets a result of 13 against the GM's roll of 6. This is a Challenge Grade of C; Balsan has 65% support in the general election. The Republocratic and NAS candidates will therefore be fighting to split the remaining 35% of the vote between them.

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL
PRIMARY SUPPORT

The GM figures that the NAS have been making gains in Balsan's home state of New Hampshire, and that Daniela Cannon is likely to be in second place. Her Charm is 3; she rolls a 10 against the GM's roll of 5. This is a C result, giving her 50% of the 35% percentage of support available. $35 \times 0.5 = 17.5$. Thus, in real terms, Daniela has 17.5% of support as the campaign begins.

This leaves **another 17.5% of the support** to the Republocratic candidate, Jane Makharev.

Primary races may have more than three candidates. In these cases, keep using the second chart to determine what percentage of the ever-decreasing pie of available support the next candidate in line gets.

Once the GM has determined the starting support levels, it's time to determine how they change over the course of the campaign. During the early stages of the campaign, check once a week for fluctuations in voter support. During the final month, check once a day.

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If nothing extraordinary happens, the leader cruises to victory. It is up to the trailing candidates to make sure something extraordinary happens. This might be where the PCs come in; they could launch an investigation to dig up dirt on the incumbent, or design a particularly effective media campaign against him. During each support level check, the trailing candidates each make a P/F Charm Challenge against a Difficulty set by the GM. The Difficulty reflects how well the leader is doing. If he is running a smooth campaign with no mistakes, the Difficulty is 9. If he is running a sloppy campaign or makes a particularly notable gaffe, the Difficulty is 4. If a scandal erupts in the leader's camp, the Difficulty can be anywhere from 3 to 0, depending on the seriousness of the charges. Due to their spending advantage, the Difficulty when running against incumbents is never less than 0.

Trailing candidates who pass a challenge gain 1% of the overall support. This support comes from the leader's column. When they fail a challenge, they lose 1% of overall support. This **support goes to the leader**

support goes to the leader: At first glance, it will seem that this system doesn't allow for trailing candidates to lose support to other trailing candidates, something that happens all the time in real multi-candidate races. But if one trailer fails a challenge and the other passes, their percentages change while the leader's remains constant.

EXAMPLE OF ONGOING SUPPORT

Example: During the first week of Balsan's reelection campaign, both challengers roll to see if they can chip into his support. Balsan's campaign is smooth and professional in the early stages, so the difficulty of these Challenges is 9. Cannon rolls a 13 against the GM's 9, a failure. She loses a point to Balsan. Repubocratic candidate Makharev, a talk show host, is a real charmer. She rolls a 21 against the GM's 9, a pass. She picks up a point from Balsan. This leaves Balsan with 65% support, having lost one point and picked up another. Cannon has lost a point, putting her at 16.5%. Makharev is up at 18.5%.

fundraising

HOW POLITICIANS RAISE ELECTION CASH

Most congressmen and senators spend the majority of their time raising funds for future reelection campaigns. Presidents need to take a much smaller bite out of their schedules for fundraising. Their prestige level is high enough to net in one engagement a bag of loot ten times that of the average's legislator's fundraising event.

Dinners are a splashy way of squeezing dough out of corporate sponsors. They're also a good laundering device. If a corporation gets an agreement from a Senator to vote their way on a bill in March, and then buys several tables at a \$100,000 a plate dinner in August, they'll have obscured the cause and effect connection between the vote and the cash.

Speaking engagements are also a great source of revenue for legislators. They often charge enormous amounts of money to give speeches to bored junior level

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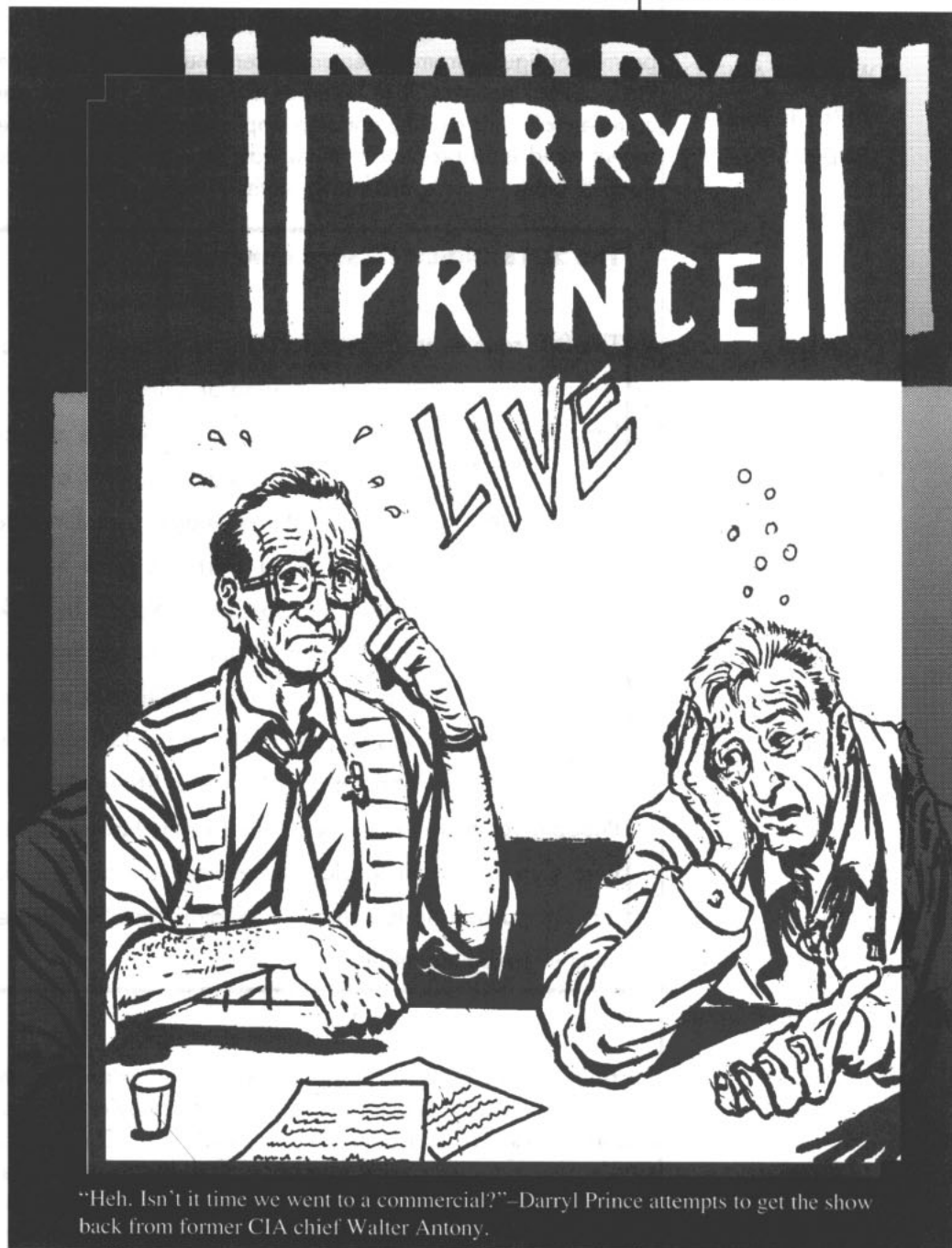
means

WCS-TV Moving and Shaking

executives at corporate retreats. This allows them to claim to have legitimately earned the money. Relaxed regulations on speaking fees now allow Congressmen and Senators to pocket these speaking fees as earned income instead funnelling it into their campaigns. There is, however, nothing stopping them from putting the money into their reelection war chests if they so choose.

Merchandising sales is a relatively new dodge that's catching on like wildfire. This practise started decades ago in the form of book sales. Congressmen and Senators would write and publish slim vanity volumes, usually little more than transcribed stump speeches. They would then sell them in bulk to donors in order to wiggle around caps on donations. This small scam has now mushroomed: legislators sell autographs, t-shirts, audio and video tapes, glossy photos, swimwear, cookies, porcelain statuettes and other assorted bric-a-bac via mail order. Because legislators pay nothing for postage to constituents, all shipments are sent free of charge to customers, with the taxpayers picking up the tab. The customers, of course, are usually corporations who buy in bulk. The items usually end up in landfill sites soon after they're purchased.

CAMPAIGN
MERCHANDISING
CATCHES ON



"Heh. Isn't it time we went to a commercial?"—Darryl Prince attempts to get the show back from former CIA chief Walter Antony.

WCS-TV means

There is no real need for rules to govern fundraising; it's more appropriately an activity that takes place in the background of adventures. PCs who serve as staff or bodyguards to members of Congress may be sent to pick up loot in midnight meetings with corporate flacks. Investigative PCs will likely be watching these transactions from a distance, trying to tie specific donations to particular votes.

ronnies: Named, of course, after beloved former President Ronald Reagan, still the most successful crossover hit from the entertainment complex to politics.

stars in politics

IT HAS BECOME
COMMONPLACE TO
HIRE CELEBRITY
ENDORSEMENTS

Because campaigning is done almost exclusively through the media in 2021, prominent figures from the entertainment media have become very influential in the political process. It is common for stars to endorse candidates in vidnet commercials, just as they endorse appliances, liquor, and cleaning products. A recent trend is to produce commercials in which the candidate is played by a popular actor — these are known in the trade as **ronnies**

The 2018 Gilbert Dissard Campaign

The first ronnies were produced by Penultimedia Associates, Ltd., for the reelection campaign of Senator Gilbert Dissard (P - Kansas.) Dissard, a long-winded professorial type with a speech impediment, faced a tough challenge from his Republocrat opponent, a former District Attorney with a hard-line image. Penultimedia produced a series of ads in which Dissard storms a juice house with EP450s blazing, with the gangly senator being played by rock-jawed action star Steve Ardner. Only a small optical at the bottom of the screen identified the scene as a dramatization. Dissard won with a stunning 70% plurality. To this day, many Kansans believe that their Senator looks like Steve Ardner, or even *is* Steve Ardner. The losing Republocrat has announced plans to run, having signed martial arts hero Cyndra Tanner to play her in commercials. For his part, Ardner has signed with no less than 17 senators and 35 congressmen to play them in upcoming media campaigns.

Because politicians have huge budgets to throw around, they can afford top stars to appear in their commercials, whether they're ronnies or straightforward endorsements. The big money is in Senate and Congressional races, since a single star can sign with numbers of politicians from separate districts. Obviously the contracts contain clauses that forbid celebrities from appearing in rivals' commercials. Some stars are loyal to one party; others may appear for a

MOVING AND SHAKING

Ashley Crawford: INT: 3, WILL: 2, AURA: 2.
Business: 9, Charm: 4. "Sure, Senator Grassley got a better deal, but he represents a smaller market."

Andrew Ransley: INT: 4, WILL: 1, AURA: 3.
Administration (Federal): 6, Business: 8, Charm 7. "Keep the bow-tie, the bow-tie says honesty. Lose the cardigan, though, it says weakness."

Senator of one party in one state and for a Senator from an opposing party in the neighboring one.

About half of the celebrities who appear in these commercials do so out of political commitment, and carefully screen candidates for ideological purity before signing with them. The really popular ones thereby develop some real clout; a star with a proven ability to ramp up poll numbers can make demands on candidates they're negotiating deals with. For example, Larrissa Yo-Wen, who plays the archetypal nurturing mom on the top sitcom *The Wangs*, demands a strong stand in favor of pre-frontal rights. Action star Martin Fucci refuses to represent pro-gun control politicians.

Other celebrities see a role in a ronnie as just another lucrative part, and don't bother to check out the candidate's record or platform. This disinterest in who they work for makes their agents influential instead. Both of Hollywood's top two talent agencies, ARRM and FO&D Inc., have permanent Washington offices in place to deal with requests for talent from politicians. **Ashley Crawford** head of ARRM's Washington branch, is a tough negotiator whose only criteria for a deal is money. FO&D's **Andrew Ransley** is more of a political animal, having forged alliances with Republocrats and moderate Plutocrats. He also serves as a media consultant to politicians he favors, offering savvy advice for those who want to pump up their VQ ratings.

The Republocrats have the strongest base of celebrity support. They're considered hipper than the other parties by the Hollywood elite, especially since the success of the Atomic Kennedy TV show. The Plutocrats tend to attract an older generation of stars. Few Hollywood types are willing to be associated in public with the NAS, as they don't want to alienate the minority groups that the NAS campaigns against. Some of them secretly donate to NAS campaigns, however.

A PC helping a politician out in an election campaign can arrange for a shot in the arm by convincing a particularly popular media star with the right image to appear in a commercial supporting the candidate. The star's Charm skill substitutes for the politician's in the three support checks that immediately follow the appearance of the commercials. If the leader in a race hires a particularly popular star, the Difficulty of his opponent's support checks goes up. Leaders don't get to substitute celebrity's Charm ratings for their own during the determination of initial support.

Investigations

Investigations are likely the most common sort of adventure that *Underground* PCs will engage in. Most often they'll be investigating wrongdoing in the activities mentioned above. These adventures function as mystery scenarios in any genre do, as the PCs track down clues that lead to other clues, which lead to still other clues until the final mystery is unravelled.

MANY CELEBS STILL CHOOSE PROMO JOBS BY IDEOLOGY

HOLLYWOOD TALENT AGENCIES MAINTAIN OFFICES IN D.C.

REPUBLICRATS HAVE HIGHEST CELEB SUPPORT

INVESTIGATIONS IN D.C.

WINGS

03

means

chapter three

There are two sorts of investigations that take place in D.C. — covert and sanctioned. A covert investigation is one carried out by individuals or groups on their own initiative, without the institutional duty to do so. A corporation that sends PCs out to find what regulations a rival is fighting to change is launching a covert investigation. There need not be anything illegal about a covert investigation; the people ordering it may or may not insist on careful obedience to the law. Just about anyone in Washington can and will arrange for private investigations at a moment's notice. The object is often to accumulate damaging info on a particular political enemies. Some operators will commission covert investigations when they run across something they find suspicious, in the hopes of getting smudge for later use.

Many Washington institutions, from the Congress to the Justice Department to the FBI and NSC, are legally empowered to launch investigations. Starting an investigation of an enemy can be a damaging psychological blow, even if they have nothing to hide. The Congress has especially wide powers of investigation, and needn't focus on criminal activities. A Congressional investigation can

Fifth Amendment: Of course, anyone using the right to avoid self-incrimination will automatically be treated as a criminal in media reports.

subpoena witnesses, forcing them to testify under oath. Witnesses can still take the **Fifth Amendment** if they don't wish to speak. Congressional investigations are, oddly enough, often used to cover up official wrongdoing. The Congress sets up a hearing and grants immunity to all participants if they cooperate with the proceedings. The immunity means that their testimony can't be used against them in a criminal trial. The witnesses then spill every scrap of incriminating evidence into the record at the hearing, making later convictions by the Justice Department virtually impossible.

Once a D.C. campaign has been rolling for a while, the GM has an interesting switch he can pull on PCs; he can see that *they're* investigated.



Camalot: The Next Generation—"The average genhanced citizen is not displeased with his lot in life. He was designed to endure hardship," claims Sen. Tom Mondohands.

means

means

WCCS

CHAPTER FOUR

Psych of the City

I've experienced two kinds of craziness:
metagenic feedback trauma, and the
craziness of Washington. And I ll take MFT
any day.

—Veteran's Affairs Secretary Clinton Gore, at D.C.™ Press Club Xmas Roast, 2021

healthy paranoia

In the politics of 2021, many of the checks and balances originally built into the system to prevent tyranny have become excuses to oppress the people through inaction. The basic needs of the American people are being neglected, with money instead pouring into a massive security apparatus to alert the authorities when people start to get restless under their yokes. However, there is still hope. Although standards of official ethics have slipped severely, there are still limits on the behavior of individual politicians. Looked at as a whole, the system has evolved into a machine for crushing the little guy. But no single person, no one part of that machine, is able to gain enough power to completely dominate it and turn it to his own purposes. Although this scarcely results in good government, it has so far prevented absolute tyranny.

The last remaining check on abuse of power by politicians is a new one — institutional paranoia. The neverending battles between competing power blocs is an internal balancing mechanism that stops individuals from going too far.

THE NEW CHECKS
AND BALANCES

INSTITUTIONAL
PARANOIA

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chapter four

NO ONE PERSON
CAN GAIN
DEFINATIVE POWER

Although laws governing official conduct are often flouted, they still exist. The different branches of government retain enough power to gang up on an errant unit and force it back into line. For example, a common goal of every administration is to finish off the Supreme Court as an independent force, by appointing a steady stream of lackeys and lapdogs to the bench. Since Congress doesn't want the administration to have absolute influence over Constitutional rulings, it uses its powers of judicial confirmation to **bork** nominees who are thought likely to follow secret orders from the White House. On any level of Washington political maneuvering, anyone who tries to gather too much power can expect to get buried under a dogpile of competing interests. This is true within any structure, from the lowliest bureaucracy mail room to the Senate floor to the White House: those who rise too fast find herself being sabotaged by their co-workers. They do this because they don't want anyone to get in a position of being powerful enough to jam them.

bork: In D.C. slang, a verb meaning "to forcefully reject."
Originally referred to Congressional rejections of nominees chosen by the President, but usage has spread to other areas of life. As in, "So I ask her if I could buy her a drink, and she borks me right in front of Richardson!"

THE WEAK WOULD
UNITE TO PREVENT
THE STRONG FROM
DOMINATING

Let's say for a moment that the rumors are true, and that Geoffery Sneed is really the most powerful man in D.C. He has risen to the highest level of personal power possible within the Washington system. If he tried to grab any more, other forces would gang up to stop him. For example, if he decided to stage a military coup with the help of AMI forces, he'd face political opposition from his colleagues in the executive branch as well as Congress and the Supreme Court. The other militant corporations would rally around these political figureheads and fight back. Other big business interests would also resist any attempt to put a single strongman in charge, because they have more influence over a system where politicians are dependent upon them for election funds. After a period of chaos and bloodshed, Sneed or any other would-be dictator would be



1•GUN 1•VOTE?!?!—The ubiquitous Ghoulboy seeking to become a one-man voting district.

black

means

WASH DC

psych of the city

Trust is considered a flaw: The phrase "trust me" now has an ironic meaning. It means "I'm going to jam you around." As in "You think this is the last of this, Henderson? Well, trust me! Trust me!"

overwhelmed by opposition. Anyone who has studied the system knows this. Those who stick their necks out too far get their heads removed.

Thus, the chief thing keeping individual politicians in line is fear. Specifically, this is the fear of losing the power that a player has carefully built up over years or even decades. A careless but ambitious and smart operator might have a meteoric rise on the Washington scene, but those rises are inevitably followed by equally spectacular falls. The big time players are those who have slowly and carefully accumulated their power bit by bit, like a colony of coral polyps slowly building up a reef. All powerful people fear change, because the present system is the one they know how to work. Inertia is the most powerful force in D.C..

Few ballparkers begin their morning with the thought, "Who am I going to jam over today?" Instead, they think, "Who's planning to jam me over today?" Most political maneuvering is defensive. No one gets to a high level position without the political equivalent of a danger sense. With it, they'll have accumulated more than enough bitter opponents to keep it buzzing constantly. It is vital to know what moves might be made by rivals to undermine one's position, and to be prepared to counterpunch. Operators are always on the lookout for enemies. Sometimes they create enemies in their own imaginations where none exist. Sometimes they launch pre-emptive strikes against these nonexistent enemies. Thus, the imaginary enemies become real enemies.

Trust is considered a flaw in Washington power circles. No true operator is insulted by a demand to provide proof that a promise will be kept. Those who do not demand proof are considered prime targets for jamming.

Here status is measured by the power of the positions people hold, how secure they are in those positions, and by the number of both enemies and allies they've acquired. People without allies are by definition not secure in their posts. People without enemies are considered cowardly and afraid to move. Of course, almost everyone is afraid to move all the time, but those who can convince others that they're immune from Washington paranoia are much admired. In a world where success is measured by a media mirror, there is no meaningful distinction between apparent boldness and real boldness. The bluff is everything here. Paradoxically, the operators with the best poker faces are the ones who are the most fearful inside — they're always afraid that the mask will slip, that everyone else will suddenly discover how vulnerable they really are. Few Washingtonians sleep well at night. They're always afraid that their lack of clothes will be pointed out for all to see.

Perhaps this is why they spend so much time spying on supposed subversives. Their main fear of the Underground is not that they'll be targeted for assassination, but that they'll be exposed as the fearful little desk jockeys they really are. Many of them would rather be killed than humiliated in the media. This is why freedom fighters who want to bring Washington down need to brush up on their psychological warfare.

FEAR KEEPS
POLITICIANS IN CHECK

PARANOIA SPARKS
ATTACKS

TRUST IS A FLAW

IF YOU DON'T ACT
IN D.C., YOU'RE
A COWARD

POLITICIANS LIVE IN
FEAR THAT THEIR
TRUE STATURE WILL
BE DISCOVERED

WASH DC means

chapter four

WASH

Why bad things are done by good people

MOST POLITICIANS
BELIEVE THEY'RE
ACTUALLY
WORKING FOR THE
PEOPLE'S WELFARE

Although most ballparkers admit to themselves, if not to others, that they're perpetually afraid, almost none will admit that what they're doing is in any way evil or sinister. Even the most corrupt of politicians think they're performing a vital public service for all Americans. In fact, they're likely to be resentful of the ingratitude they receive from the public at large. Chances are they see some of their nastier opponents as immoral, but they rarely put the same magnifying glass up to their own actions. Nowhere is the human capacity for self-delusion more cultivated than in Washington.

THOSE WITH
IDEALISM ARE
MOCKED

Few of Washington's players came to town with the intention of becoming corrupt. Most started out their careers thinking of the prestige of governmental service. Although they come from the elite class and identify with its interests, some of them even thought they might be able to do something to help the lowly and downtrodden. Then they came up against the realities of Washington. They discovered just how painfully difficult it is to get anything done, especially in cases where entrenched corporate interests would end up losing money. They found themselves forced into petty power struggles with their own colleagues, and with their counterparts from other agencies or branches of government. They discovered that the respect they craved was not going to arrive. Other Washington types sneered at their idealism. When they looked to the poor and downtrodden for respect, they found that they were assumed to be corrupt and power-hungry simply because they were politicians or bureaucrats.

POLITICIANS FEEL
JUSTIFIED IN
TAKING PERKS

Because they feel unfairly abused, officials then feel justified in snapping up the perks that go with the job. Once they realize that they won't even get any thanks if they go to all of the trouble to make things better for the average person, they begin to slowly slide further and further into corruption. The politician feels a sense of **entitlement** after spending long hours of alternately boring and frightening wrangling and getting nothing but flack from fellow officials, the media and the general public. As strange as it may seem, many politicians see themselves as misunderstood victims. If only other people could somehow look inside their hearts, they would then see how much love and respect they've been owed all along.

MOST POLITICIANS
DON'T RECOGNIZE
THE UNDERCLASSES
AS REAL

Washington players also find it easy to jam over the average Joe or Jane because they've never really known anyone from the underclass. They're almost invariably drawn from the rapidly shrinking elite. Their mothers and fathers paid good money for security to keep the unwashed masses from their neighborhoods, and sent them to expensive schools free of troublemaking poor people. Homeless veterans or victims of gang violence are no more real to them than any other distant vidnet image.

Politicians are big on **so-called "family values"** because the personal sphere is the one area where they can prove to themselves that they're still good

entitlement: This term, which once referred to monetary benefits which the government guaranteed to its citizens, is now slang for a bribe. As in, "The secretary is going to fight in cabinet for us to get the contract. As long as we fork over his usual entitlement, of course."

so-called "family values": This is actually an outdated buzzword. The 2021 equivalent is "hearthsteading", a psychobabble term that evokes the independence of the frontier. It carries the connotation of protecting one's families from all of the hostile forces of society — ie., other peoples' families. As in, "Poverty is the direct result of family breakdown. The solution is more individual hearthsteading."

WASH

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means

psych of the city

people at heart. Although they rarely have the time to spend with their spouses and children, and although many players have lovers on the side, they cherish an image of their family lives as representing everything that is good about themselves. Someone loves them, so they must not be all bad. Family values comes to mean protecting the lifestyle of their families, which means continuing to bring in money. And paying for security to keep the riff-raff out, and private schools so their children can have the advantages they did.

There is an enormous sense of detachment between the decisions a politician makes and the results of those decisions on the street. Ballparkers talk about political maneuvering as a game in order to forget that their actions have real consequences on real lives somewhere else. They like to argue about statistics in order to reduce people to abstract numbers. Poverty and misery are just percentages to be debated about. And since any skilled orator can manipulate statistics to produce any desired result, politicians are as free to believe what they want to believe as anybody else.

What they want to believe goes roughly like this: they are hardworking and underappreciated. None of the people who criticize them could do any better. The problems that beset America are too big to be solved. There's no point in doing small things to help people, because there's no point in mere "band-aid solutions." There's no point in doing big things to help people, because government always jams up when it tries to do big things. They jam other D.C. types over because that's the way the game is played; it doesn't mean they're bad people. If they quit the game, they'd just be replaced by another crop of ruthless greedheads. Nothing will ever change. So they might as well be the ones to cash in.

democracy sleeps tonight

The politicians are wrong when they say things can never change. The mechanism for change is still present in the system — the good, old fashioned voting booth. The power elite have never gone to the trouble to dismantle democracy entirely, because the people abandoned it themselves. They gave up on voting because they became convinced that nothing could change. The military/industrial/entertainment complex did the convincing. The more corrupt D.C. becomes, the fewer people vote, and the more corrupt D.C. is permitted to become.

The most subversive act imaginable in 2021 America would be to get the average citizen heading back to the polling booth again. If true democracy is to be restored, freedom fighters like the Underground will have to wake up the slumbering giant and convince them that their votes will make a difference. This is not an easy task — the entire media complex works to discourage it.

Two of the mainstream parties are working to bring more nonvoters back into the process, but they're very careful to keep them ignorant at the same time. The

POLITICIANS HAVE
LITTLE RECOGNITION
OF THE RESULTS OF
THEIR ACTIONS

HOW LAWMAKERS
ENVISION THEMSELVES

THE MECHANISM TO
MAKE THINGS BETTER
IS ALREADY IN PLACE

means

chapter four

LOSS

THE NAS MUST BE STOPPED

Republocrats are busy blurring the line between fantasy and reality, while the NAS is singing the old siren song of bigotry and fascism.

It is the presence of the NAS that makes the task of putting smelling salts under democracy's nose ever more urgent. If the radical conservatives achieve power, they can be counted on to upset the current balance of paranoia and set about dismantling democracy once and for all. **One decisive vote** for the National Anti-Socialists will probably be the last real vote America ever gets.

Which brings up another one of those ironies that makes Washington tick. The NAS are the least corrupt of all D.C. operators. This is because they still have a cause to believe in — they see a future in which everyone they fear and hate will be forever under their thumbs. They act out of ideology, not out of personal greed. The mainstream politicians who are milking the public cow for every dollar they can squeeze out of it are much more cautious, much less interested in running other people's lives. They're happy just to feather their own nests and accumulate phony prestige for themselves. In 2021, it's the honest politicians you have to look out for — they're the truly dangerous ones.

The path before the Undergrounder is going to be a difficult one. It may already be too late, but those devoted to freedom can't let themselves believe that. This is the last chance to act. It's now or never, do or die. America needs some heroes, and fast. It's up to you, Undergrounders.

One decisive vote: Options for Renewal, a recently leaked policy paper presented at a recent summit of top NAS activists attempted to outline the fastest way of achieving a state of martial law after an NAS electoral victory in both the White House and Congress. Although Mary-Margaret Vincent and others have labelled the report disinfo, many insiders consider it an authentic expression of NAS plans.



Another day at the office—Unlike many genhanced citizens, Little Sheba doesn't suffer from a lack of "employment opportunities."

LOOSE

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CHAPTER FIVE

Running the Gauntlet

Congratulations!

You've been elected to the House or Senate! You no doubt fought a tough race, and made everyone around you proud! Now that you're here, we bet you're asking the question that every new legislator asks. "Now what do I do?" Well, that's why your friends at the Aramco Foods Group Inc. have put together this little pamphlet, as a public service to help you orient yourselves in this vast machinery we call Democracy.

— from the brochure "Aramco Presents The Newbie's Guide to Good Government"

It is a truism in Washington — a town where the truisms are thick on the ground — that no one is really in charge of the agenda. Ten percent of politics is doing what you planned to do; ninety percent is devoted to dealing with surprises and emergencies. Once your players have oriented themselves in Democracy City™, they'll soon find themselves up to their hips in intrigue of various sorts. This product is intended to help you, as gamemaster, to keep them that way over the long haul of a campaign set in the heart of the corrupt US government of 2021.

AN INTRO FOR GAME
MASTERS

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means

chapter five

THIS SECTION
IS FOR THE
GAME MASTER ONLY

The material in this section of the book is presented for the Gamemaster only. Before beginning a D.C.TM based campaign, start by reading the *Ways* section. It provides both the atmosphere of the city and general information on the players of the city and how they interact. Then come back here for info on running campaigns, specific settings in Washington, and lots of adventure ideas.

Although some parts of this section are written from the point of view of characters from the game setting, they are presented in this format for interests' sake. For example, the material in *Ways* from the point of view of the dedicated Undergrounder wouldn't logically be available to characters without Underground connections. If they do have such connections, you might want to present it to them in photocopied form. Permission is granted to copy those pages for personal use only.

Parameter changes: See Chapter 12 of the *Underground* rules if you need a refresher on Parameters. For more on Parameters in the D.C. context, see p. 150 of this book.

FIND OUT WHAT KIND
OF CAMPAIGN THE
PLAYERS WANT

Once you've read the *Ways* section of the book, you'll know enough of the ropes to start setting up a D.C.TM campaign. The first step is to confer with your players as to what sort of group they want to run. The section on Campaign Frameworks provides a range of options for them to choose from. They may want to combine options — by, for example, playing Congressional aides who are secretly members of a terrorist cell — or even invent their own. Encourage them if they get creative in this way. You'll soon learn that the range of choices their characters have in the game world is much wider than in a more combat oriented campaign. There are so many possible things they can do here, so many strategies they can adopt, and so many forces to interact with, that you as GM are going to have to get used to following their lead. Know the setting, learn to communicate its atmosphere of cynicism and decay, and sit back and let the players lead themselves into interesting trouble. There's lots of it to be found here.

If the players fail to stumble into storylines for their characters, we present a number of Independent Adventures, in Chapter Three. These make ideal introductions to the complex world of government intrigue, or breathers to slide into the storyline after the resolution of a long-running plot line. These are presented in a loose framework format, since D.C. players aren't going to do what you expect them to anyway.

Chapter Four contains notes on Reactive Adventures, which are triggered by changes in Parameters for the entire nation. These changes might be brought about by **Parameter changes** made by the vets. Or you could decide that other NPC characters made the necessary Parameter changes.

campaign frameworks

SOME D.C.
CAMPAIGN
FRAMEWORKS

Many GMs will find it useful to conceive of their D.C. campaigns within a particular framework. The framework is a baseline assumption about who the

Ways

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mean's running the gauntlet



Casting his first voter—Troy “Defenstrator” Phillips does a little research for his upcoming book, *How to Get a Job Killing in Washington*.

PCs are and what they want to do. A framework is helpful to GMs because it allows them to prepare in advance for the actions that PCs may take. It also serves as a creativity jog to players, to narrow down the possible things they might do to a manageable number of options. GMs should confer with their players to choose the framework they find most entertaining.

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chapter five

THE VETS AS
CONGRESSIONAL
AIDS

If the D.C. campaign is either the group's first outing with *Underground*, or is a new series starting from scratch, players should design their veterans with the framework already in mind. However, these frameworks are also designed to allow existing characters already operating outside D.C. to join in. For example, many groups will begin their *Underground* storyline in the L.A. setting as described in the *Streets Tell Stories* sourcebox. After they've plumbed the depths of corruption and despair there, they might decide to come to D.C. to really get at the root of the problem — or simply to nab a cushy position working for the overdogs.

the frameworks

1. Mr. boost goes to Washington

The vets serve as aides to a member of Congress. Congressmen and senators have to rely on staffers to do most of their research work for them, as well as sniff out potential bribes (if they're in the business of taking same) and lining up support on legislation from other congressmen and senators — through their aides, of course. Vets are likely to spend much of their time helping out on investigations, whether covert or official. Each member has a large staff of up to 50 members, so the vets won't be the entire staff by any means.

Decide whether the vets are serving an idealistic legislator who wants to change things for the better, or just another white-collar criminal with name recognition. In the former case, when they dig up smudge on other officials, they'll be doing it to arm-twist them into supporting their patron's agenda. They'll also have to fend off disinfo aimed at their boss. If their employer is dirty too, they'll be fighting off his competitors for fundraising moneys.

One way to lead into this framework from a pre-existing campaign is to get the vets involved as campaign workers in an election in their district. The election forms a bridge between the two storylines. If the vets are clever enough to help the candidate win, they get hired permanently and whisked off to Washington. GMs can use the election rules on p. 76, or they can, in order to get the D.C. campaign rolling, decide that the **candidate automatically wins**

If the vets are already active in another city, there's nothing to stop one of them from running for Congress, though a boost would likely start in third place in any primary or general election campaign due to prejudice against the enhanced. PC candidates should face a wide variety of temptations as they trawl for financing for their media campaigns. The other vets will have their hands full protecting the candidate from opponents' smears and even — if they're doing too well and have too radical a platform — assassination attempts.

Veterans can spend Reward Points at the end of successful stories to gain political allies. These are fellow ballparkers — other aides, bureaucrats,

candidate automatically wins: GMs can leave the campaign up to chance without forever blowing the chance to start a D.C. storyline. Even if their candidate loses, veterans might be hired by a successful freshman Congressman who has heard of their political skills via the grapevine.

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means

mean running the gauntlet

Hi-Security Enterprises or by the SS-BD: Both organizations are further discussed in their own Notebook pages, included at the end of this book.

promotions: Rank titles given are for the SS-BD. All private firms have their own rank structure. For example, Hi-Security's ranks are: Operations 3rd Class (starting level), Operations 2nd Class, Operations 1st Class, Operations Supervisor, and Operations Manager.

lobbyists, politicians — willing to cooperate on future ventures. Vets must spend 18 Reward Points and make a successful P/F AURA or Charm Challenge against a Difficulty of 9 to turn a character temporarily allied to them in the course of the story to a contact they can rely on in the future. Contacts will not sacrifice their own obvious interests to help the vets, but won't jam them without good cause either.

They can also acquire smudge — damaging evidence against another ballparker — by spending 20 Reward Points and passing a P/F INT or Detective (Investigation) Challenge against a Difficulty of 9. This may also be done only at the end of a successful story. The identity of the smudged party is up to the GM; the vets may come across it as a direct consequence of their actions, or by random accident.

Players designing veterans for this sort of campaign should invest in mental attributes and skills, as this framework is heavier on intrigue than combat. Image-conscious elected officials don't like to be seen with really freaky-looking vets, so visually obvious enhancements should be downplayed.

2. bodyguard detail

Speaking of assassination attempts, vets can also arrive in Washington in order to take advantage of the lucrative opportunities in the personal protection field. They might not have any political agenda at all — though perhaps exposure to the D.C. scene will awaken ambitions to move on to another framework later.

Most bodyguards in Washington are hired by security firms like **Hi-Security Enterprises or by the SS-BD**. Players are likely to prefer private firms to the Secret Service, as the SS demands that all boosted operatives receive Paste™ Pacifier implants, which are deadly during a metagenic feedback attack. Some individuals hire their own bodyguards personally; they may have looser or more stringent requirements than private firms.

If the vets end up working for a firm, they'll likely be assigned to clients on a rotating basis. Legislators, their staffers, corporate bigwigs, backroom power brokers, NJs and even loudmouthed heads might from time to time find themselves under threat. Vets will especially need to be on their toes when their clients venture beyond the high-security confines of Democracy City™. They might define their roles as purely defensive, planning to avert attacks on their clients as they happen. Or they may decide that the best defense is a good offense and go out after whoever has ordered the spin.

Bodyguards, whether private or Secret Service, may apply for **promotions** by spending Reward Points at the end of a successful story. After spending the points, they must succeed at a P/F AURA or Leadership Challenge against a Difficulty of 9 (Impressive Task) to get the promotion. Promotions from the SS-

THE VETS AS
BODYGUARDS

mean

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chapter five

BD allow vets to command non-boosted officers of the regular Secret Service; so far no vet has made it beyond the level of Unit Lieutenant. GMs may decide that there is a "glass ceiling" in place that prevents vets from going further than this.

Rank	Reward Points that must be spent
Squad Lieutenant	15
Unit Lieutenant	20
Unit Captain	25
Operations Chief	30

Squad Lieutenants (and private equivalents): Are in charge of a single security detail assigned to a single client. The size of the detail varies widely depending on the organization and client. Clients are typically protected by several details on shifts.

Unit Lieutenants (and private equivalents): Are in charge of all security details assigned to a single client.

Unit Captains (and private equivalents): Are in charge of security planning for extremely prestigious or high-paying clients who demand supertight security, like heads of corporations (in the case of private firms) or sitting Presidents or visiting heads of state (in the case of the Secret Service.)

Operations Chiefs (and private equivalent): Oversee overall logistics, budgeting, hiring, and policy. This is a desk job, with little field work. The life of anyone at this level or above in a security firm does not lend itself to a steady stream of adventure stories; vets who reach this level should be retired from play until they decide once more to step into harm's way.

A bodyguard campaign can lead into other frameworks, as patrons hire vets away from their firms to work for them in other capacities. Players designing veterans for this framework should concentrate on defensive combat-related abilities. For example, Leadership would allow characters to spend Karma to buy off sniper hits on their clients — who are considered to be acting under vet's instructions when it comes to security matters. Danger Sense and Emotion Control are among the enhancements favored by security firm recruiters.

THE VETS AS
TERRORISTS

3. smash the state

The veterans are unlicensed **terrorists** infiltrating Washington in order to throw monkey wrenches (or grenades, depending on how subtle they plan to be) into the machinery of state. They may do so out of comparatively altruistic motivation, wanting to restore honesty and respect for the Constitution. Or they may represent a nutty, dangerous fringe group. Get the players to specify which, and what precisely their ideology is.

terrorists: Technically speaking, if they lay off on the violence and concentrate on intrigue, the vets will be activists rather than terrorists. But if they accomplish anything, the state security apparatus will consider them terrorists anyway.

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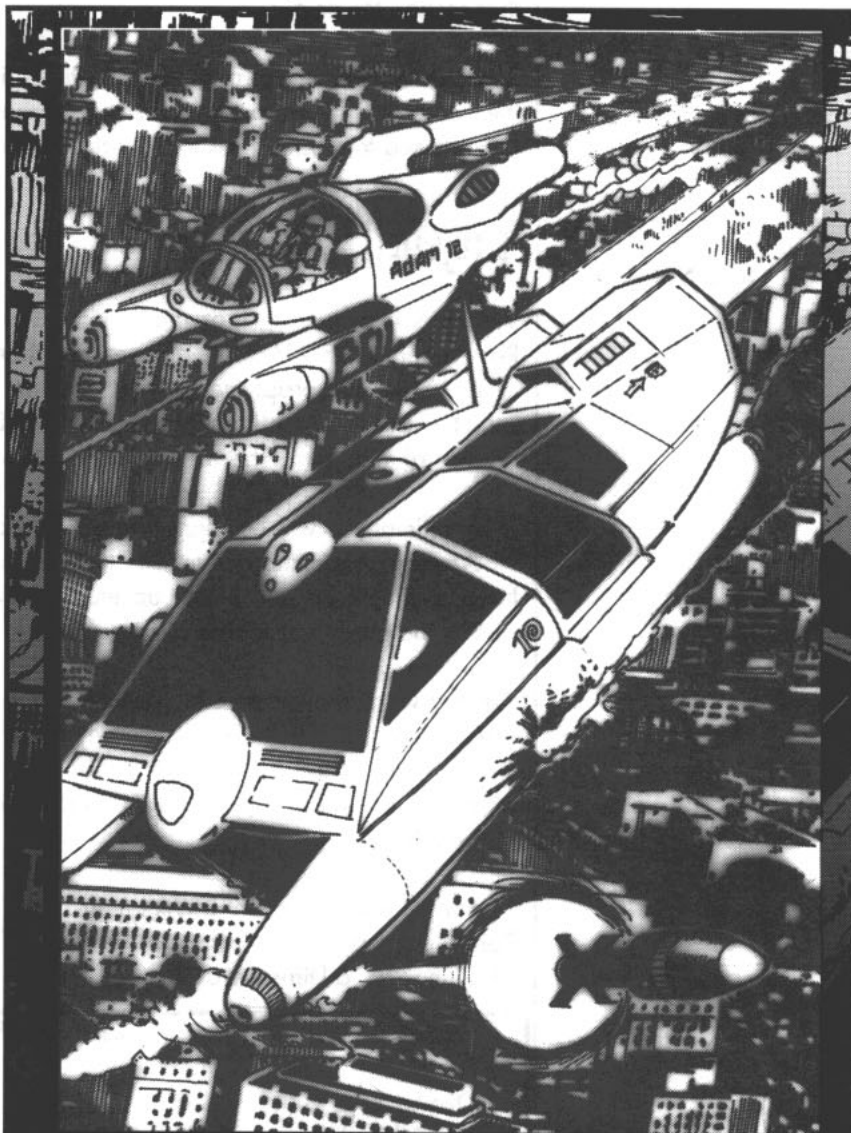
government contact:
This person may be
sympathetic to the
terrorist cause, but is
more likely subject to
blackmail by the
player characters.

Whether the vets have previous experience in another city or are starting afresh, the first thing they'll need to do is establish cover identities for themselves in order to move about in Democracy City™ unmolested. Or they could hang out in the Old City and only enter D.C. on a per-mission, infiltration basis. In the former case, they'll need to spend time keeping their cover intact. In the latter, they'll likely end up skirmishing with O.C. gangs from time to time.

If the vets have been in play for a while, they may have recruited fellow conspirators they can take with them to Washington. New conspirators can be recruited at the end of a successful story by spending 20 Reward Points and making a P/F AURA Challenge versus a Difficulty of 9. Their abilities are left up to the GM, but they should be assistants rather than full-fledged colleagues. In other words, they shouldn't be able to complete important missions on their own. Another terrorist-specific use of Reward Points is in acquiring special or restricted weapons (ie. items of Availability E.) This also costs 20 points and requires a P/F INT or Streetwise Challenge against a Difficulty of 9. Finally, 15 Reward Points and a P/F Administration Challenge against a Difficulty of 9 snags a **government contact** who does a single favor for the group. Examples of favors would include leaked information or the alteration of incriminating computer records. Be sure to play out the details of this encounter. Stealth and combat abilities are crucial to players designing vets for a terrorist framework.

4. agents of influence

Vets are corporate flacks, advancing the aims of their patron conglomerate in the playpen of influence. Their activities will likely be a mix of legal and illegal, peaceful and violent. They'll be competing with similar teams from rival companies, trying to bend regulations and laws in their favor, supporting favored legislators with



Fold! Spindle! Mutilate!—A disgruntled postal worker tries to put the "Post" into Postmaster General.

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chapter five

funds and **logistical favors**, and leaning on unfriendly bureaucrats and members of Congress. They'll have to defend themselves from licensed terrorists, who are usually being manipulated by shadowy figures within government regulatory agencies. They'll also need to be on the lookout for foreign spies looking to swipe technological secrets.

Allow the vets to specify the corporation they work for, and its general aims. Many corps in 2021 are vast conglomerates owning pieces of virtually every industry under the sun, allowing a wide range of objectives for characters.

Like characters in the *Mr. Boost Goes to Washington* framework, *Agents of Influence* can spend Reward Points to earn regular allies or bits of smudge. See that section for details.

Because of their wide range of activities, virtually any character design, from the social whirlwind to the combat nut, can fit into a corporate team. Players are advised to create a team covering a spectrum of specialties.

logistical favors: Dirty tricks, in other words. Government officials who want to insulate themselves from a covert strike against an opponent often get corporate agents to do the nasty stuff in return for "future considerations."

THE VETS AS INVESTIGATORS

5. agency wars

Veterans are members of the investigative arm of a government agency. Remember, in 2021 most agencies and bureaus have investigative teams, no matter how inappropriate to their mission this may seem. Have the players select a bureau mentioned on pp. 41 - 48 or make up an agency or sub-agency of their own. There's a million of 'em.

Their official job will be related to the purpose of the agency, but don't worry — Agency Wars characters won't be spending much time on official duties. Instead, they'll be out to jam up the investigative teams of other agencies as part of the great war for the biggest budget.

Agency wars characters can spend Reward Points to increase their rank in the organization. Since there are so many possible duties within so many agencies, the rank titles used are slang titles, not real ones. Each hierarchy has its own official titles, and breaks down duties differently. These are left to the discretion of the GM.

To earn a promotion, characters may spend an appropriate number of Reward Points according to the following chart. They must also pass a P/F AURA Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 9.

"Rank"	Reward Points that must be spent
OverLackey	15
Special Lackey	20
Champion Butt Kisser	25
Major Weasel	30

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Like *Mr. Boost Goes to Washington* characters, *Agency Wars* vets can also spend Reward Points for bits of smudge.

Players designing vets for this framework should aim for a balance of investigative and havoc-wreaking abilities.

b. cloak and dagger

THE VETS AS
FOREIGN AGENTS

Characters are intelligence agents operating in Washington on behalf of a foreign government, or are US counterintelligence agents dedicated to tracking them down. Have players choose the nation they're loyal to if they're not American agents. If they're Americans, have them pick an agency with counterintelligence duties — either the NSA, NSC, or FBI.

Foreign agents will be advancing the agendas of their nations. Third world countries try to find out what the US plans for them, paying particular attention to war plans. They also want technological information, and spend as much time spying on US corporations as on its government. This puts them in conflict with corporate ops teams as well as government counterintelligence units.

The Chinese and Neo-Deutsch are looking for military plans, and often target the militant corps. They're also interested in trade policy. Both nations manage blackmail operations, looking for smudge on important officials they can use to coerce either votes favorable to their interests, or to force the stealing of desired documents.

Counterintelligence agents seek to find and neutralize these foreign spies. Captured spies are prosecuted and imprisoned so they can be traded with US spies in foreign jails. If they're killed in action, that's fine too. Ideally the counterintelligence agencies prefer to "turn" apprehended spies into foreign agents.

Like terrorists, foreign agents can spend Reward Points to get restricted weaponry and/or duped or coerced government contacts. They can also, like congressional aides, get smudge.

US agents spend Reward Points for promotion up the agency ladder, like *Agency Wars* characters. They may on occasion be called upon to act as *Agency War* characters against other US counterintelligence arms.

Cloak and Dagger vets should be designed with emphasis on stealth and investigative skills and enhancements.

campaign goals

Players may find that the D.C. setting offers too wide a choice of possible campaign goals. Here are some suggestions, which you can either use as is or

SUGGESTED
CAMPAIGN GOALS

chapter five

TAKE DOWN A HEAVY-HITTER

adopt as models for campaign goals geared to your specific group of vets. A possible final story appears with each goal, as well as the Parameter changes necessary to achieve it.

1. spin a spinner

The vets, used to solving problems with heavy artillery, might decide that the best favor they could do to the nation would be to wipe out one of D.C.'s particularly loathsome operators. Although the real heavy hitters should be too well-protected for beginning vets to take on, there are many backroom types who aren't so thoroughly guarded. If the spin takes place in D.C. itself, the killing will strike fear into the heart of the victim's colleagues as well, as Democracy City™ is supposed to be a safe haven. Succeeding at this goal means learning to subvert the tight security of the Edutainment Corporation and at least one private bodyguard agency.

Final Adventure: Once they have their plan all worked out, the vets spring it into action. What they haven't counted on is that one of their contacts has turned on them, and alerted Edutainment to the upcoming spin attempt. Edutainment boosted ops are there in force, ready to spin the vets right back.

Parameters: Start with the D.C. parameters. To succeed, the players must **decrease** Safety to 12 and Government Purity to 2. They're temporarily punching a hole in D.C.'s extraordinary security net, and bribing selected security officials to look the other way.

2. get message on airwaves

GET YOUR MESSAGE ON THE AIRWAVES

The veterans want to get an issue of importance to them presented in a favorable light in the major media. For *Mr. Boost Goes to Washington* or *Bodyguard Detail* types, this would mean a high profile for their political boss. *Smash the State* vets will want to broadcast subversive propaganda or damaging info against an opponent. *Agents of Influence* will want to defend their own conglomerate or attack another one. *Agency Wars* characters will defend their bureaus' budget or publish information justifying the slashing of a rival's budget. *Cloak and Dagger* types will want to plant disinfo about a rival nation. To get there, the veterans have to begin a campaign among NJ and head contacts to get the idea percolating. They must also be prepared for counterpunches by their opponents, who will respond to their charges with damaging countercharges. Also, they'll have to fend off efforts of other groups and individuals fighting for coverage of their own, unrelated stories.

Final Adventure: The final coup would be to get a story on both the Darryl Prince and Peter Argot shows on the same evening. This would rocket the story in question to the top of the national agenda, since both the top government media lackey and the ultimate muckraker's producers consider it worthy of coverage.

Parameters: Start with the D.C. Parameters. To succeed, the players must increase Government Purity to 5, Quality of Life to 11, and Education to 16.

decrease: It costs the same number of Reward Points to decrease a Parameter as to increase it. Reverse the effects of the Parameter relationship chart on p. 249 of *Underground*. For example when Safety decreases, Quality of Life increases and Necessities decreases.

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the end running the gauntlet



Walking on the grave of Liberty—Two punks from the Old City stake a claim to their piece of the American Dream.

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3. investigate political killing

BRING IN THE
KILLER

An ally of the veterans is found dead in a hotel room outside Washington, victim of apparent suicide. The case is closed by the authorities. A close examination of the clues reveals that the victim was murdered. When the veterans investigate, they find that their ally's safety deposit box was emptied an hour after the mysterious death. Their friend had smudge on somebody, and now it's gone. The veterans must find who had reason to fear their ally's files, and then uncover proof implicating the smudgee in the killing. When they start to get too close, a shadowy hit team begins to take potshots at them.

Final Adventure: Once they've got conclusive evidence establishing who ordered the spin, the veterans discover that the killer has the cops in his pocket. They must penetrate his security to take him out themselves, facing down the enemy hit squad in the process.

Parameters: Start with D.C. parameters. To succeed, the players must increase Government Purity to 5 and Safety to 18.

accumulate enough
Reward Points: See the
notes on p. 133 for
getting Reward Points
from NPCs for large
changes of this sort.

4. the lobby limbo

GET INVOLVED IN
VETERAN AFFAIRS

There is intense pressure from state and local officials in California to stop the Department of Housing and Urban Development from building all of its housing projects for boosted vets in the L.A. and San Francisco areas. They want other areas of the country to take more of the social and economic burden that the boosts create. The vets may want to take either side of the fight. If they're aides to a California congressman, they'll want to see the projects spread out — unless boosts represent a big proportion of their support, in which case they won't want to see their base eroded. Subversives and revolutionaries want the boosts all bottled up together, because that makes them angry and easier to mobilize. Bureaucrats with ties to HUD want the change, because it would mean an increase in their budget; other agencies want to keep them from expanding their territory. Foreign agents want the boosts spread out through the country, as exposure to veterans decreases domestic support for the war effort.

Final Adventure: The administration wants to keep things the way they are. The veterans must rally enough support in Congress to get them to back down, or must armtwist Congressional supporters of the change into giving up the fight, depending on which side they're on.

Parameters: Veterans trying to change the distribution of the projects are enacting a national policy, so they start with the USA Parameters: 7/7/5/9/8/11/9. They must **accumulate enough Reward Points** to increase Wealth to 8, Quality of Life to 10, and Necessities by to 13. Opponents must spend the same number of Reward Points to cancel out the Reward Points spent by proponents.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Corridors of Power

The happiness of the visitor to Democracy City™ is your number one concern as a customer interface operative for the Edutainment Consortium. Always smile. Always be polite. And never talk politics. Tourists don't like to be reminded of our nation's problems while enjoying a pleasant vacation.

—from the Edutainment Corp Training Manual for Gift Shop Employees, p. A2

The following chapter is devoted to the physical locations of D.C.™. These divide into roughly three categories: A) attractions, O) official institutions, and R) residential spaces. As they move and shake their way through D.C. politics, veterans will find themselves travelling through all three zones. Many secret meetings and payoffs are made in the tourist zone, for example. Other deals are made in the luxury digs of the town's powers. The only area where real business is rarely done is the government zone.

Locations are keyed to the Democracy City™ map on pages 130 – 131.

attractions

To get in to many attractions, it is necessary to buy tickets. One A ticket costs \$100. B tickets cost \$80; C tickets, \$60; and D tickets, \$45.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

TICKET PRICES

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THE REFLECTING POOL

a. the reflecting pool

No admission charge.

A long pool of clear water which reflects both the Washington Monument on one end and the Lincoln Memorial on the other. Every hour on the hour it erupts with a manmade geyser meant to simulate the famous Old Faithful natural geyser in the **former Yellowstone Park**. At night, this is lit up from within and accompanied by a medley of loud recorded performances of patriotic songs such as "America the Beautiful", "Born In the USA", "Baby's Got Back", and "Red, White, Blue and Green."

Patrolled at all times by a squad of four **regular Edutainment security officers**

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

a2. lincoln memorial

Admission: 1 A ticket.

As noted on the introductory piece on Democracy City™ on p. 12 of Ways, the Lincoln Memorial is now a giant audioanimatronic robot of Abraham Lincoln who delivers a snippet of the Gettysburg Address and sings a MacRaney's jingle. This is by far the most popular of the attractions of Democracy City™. Patrolled by eight regular officers.

former Yellowstone Park:
The real Yellowstone Park has now been turned into a high-security condo development, where many of America's corporate titans live in safety and hunt an ever-diminishing population of wild game.

regular Edutainment security officers: Use the statistics for Police Officers on p. 233 of Underground.

boosted Edutainment officers: Use the statistics for Peace Force Officers on p. 232 of Underground.

AMI MEMORIAL

a3. ami memorial

Admission: Free

The Allied Mayhem war memorial / recruiting center. See p. 104 of Ways for more details. Sometimes AMI hosts autograph sessions with veterans made famous due to war footage shown on *Combat! Combat! Combat!* This is always popular with tourists, who are happy to meet a real genetically enhanced killing machine in a controlled environment. These are the same sorts of people who fight veteran housing projects in their own hometowns. There have been a few regrettable incidents in which the combat footage shown by the memorial display triggered psychotic episodes in autographing boosts. The normal security detachment of six officers is supplemented by a team of four **boosted Edutainment officers** whenever one of these personal appearance events is scheduled. Vets who are still on good terms with AMI might be able to use this routine as a mechanism for infiltrating D.C.; boosts doing Allied Mayhem promotion are waved through the security procedure.

TWD MEMORIAL

a4. twd memorial

Admission: Free, but VR exhibit costs 1 D ticket.

Essentially a duplicate of the AMI memorial, this building includes a new attraction — a virtual reality theatre in which average citizens can take on the roles of boosted vets deep in the heart of the Paraguayan Cuidado

the corridors of power

Massacre of 2019. It has ramped up TWD's recruitment results among service-age visitors. TWD sponsors field trips by disadvantaged young students from the O.C. to D.C., on the proviso that they visit the TWD memorial.

TWD does not sponsor personal appearances by boosts; they're too image conscious to risk the sort of incidents that have occurred at the AMI memorial. Four regular Edutainment security officers are on duty here.

a5. dhi memorial

Admission: Free

DHI MEMORIAL

The least impressive of the three memorials, DHI's is suffering from budget cutbacks. Many of the multimedia exhibits are out of order at any given moment, and the construction of the building is beginning to crack. DHI tour guides offer a free D ticket and coupons for food at the Supreme Food Court to guests who visit their memorial.

ab. airpad

AIR PAD

All tourists entering Democracy CityTM arrive here, ferried in by helicopter from an Edutainment facility in Maryland. This airpad accepts only landings by Edutainment copters. Nearby anti-aircraft emplacements are sometimes required to blast unauthorized small craft out of the sky. The occasional sight of a terrorist aircar going down in flames has proven so popular that Edutainment officials are trying to figure out a way to somehow incorporate this feature into a paid attraction.

a7. edutainment reception

EDUTAINMENT
RECEPTION

A building in which friendly greeters approach incoming guests and inform them of the attractions and services of Democracy CityTM. Reception personnel also warns them of the consequences of breaching security regulations, and informs them of the free (and mandatory) *Price of Freedom* exhibit. Coat checks, washrooms, and vending machines are available.

ab. the price of freedom is vigilance exhibit

Admission: Free

"THE PRICE
OF FREEDOM IS
VIGILANCE" EXHIBIT

See p. 16 of *Ways*.

ag. edutainment box office

EDUTAINMENT BOX
OFFICE

Ticket booths where admission coupons for the various attractions can be purchased. Visitors can also book tours with guides (cost a D ticket), and rent strollers, wheelchairs, and personal listening devices with recorded tour descriptions.

ways

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WASHINGTON MONUMENT

ad. Washington Monument

Admission: Free

The Washington Monument is a four sided pillar with a small pyramidal top, made of white polymer resin. Each side is emblazoned with a series of corporate logos. Edutainment rents ad space on the Monument for \$2,000,000 per year per logo. It refuses **advocacy ads**

TIDAL BASIN

ad. tidal basin

Admission: Free

A recreation of an inlet of the Potomac River below, the Tidal Basin is a wonder of alien anti-grav technology. Anti-grav fields hold the water in place, hovering above the O.C. with no visible means of support. Edutainment maintenance take special care that the purity of the water remains high — even small children wishing to wade in the suspended pool are gruffly shoed away. Perhaps this is a good thing — several months after their installation, the anti-grav units failed, dumping millions of gallons of water on the O.C. neighborhood below. Several homeless vets were killed in the accident, a fact that Edutainment covered up in order to skirt the wrath of boosted rights organizations. Edutainment investigators were unable to determine a cause of the failure, and sabotage was not ruled out. The anti-grav generators are now guarded by eight regular security officers at a time.

FORD'S THEATRE

ad. ford's theatre

Admission: Two B tickets

This none-too-accurate recreation of the Ford's Theatre National Historical Monument is home to a glitzy musical revue performed five times daily by a sparkingly Aryan cast of enthusiastic young performers. The numbers in the revue, which changes every March, revolve around incidents in American history, and is decidedly jingoistic in tone. Current numbers cheerfully celebrate the Boston Tea Party, the capture of Geronimo, **radiation testing on unwitting citizens** in the 1940s and 1950s, the subjugation of Iran, and the inflation-fighting strategies of the Federal Reserve Bank. As the finale approaches, the spotlight falls on a box seat, where an audioanimatronic robot of Abraham Lincoln is clapping along in time to the music. A John Wilkes Booth robot (with suspiciously Chinese features and an odd German accent) bursts into the box, blows off Lincoln's head with a 30mm ZAG, and escapes into the audience. The audience is encouraged to overpower the Booth robot, which is then lynched on a scaffold conveniently situated in the lobby. The audience then returns to its seats for a moving final number in which actors portraying America's five assassinated Presidents link arms and sing "We Are The World."

President Foster is said to visit Ford's Theatre on a quarterly basis; the show never fails to bring tears to his eyes. Ford's Theatre was also a central location in the recent hit film *Let's Do the President*.

advocacy ads: Ads by groups pushing a particular political agenda or viewpoint rather than a line of products. This policy was instituted after protesters from the Forced Celibacy Action Committee applied a flamethrower to the logo of the Animal Sexual Liberation Foundation, melting the polymer construction and forcing expensive repairs.

radiation testing on unwitting citizens: Once considered a scandal, these experiments are now portrayed in the big media as patriotic acts by misunderstood questers for truth. Dr. Rudolph Bushmiller credited some of the information gleaned from the experiments as "inspirational" to his breakthroughs in the genetic enhancement field.

mean the corridors of power



Mr. Smith goes to Washington—"Yea, and he's being sent back in a pine box!"

There are 14 unarmed security staffers as well as 2 regular Edutainment officers on duty during showtimes.

aj. constitution gardens

Admission: D ticket

A showcase garden famous for its topiary — shapes trimmed into the foliage of trees. Leafy sculptures of famous historical figures and beloved cartoon

CONSTITUTION
GARDENS

mean

mean

THOMAS JEFFERSON MEMORIAL

at. thomas jefferson memorial

Admission: Free

This exact replica of the original Thomas Jefferson Memorial is sponsored by Schweig Meat Packers, and is constructed entirely of mock chicken loaf encased in clear, high-impact resin. Cheerful hostesses provide free sausage samples to visitors.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

at. smithsonian institution

Admission: 3 A Tickets

Ownership of the vast collection of historical artifacts found in the Smithsonian Institution is now under dispute. Edutainment claims that a clause of their contract with the federal government in effect transferred legal possession of the collection to them. Federal lawyers heatedly dispute this claim, and the legal battle has fattened the bank accounts of many judges. Every so often the government threatens to raid the place and reclaim the goodies, so Edutainment deploys a serious security contingent here. Each room of the museum is guarded by at least one armed regular Edutainment officer, and a contingent of 4 boosts is on duty at all times in the Smithsonian's security center.

Under Edutainment management, the emphasis of the Smithsonian has shifted away from display of historical materials and towards exhibits of greater audience appeal. For example, tour guides in the Egyptiana department dim the lights and tell spooky stories about a mummy's curse. At a crucial moment, an actor dressed as a mummy leaps from a sarcophagus to scare the kiddies. The two most popular exhibits at the museum are the Hope Diamond and the display of ancient Elvis memorabilia.

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

at. natural history museum

Admission: D ticket

This once-proud institution has fallen into disrepair. Edutainment staffers have been unable to come up with a way to jazz it up so that it can compete with its new neighbor, the Genetically Altered History Museum. According to the **Scientific Equality Statute**, Edutainment is required to keep the Natural History Museum divided into equal halves. One half is devoted to the theory of evolution; the other, to biblical creationism. The place is patrolled by only four regular Edutainment officers. Because of its usual emptiness, it is a favored spot for secret meetings between ballparkers and spies.

Scientific Equality Statute:
This law, mandating the teaching of creationism side by side with evolution in all publicly funded educational institutions, was yet another sop to the radical conservative faction in Congress. It is not rigorously enforced, to the chagrin of the NAS.

a7. genetically altered history museum

Admission: 3 A tickets

Due to regular exposure on the TV nature program *Big Mean Animals Tear the Crap Out of Each Other*, the Genetically Altered History Museum has become one of the most lucrative attractions of Democracy CityTM. The "museum" is really a big indoor zoo. Edutainment genetic scientists work round the clock to develop new and more fearsome perversions of various animal species, using genetic techniques derived from the downed alien pod. Acid-spitting wolves, shock-generating boa constrictors, wolverines with razor sharp antlers, aquatic tigers, miniature polar bears, poisonous kangaroos and double-headed mako sharks are all part of the fun. These deviant creatures range in temperament from highly strung to rabidly destructive, and are kept caged with poly-reinforced plexiglass sheets (RES: 13) several feet in thickness. Feeding time is a particular crowd pleaser — most of the animals are carnivorous and leap on rodents and poultry with bloody abandon. Life expectancy of these animals is very low, but the Edutainment biotechies keep churning them out.

The highlight of any trip to the Genetically Altered History Museum is the *Red In Tooth and Claw* demonstration, in which tourists sit in an arena as two of the museum's most vicious enhanced predators are released into a pit to fight to the death. These shows are given three times a day. Lab accidents sometimes reduce the number of available creatures, forcing cancellations of shows. The accounting department is always pressuring the genetic researchers to keep the animals coming and thereby avoid having to issue refunds to customers. Someday this is going to lead to a terrible mistake.

So far, there have been admirably few escape attempts by boosted animals. The squad of six boosted Edutainment security officers on duty here has always managed to frag the things before they get out the door. A month ago, however, a breeding pair of poisonous, invisible bobcats disappeared, cages and all, from the Edutainment labs in the sub-basement of the museum. Needless to say, Edutainment has kept this fact under wraps, and is hoping that whoever swiped them won't use them in a way that will hurt their corporate image.

a8. air and space and warfare museum

Admission: B ticket

A display of historical and up-to-the-minute aviation and military hardware, sponsored by a consortium of arms dealers. An extra C ticket buys the interested tech enthusiast fifteen minutes at the ASWM Firing Range. There, civilians get the chance to fire the latest high-powered pistols and assault rifles at life-size plastic mannequins of gangbangers and boosted terrorists, as well as Chinese and Neo-Deustch soldiers. These targets are fully equipped with exploding blood pellets, and trigger recordings of death screams when hit. Weapons which can normally be wielded only by boosts are mounted in

GENETICALLY
ALTERED HISTORY
MUSEUM

AIR AND SPACE
WARFARE MUSEUM

mean

mean

NATIONAL GALLERY OF GOOD ART

special hydraulic emplacements that supplement the strength of the user. It's the emplacement doing all of the work, but patrons don't care, so long as the mannequins keep blowing up.

Ten regular Edutainment security officers are on duty here at all times.

ag. national gallery of good art

Admission: C ticket

Due to radical conservative pressure, the art collection of the National Gallery was divided in two, several years prior to the Edutainment buyout of Washington's tourist attractions. Works of art which were deemed to be "real" by a Senate subcommittee were placed here, in the National Gallery of Good Art. These are the works that passed muster as representing officially approved culture. In essence, this means representational paintings up to the Impressionist period — landscapes, portraits and other recognizable pictures. Nudes, even by old masters, are out, as are all but the calmest abstract works. Surrealism, dada, pop art, and other works with political overtones, as well as pieces deemed "confusing" by senators, were all banished to a second institution, the National Gallery of Bad Art and Borderline Pornography, below. Attendance at the original Gallery of Good Art started out flat and quickly plunged from there.

The Edutainment Consortium kept the old division between good and bad art when it reconstructed the two museums. As with the Smithsonian, there is now a dispute over the ownership of the works displayed here. Although attendance here remains scant, Edutainment keeps the works well preserved and well-guarded. It plans to slowly sell the best pieces at auction once its clear title to them has been established. Edutainment makes little attempt to promote the Gallery of Good Art, hoping that people will forget just what is supposed to be in the collection. A contingent of 6 boosted and 18 regular Edutainment security officers is on duty at all times.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF BAD ART AND BORDERLINE PORNOGRAPHY

ab. national gallery of bad art and borderline pornography

Admission: 3 A tickets

Congress established the National Gallery of Bad Art and Borderline Pornography in order to stigmatize works they didn't approve of, but were unwilling to sell due to their investment value. Of course, the racy name of the new institution simply encouraged people to go out of their way to see the pieces that so alarmed radical conservatives. Would-be voyeurs flocked to the NGBABP in droves, only to be disappointed by the tameness of Renaissance nudes and modern abstract paintings.

When Edutainment rebuilt the art museums, they satisfied their customers' prurient hopes. They changed the tour guides' spiels so that they mocked the abstract and conceptual pieces, and told salacious stories about the nudes. And they invited real pornographers to contribute works both to the permanent collection and

the corridors of power

eagles, bears, and eledonks: "Hawky the Eagle" is the official mascot of the NAS.

The bear is the symbol of the Plutocratic party, and the eledonk

— a combination of elephant and donkey — is the mascot of the

Republocrats. In response to public

demand, the Genetically Altered

History Museum has engineered actual

eledonks. These torporous creatures sleep most of the day and emit a foul odor.

special exhibits. Although Edutainment still officially adopts the position that these things are presented merely to inform responsible citizens of the moral blight of pornography, they're really just giving the public what it wants.

Particularly well-liked by families is the *My Kid Could Do That!* gallery, in which children are handed art supplies and encouraged to duplicate famous abstract works.

A dozen regular and 2 boosted Edutainment security officers are typically assigned to the NGBABP.

a21. spiralling deficit

Admission: 2 A tickets

This state of the art rollercoaster is famous for its central "bell curve from hell."

a22 - a23. the american way (cablecar ride)

Admission: 1 C ticket

Small cable cars (maximum capacity: four adults or six children) carry visitors across the gap separating the two sections of the tourist area. Terrorists sometimes try to shoot down cablecars, but to date have always been toasted by Edutainment antiaircraft fire before managing to do so.

a24. the voice of the people

Admission: 1 B ticket

This is one of those swing rides, on which patrons take seats on a gigantic simulated boat, which is then rocked violently to and fro by a hydraulic mechanism.

a25. the voting booth

Admission: Pay per play, \$15 per game

This is a series of typical carnival games, as well as arcade rooms containing the latest 3D shootout games. Barkers at the various dart throwing, ball tossing, and squirt gun shooting booths like to call out that their games are "more honest than the Supreme Court!" Of course, that isn't saying much. Prizes include plush toy **eagles, bears, and eledonks**. A new line of plush toys representing favorite mutant creatures from the Genetically Altered History Museum is also doing quite well. Other winners prefer Atomic Kennedy, *Vigilance Team*, or Cracker Brothers merchandise.

a26. the pie chart

A huge restaurant serving the best in high-cholesterol, high-fat, high-protein foods. The place has terrible acoustic problems, its barnlike structure magnifying

SPRAWLING DEFICIT

THE AMERICAN WAY
(CABLECAR RIDE)

THE VOICE OF
THE PEOPLE

THE VOTING BOOTH

THE PIE CHART

what

means



The Vote-A-Tron 7500—It took 7 years and 15 billion dollars to develop and has personally been attributed with reducing voter turnout by 13%.

the sounds of chatting diners to an ear-shattering din. Although the food is strictly tourist class, players sometimes come here to make secret deals, since it's impossible to eavesdrop, electronically or otherwise, on anyone even a single table away.

The adolescent children of Washington power brokers often get their first taste of employment working as waiters, cleaning staff, or kitchen help at the Pie Chart. It doesn't pay much, but most players insist that their kids get a taste of the working world to toughen them up. A terrorist wanting to wipe out a good number of tomorrow's ruling class would do well to spray the kitchen with autofire.

The Pie Chart kitchen is the juice distribution nerve center of Washington. The assistant manager of the restaurant, **William van Dyke**, makes three times his official income smuggling J into D.C. every day. He got into the business just to make some extra dough off the rich and spoiled brats who worked under him, but word has gotten around, and he has some high-level folks in

William van Dyke: INT: 1. Business: 3. "Product? You're asking me if I have product? Depends on what kind of product you're referring to."

the corridors of power

his little black book. van Dyke figures he's untouchable because of the smudge he's accumulated on some of Washington's big names. He buys his stash from the O.C. gangster Blue Monk, who is smart enough not to mess with a good deal. Blue Monk's rivals would be pleased to take out van Dyke and replace him with someone loyal to them.

a27. Watergate II

WATERGATE II

A mammoth resort hotel complex, owned by the Edutainment Consortium and some outside partners. Tourists who wish to stay over in D.C. are restricted to the Watergate II, so they feel free to price gouge mercilessly. Even the cheapest room goes for \$2000 a night (double occupancy); these are usually booked way in advance. The more luxurious \$3500 per night rooms are easier to get on short notice.

The Watergate II contains more than just hotel rooms: there are four restaurants, two nightclubs, a casino, two swimming pools, a health spa and workout centre, and a shopping concourse. The stores in the concourse are typical of upscale malls — clothing boutiques, an entertainment software outlet, gift shops, and so on. Prices are on the high side.

True players wouldn't be caught dead in the Watergate. Not only is it a tourist trap, but most of them have dimly recollections of some old history lesson or other that makes them feel vaguely queasy ...

a28. checks and balances

CHECKS AND
BALANCES

Admission: C ticket

A bumper car ride done up to resemble the Congress. The fronts of the bumper cars are painted with caricatures of well-known legislators and administration officials. Having your mug plastered over the front of one of the bumper cars is almost as prestigious as being tagless.

a29. edutainment security stations

EDUTAINMENT
SECURITY STATION

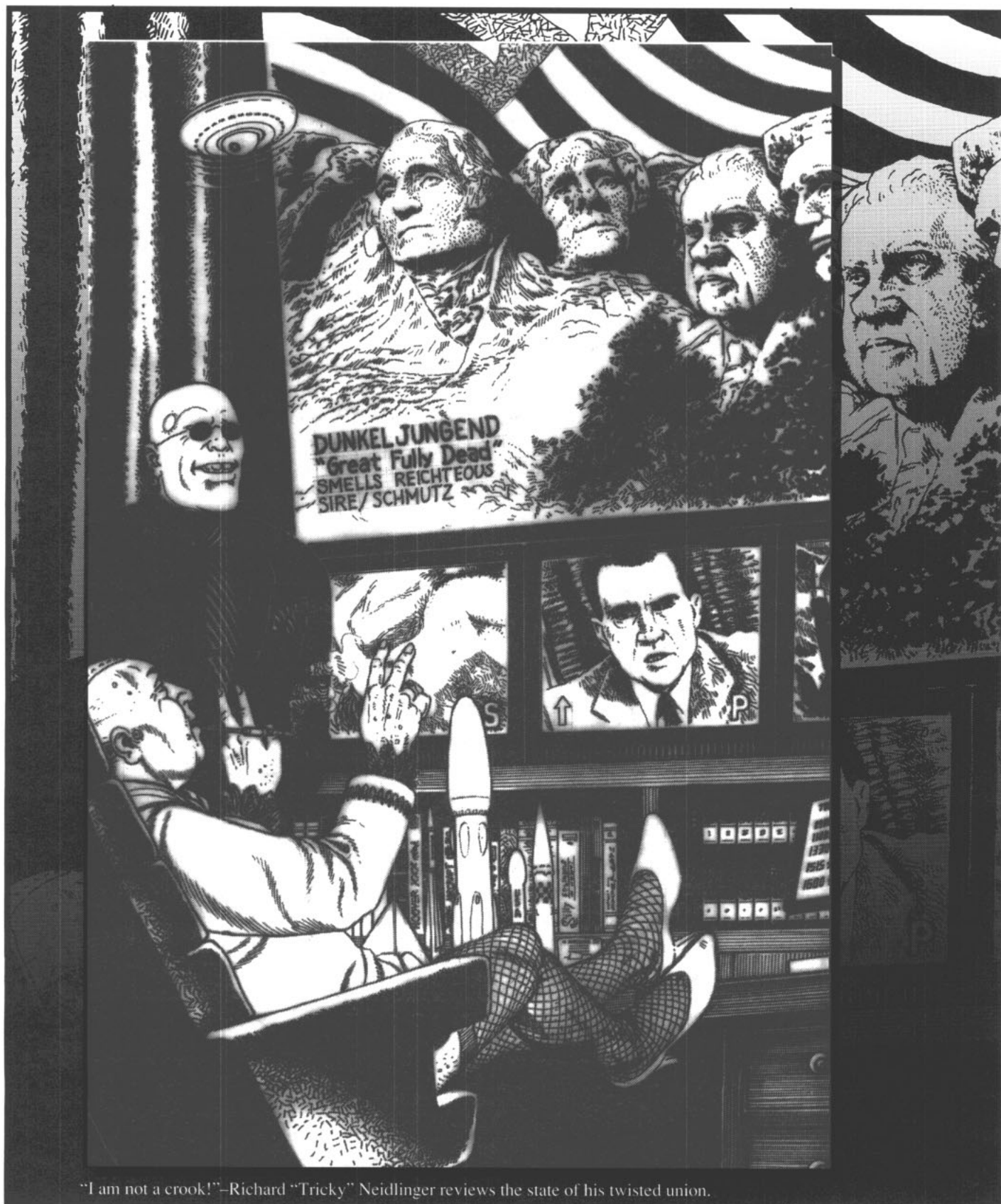
Peppered throughout the grounds of the tourist area are security stations, where a team of four boosted officers whiles away the time in case they're called to provide backup. They monitor security camera readouts, which between them cover most of the high traffic areas of the Edutainment area.

a30. junior congress

JUNIOR CONGRESS

Admission: C ticket

An amphitheater with aquarium, the Junior Congress is a marine mammals show held every two hours. The performing seals and dolphins do tricks which are keyed in a cute way to the Washington scene. For example, the seal trainer gets the seals to "vote" on a bill to reduce tariffs on sardines by beeping their noses on old bicycle horns. This show is getting lamer and more



"I am not a crook!"—Richard "Tricky" Neidlinger reviews the state of his twisted union.

deal with the Foster administration: Which has prompted much obvious joking in the White House, along the lines of, "Hell, what's the difference? We've been makin' em eat it for years."

threadbare every year, and few people come here any longer. They'd sooner watch the bloodier animal show at the Genetically Altered Museum. The embittered emcee of the show, Betty Peck is trying to get released from her contract with Edutainment. She's taken to salting the show with biting political satire, naming names in various Washington scandals that have been kept out of the press. Ballparkers are now coming to her and giving her rumors to float. She'd make an excellent source for the would-be operator wanting to learn the ground rules of the city.

231. the supreme food court

THE SUPREME
FOOD COURT

A series of booths for fast food joints, including Tastee Ghoul. This is the only aboveground source of cannibal cuisine in D.C., which characters whose enhancement limitations require them to regularly ingest human flesh will want to take note of.

A recent addition to the lineup is Coppy's, a place that specializes in sausages manufactured from sewage solids supplemented by soybean protein and steak flavoring. This technology dates back to the early 1990s, but it's taken a long time for someone to attempt to market the product commercially. Coppy's management is divided over whether they should cover up the source of their meat or promote it vigorously; its many satisfied customers are currently munching in ignorance. Coppy's is working on a **deal with the Foster administration** to mass-produce their sausages for consumption by federal prisoners, schoolchildren in lunch programs, and food stamp recipients.

232. Mount Rushmore II

Admission: free

MOUNT RUSHMORE II

A replica of Mount Rushmore, one twentieth of the original size, with Richard Nixon replacing Theodore Roosevelt.

233. statue of liberty II

Admission: free

STATUE OF LIBERTY II

A full size replica of the Statue of Liberty, resculpted to give the figure a more contemporary, sexy look. Can you say cleavage, boys and girls? The replica is sponsored by Alpaca Smokes, the cigarette manufacturer. Its face is animated: Lady Liberty winks at passing planes and has a lit Alpaca dangling from her lips.

A controversy is now raging over the recent bombing of the original in New York. Investigative reporters have linked a team of boosts employed by Alpaca to the sabotage, accusing them of blowing the statue up so they could make an offer to "repair" it their way. Alpaca executives have denied the accusation, blaming the incident on anti-smoking activists. Nonetheless, some Republocrats have called for sponsorship rights to the Washington model to be given to another cigarette company.

mean

mean

LIBERTY BELL II

234. liberty bell II

Admission: C Ticket

This replica of the Liberty Bell was recently repaired to eliminate the unsightly crack in the original. This was done in response to a campaign waged by Triumph Armbolack, who pilloried "establishment bureaucrats" for foisting defective workmanship on the American public. Never mind the fact that the Bell was commissioned by Edutainment, not the government, and was intended all along to mimic the crack in the original. Armbolack's audience could be counted on not to know that it was supposed to be cracked. Members of Congress were bombarded with outraged mail, and pressured Edutainment to fix the bell. Armbolack then turned around and declared his campaign an experiment to reveal the timidity of Washington, and is now demanding that the cracked bell be reinstated.

extremely difficult to blow up: Unfortunately for the 14 victims of the recent Underground bombing of the Department of Agriculture, a subcontractor illegally cut corners on the security specs. This allowed the partial collapse of the first floor of the building during the blast. Although the bombers have not been caught, the builder in question is now doing hard time.

MARS CORPORATION MEMORIAL

235. Mars corporation Memorial

This Memorial is still under construction, and is being held under wraps by the management of this up-and-coming conflict firm. Rumors abound that MARS recently uncovered a conspiracy by a rival firm to sabotage their project, explaining a rash of discoveries of boosted corpses in Monument Valley in the O.C.

GMs are encouraged to invent further attractions of Democracy City™ to keep their veterans informed and enlightened.

official Washington

The government district of Democracy City™ is laid out as a hub, with streets radiating out from the White House. In this respect, it is more like Paris than the O.C., which was built on a grid pattern. During the planning stages of Democracy City™, the Gates administration lobbied heavily for this new arrangement, citing security as a reason. If the streets are confusing, it's harder for people who are unfamiliar with them — like unlicensed terrorists — to escape from security forces after pulling a job. Gates' critics contended that the real purpose behind the plan was to increase the prestige of the White House, which is the center of the hub. Now all major avenues lead to the White House, with Congress shunted off to the side.

Buildings in this section of town are much more sturdy than the norm for new buildings in 2021. They're usually made of super-alloy reinforced concrete, and built to support heavy armaments. Many official buildings are equipped with machinegun turrets and even surface to air missiles. Most would be **extremely difficult to blow up**. They're also, in general, uglier than a fifteen-car pileup. Big, square, thick, and utilitarian, the official buildings of Washington have abandoned the graceful pseudo-classical style of their O.C. predecessors in favor of a depressing neo-Stalinist style. They look especially

mean the corridors of power

middle floors: Top floors used to be the most prestigious, but these are now considered vulnerable to airborne terrorist attacks. Low-ranking employees are situated in the highest and lowest floors. A slang term for top bureaucrat is "burrower", indicating that the person has made it to the safe centre of the office tower.

soul-deadening during the winter months, when streaks of rain and melting snow dribble darkly down their gray concrete walls.

Security measures taken at the various public buildings can be roughly broken down into categories. These grades are cumulative; a building with security grade B will also have the characteristics listed in C and D. Security grades are a descriptive convenience for the purposes of this book; characters in the game world don't use them. These descriptions aren't meant to be exhaustive; use them as a guideline when veterans decide to penetrate a government building without proper authorization.

Grade	Security Measures
D	"off the rack" security patrols, lightly armed
C	heavily armed "off the rack" security, metal detectors at entrances, gun turret on roof, manned only in emergencies
B	boosted security contingent on back-up, personal searches at entrances manned gun turret on roof,
A	boosted security (usually SS-BD) on patrol, secure areas equipped with automated machinegun emplacements triggered by electric eyes, surface to air missile launchers on roof

OFFICIAL
WASHINGTON
SECURITY MEASURES

While there is nothing more riveting than a detailed description of dozens of government office buildings, the following descriptions are kept as brief as possible. Many aren't described at all, except to note their security grades. Most of these buildings are the same — ugly exteriors, as described above, with similarly unglamorous interiors. The **middle floors** of most offices are given over to the top administrators, and are richly appointed on the taxpayer's dime. Lower-ranking officials labor away in large areas separated by temporary dividers. During the summer, the air conditioning is often on the fritz in these areas, and large, ancient fans putter away to little effect. Many offices suffer from so-called toxic building syndrome: ventilation is notoriously poor, and many of the carpets are embedded with noxious chemicals. Low-level bureaucrats are three times likelier than the general population to suffer from exotic cancers and respiratory ailments. The worst building in the city is, naturally, the Department of Health and Human Services.

There are many more government office buildings in the city than noted below. Many of them are overflow buildings, meant to house workers from agencies

mean

mean

whose payroll has expanded past its physical capacity. These have memorable names like H-2, J-3, and L-7.

Overflow buildings are particularly nasty places to work; getting transferred to one is a sure sign of a career in decline. Demoralized staffers in such places are very inefficient, and spend a high proportion of their time watching soaps on smuggled vid sets, playing hallway touch football, and getting stoned. These, naturally, are the bureaucrats who are most likely to be dealing with members of the general public. They remain in their jobs not because they have anything worthwhile to do, but because no bureau head is willing to suffer the symbolic defeat of a budget cut or decrease in workforce. These buildings periodically get on the news when an employee shows up one morning with a cardboard box full of Snap-Tites™ and starts lobbing away.

Some of the new oddball agencies are listed below, but GMs are encouraged to come up with their own to add to the stew.

collapse into itself:
Government officials
consider this unlikely,
because nothing quite
that poetic ever happens
in Washington.

THE WHITE HOUSE

036. the white house

Security Grade: A

The home of the President and his family, and nerve center of the Administration. Also a tourist attraction, which allows guests to tour a public wing of the building used only for rare formal affairs. As mentioned on p. 116, tourists who stray from the approved route can suffer quite permanent consequences. Admission to the White House tour costs two A tickets, available for purchase at Edutainment ticket offices in the tourist area. A limited number are sold each day, and tourists are carefully searched on their way in. The White House is heavily guarded by the regular Secret Service and the SS-BD.

THE CAPITOL

037. the capitol

Security Grade: A

The legislature of the United States. The House and Senate debating floors are only a portion of this labyrinthine complex. Designed to duplicate the originals, the expanded number of representatives and senators, and their demand for increased office space, has meant the progressive growth of underground corridors beneath the Capitol. In 2020, an engineer's report, promptly classified by the administration, revealed that unchecked below ground expansion is in danger of eroding the building's structural support, causing it to **collapse into itself.**

THE SUPREME COURT

038. the supreme court

Security Grade: C

A comparatively small official building by contemporary Washington standards, the new Supreme Court copies the imposing neo-Greek facade of the original, with its majestic central staircase. Unfortunately, the rest of the building is already deteriorating, and is infested with impressively huge cockroaches to boot. One

the corridors of power

Blowin' Up the Wind:
Characters can find
the secret e-mail
address needed to
subscribe to this
informative
publication by making
a P/F Computer
Science (Digital
Security) challenge
against a Difficulty of
15. Some of
America's most
experienced terrorists
talk shop and
exchange gossip in
this encrypted forum,
which has supposedly
never been penetrated
by the NSA.

less than reliable rumor has it that the roaches are products of the Genetically Altered Museum (see p. 109), imported by either administration or Congressional forces as part of a psychological warfare campaign against the justices.

039. bureau of national security medicine

Security Grade: B

A little-known agency responsible for government research into the genetic enhancement field, as well as other applications of the alien pod technology. Most people think that the militant firms like AMI are solely responsible for such inquiries, but the government has kept its bases covered by funding parallel research. Officially, BNSM scientists are required to share their results with any and all militant corporations who have current contracts with the US government. Unofficially, all of the firms suspect the BNSM of holding back on them. Thus, this bureau is now and then the target of industrial espionage. It also attracts the interest of spies from the other superpowers.

BUREAU OF NATIONAL
SECURITY MEDICINE

040. state department

Security Grade: B

The State Department is noted for its top-to-bottom ritziness. No stuffy cubicles or broken air conditioning here. The explanation for this is that America doesn't want to present a less than sparkling front to visiting dignitaries from other nations. Trade representatives and ambassadors from third world nations are often intimidated — sorry, make that *entertained* — here, and the all-over mahogany panelling is a big part of the snow job. Like any big agency, it offloads clerical workers and other lesser lights to cramped and noxious overflow buildings.

STATE DEPARTMENT

041. interior department

Security Grade: D

Noted for its demoralized workforce — including security officers — the Interior Department headquarters was voted *Most Likely To Be Firebombed in 2021* in the December "year in review" issue of **Blowin' Up the Wind**, the secret electronic trade journal for terrorists.

INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

042. bureau of conglomeratization

Security Grade: C

Another obscure agency, the Bureau of Conglomeratization was what the Plutocrats made of the Small Business Administration shortly after they dismantled it in 2015. The bureau is now a corporate matchmaker, helping big corporations target smaller companies for takeover in the interests of "national security." Designed as a revenue generator, the bureau takes a cut from all transactions it inspires, and kicks most of it back to pay off the national debt. The percentage it keeps buys very sharp office furniture and a valuable art collection, which has on occasion made the BoC a target for thieves.

BUREAU OF
CONGLOMERALIZATION

blowin'

means

chapter 111

THE TREASURY
DEPARTMENT

043. treasury department
Security Grade: C

THE EXECUTIVE
OFFICE BLOCKS

044. executive offices à block
Security Grade: C



"You like me! You really like me!"—Vice President Brooks seen with a few close friends.

Office space for the many political appointees and advisors to the President who don't report to a specific cabinet department. The Vice-President and his staff have a floor of this building to themselves. Oddly, neither the heat or air conditioning on this floor work properly, and no amount of bureaucratic wrangling results in their repair.

045. executive
offices à block
Security Grade: C

More offices for administration officials. Many offices in both buildings are unoccupied; rumor has it that the second building was commissioned to accommodate always-feverish demand for corner offices.

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120

means

the corridors of power

046. U.S. district court

Security Grade: D

The federal court for the Washington area. The details of commercial cases are thrashed through here before heading to the Supreme Court. Federal justices stationed here have gotten into the habit of never stepping foot outside the city, after double-header assassinations of two vacationing justices in early 2020. The District Court judges are often considered frontrunners for Supreme Court appointments, and at least one alliance was launching a pre-emptive strike to keep candidates it didn't like off the short list. Federal justices, like their Supreme Court superiors, hire their own security details.

U.S. DISTRICT
COURTHOUSE

047. IRS headquarters

Security Grade: A

The IRS is the institution most often mentioned when terrorist conspiracies to attack D.C. targets are busted up throughout the country. Nothing unites angry people of all stripes like taxation. Hence the constant state of military-style readiness at the mammoth IRS headquarters, a sprawling accordion-shaped building colloquially known as either "The Caterpillar" or "The Centipede."

IRS HEADQUARTERS

The IRS is growing at a phenomenal rate as it tries to keep up with the public's skill at tax evasion. They've long ago given up on collecting any more than a token amount from corporate sources. Bureaucrats here are engaged in a continual turf war with the Census Bureau; it wants full access to their exhaustive records on the day-to-day doings of US citizens in order to catch people when they hide income. But the Plutocrats have so far blocked measures to open Census data to the IRS. They know this would be an extremely popular move. People don't like being spied on, but they've grown used to it. To be spied on and then taxed on it would be too much for the voters to bear. As the Plutocratic platform relies on their stand against taxation, it helps them to be seen to frustrate their own tax collectors.

When the IRS really wants to nail someone, however, they don't let this mere formality stand in the way. They've long been suspected of using their official budget to bribe individual Census Bureau employees into leaking files they particularly want to see. Congress has investigated these charges on two separate occasions, finding nothing to pin on the IRS. Nobody knows how to make books audit-proof better than the IRS, after all.

Even when they resort to extra-legal means of information gathering, the collection of taxes isn't necessarily an easy thing. Well-to-do organized criminals generally have firepower at least equivalent to IRS armed response teams, and the corporate types can simply lobby for favorable loopholes. As usual, it's the lowly working stiff who gets the maximum jam, shouldering a disproportionate chunk of the national tax burden.

means

means

FBI BUILDING

048. fbi building

Security Grade: B

Visitors to FBI headquarters are sometimes surprised to find that it has the same slack atmosphere of an overflow building for excess clerical workers. Its washrooms are noted for having the ripest selection of graffiti in town.

BUREAU OF
ENGRAVING AND
PRINTING

049. bureau of engraving and printing

Security Grade: D

The government's printing plant, notorious as a dumping ground for otherwise unemployable nephews and cousins of the rich and influential. Most important printing jobs are now contracted out to private firms, but the agency refuses to die. According to the terrorist e-journal *Blowin' Up the Wind*, destroying the Bureau of Engraving and Printing would be redundant. Occasionally some prime dunderhead is nailed for conspiring to rob the joint, having confused it with the **US Mint**

DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

050. department of transportation

Security Grade: D

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

051. department of health and human services

Security Grade: D

As noted above, the HHS's headquarters is the unhealthiest work environment in town, with the possible exception of the Genetically Altered Museum's monkey cage at feeding time.

FDA

052. food and drug administration

Security Grade: C

DEPARTMENT
OF LABOR

053. department of labor

Security Grade: D

NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

054. national archives

Security Grade: D

The repository for official and unofficial historical documents, ranging from ancient times (its collection of infomercials is envied by media arts curators

US Mint: Is now just a row of offices in an overflow building. All actual printing is done by a private firm, Dead Presidents Inc., in Alaska, and shipped to distribution points throughout the country. Technically a state secret, this fact is known to anyone who makes a P/F Administration (Federal) challenge vs. a Difficulty of 2.

the corridors of power

Uncle Meat: STR: 5
DEX: 9 SPD: 4 RES: 8
INT: 3 WILL: 3
AURA: 2. Acrobatics
(Dodge): 15, Detective
(Investigation): 8, Gun
Combat: 15, Martial
Arts: 4. Invisibility 7.
"The Trilateral
Commission has
launched a satellite to
reduce the world
population by 30%
due to ozone
depletion in ten years.
I know because my
friend told me."

throughout the globe) to the present. Many of the older records are on paper; anything dating from 2010 or later is only going to be found on read-only biodrives. The dedicated researcher can find some really useful info here. Just as there are warehouses full of stored documents that have been classified for no good reason, scattered among the trivia housed by the National Archives are a surprising number of documents that should have been classified but have accidentally slipped into the public record. The problem is coping with the information overload. The sheer volume of information stored on the archives' bio-drives is staggering. To find a random bit of useful info, vets must make P/F Detective (Investigation) Challenge against a Difficulty of 9. To get a factoid of actual relevance to a specific matter determined in advance, the character must challenge against a Difficulty of 15.

Access to the archives is available to all during the hours of 10 am - 4 pm on weekdays. The ASS is attempting to bar people on their watch list from entering, so far to no avail. This means that one can find some interesting characters in the Archive's study rooms. The National Archives are bedevilled by a semi-crazed boost with an aversion to washing who refers to himself as **Uncle Meat**. Meat believes that one of the Archive's bio-drives is sentient and communicates with him, revealing the darkest secrets of the US government. Somehow Meat always manages to elude security; no one knows how he infiltrated the city or continues to escape detection. Meat is justifiably paranoid; if the vets win his trust they may be able to get valuable clues from him, or just plain lunatic nonsense.

055. democracy city airpad

Security Grade: A

A small airport for incoming aircars and copters. This one caters to people on official business, as opposed to tourists, who use the airpad at A6. Large airliners don't land in Democracy City™; they're considered too attractive to terrorist infiltrators and bombers. D.C., also for security reasons, has very little commuter traffic. Government workers are strongly encouraged to take up residence in the floating city.

056. general accounting office

Security Grade: D

Home to supposedly independent number crunchers and support staff. In reality, these folks specialize in cooking the books for the administration.

057. u.s. public relations agency

Security Grade: D

An agency set up to handle general communications from the public, as well as to make sure that the US government — and the Plutocratic administration in particular — has a positive media image at home and abroad.

DEMOCRACY CITY™

AIR PAD

GENERAL

ACCOUNTING OFFICES

US PUBLIC

RELATIONS AGENCY

123

123

means

DEFENSE
DEPARTMENT

058. defense department

Security Grade: A

The Defense Department doesn't really do much these days, serving mostly as a liaison with the various conflict firms. It takes care of unpleasant paperwork like notifying next of kin when soldiers bite the dust, and maintains copies of service records of soldiers and vets. This section of the department is **notoriously leaky**. The heads of the bureaucracy spend most of their time fighting for top security measures, meant to create the illusion that this department is still a power to be reckoned with.

JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT

059. justice department

Security Grade: A

Home of the ASS, the Justice Department headquarters is better maintained than many other buildings. It's security teams are famous for being hard-assed, and the building is considered very hard to penetrate.

ENTERTAINMENT
DEPARTMENT

060. entertainment department

Security Grade: D

The Entertainment Department building was funded by several Hollywood studios, and looks like a gigantic replica of Mann's Chinese Theatre, complete with cement foot- and handprints of celebrities on the street outside. Inside, it's decorated in avant garde style by leading movie designers, and is awash in posters and publicity material for various stars. Each floor has a large party room for the benefit of visiting celebs. The Entertainment Department cafeteria has the best salad bar in town.

COMMERCE
DEPARTMENT

061. commerce department

Security Grade: D

AGRICULTURE
DEPARTMENT

062. agriculture department

Security Grade: A

Recently blown up by the Underground, this building is still under construction. In classic fashion, the government is now guarding the barn door after the horses have fled, giving top security priority to the building site. The entire surviving staff of the department has been offloaded to various overflow buildings. The explosion resulted in no noticeable change in the efficiency of the department.

EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT

063. education department

Security Grade: D

FEDERAL BUREAU
OF DEEDS AND
DISSEMINATION

064. federal bureau of deeds and dissemination

Security Grade: B

notoriously leaky:
Characters wanting a copy of any service record can get one by finding an employee of the relevant department, offering a \$1,000 bribe, and making a P/F Administration (Federal) Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 2. The Difficulty is reduced by 1 for each additional \$500 offered. For the same amount, characters can arrange to have records destroyed. Thus GMs should feel free to rule that certain records are permanently missing.

the corridors of power

After a series of bomb threats, department head Marion Whales has managed to get the FDDD's security upgraded to a more prestigious level. A whispering campaign has begun alleging that she orchestrated the threats just for that purpose.

obj. census bureau

Security Grade: A

CENSUS BUREAU

Another mammoth structure, the Census Bureau building is known by Washingtonians as "The Behemoth" or "The Great Maw." It is tightly secured —



8"x10" glossy persuasion—An AMI representative discusses the new Foreign Contract Surcharge legislation with Senator Ingle (P) of Pennsylvania.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

so much so that its security officers hold the record for accidentally shooting the highest number of their own colleagues, per capita.

obb. housing and urban development department

Security Grade: D

Veteran's Affairs Secretary Clinton Gore, responsible for this department, was recently embarrassed by revelations that HUD employees hired under an affirmative action plan for boosts were running a prostitution ring from the mailroom here. The growing scandal was squelched when it became clear just how many important figures had been willing to pay to do it with a boost. The leader of the ring, Martha Lassez (a.k.a. **Mother Courage**) ended up getting a promotion to keep her quiet.

Mother Courage: STR: 4
DEX: 8 SPD: 5 RES: 4
INT: 3 WILL: 3 AURA: 2.
Acrobatics (Dodge): 14,
Gun Combat (Pistol): 14,
Leadership: 5, Martial
Arts: 11.
Control 12. A fervent
Neo-Scientologist,
Mother Courage inspires
fierce loyalty from the
small coterie of boosts
working at HUD. "Hey,
babe, join the party."

IMMIGRATION, NATURALIZATION, AND PROCREATION DEPARTMENT

obj. in-migration, naturalization and procreation department

Security Grade: D

This department is detailed in the *Underground Notebook*.

DISEASE CONTROL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UNIT

obb. disease control emergency management unit

Security Grade: B

This secretive agency is officially supposed to develop rapid response methods to combat epidemics, with a special eye on curbing enemy germ warfare. It has been given, without anyone really noticing, broad emergency powers allowing it to invoke a state of virtual martial law at the drop of a microbe. Conspiracy theorists worry that DCEMU could be used as the point operation of a totalitarian takeover of the US.

ANIMAL DISEASE CONTROL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UNIT

obj. animal disease control emergency management unit

Security Grade: C

A poorer sister agency of DCEMU, ADCEMU was set up as a pet project of a Montana senator worried that the Chinese would attack America through its cows. It spends most of its time trying to undermine the efforts of DCEMU. Its heavily armed field agents have become officially sanctioned muscle for big agribusiness, continually hassling the few family farmers left in America.

CONSUMER STANDARDS TESTING BOARD

orp. consumer's standards testing board

Security Grade: D

A pet Republicratic project, this agency generates kickbacks from corporate America by threatening to find its products unsafe. Which they often are. Recalcitrant independent corporations often find themselves fighting espionage campaigns against CSTB's enforcement arm.

the corridors of power

unknown even to
many experienced
ballparkers:

Characters making a
P/F Administration
(Federal) Challenge
against a Difficulty of
15 know that the NSA
is currently disguised
as a run-down fish
processing plant in
Baton Rouge,
Louisiana. If they
make a second such
Challenge vs. a
Difficulty of 20, they'll
know that the agency
is already planning a
move to Cuba in
2024.

071. computer technologies monitoring agency

Security Grade: D

An agency set up to coordinate protocols and standards in the computer industry. Its enforcement arm spends about half of its time sabotaging foreign shipments of computer technology and software, and the other half either hunting down Cypherpunks or protecting them from the NSA, depending on who you ask.

072. statistical study standards bureau

Security Grade: D

Another typical minor agency, this one is supposed to monitor media references to statistical studies and demand air time to refute statements where such references are used deceptively. Since this applies or can be interpreted as applying to virtually any statement involving a statistic, this allows the agency to butt in arbitrarily into any public debate. Its enforcement arm attempts to punish pirate broadcasters when they misuse statistical claims.

073. infrastructure development advisory board

Security Grade: D

This one was set up to target areas of the country that most desperately need attention in the public works department. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that almost all of the nation fits under this category. Management here is proud of the fact that the agency wastes almost none of its time fulfilling its official mandate. The agency's enforcement arm devotes most of its resources to investigating other agencies, and, for no immediately obvious reason, hijacking trucks full of frozen corn, cauliflower, and brussel sprouts.

074. water conservation authority

Security Grade: D

This agency, responsible for guaranteeing an unlimited supply of water, is looked in bitter and permanent struggle with —

075. environment water standards council

Security Grade: D

— which is responsible for the quality of the water supply.

Some important agencies are not found in Washington. NSC headquarters is next to the privatized CIA in Langley, Virginia. The NSA is so secretive that its location is **unknown even to many experienced ballparkers**

COMPUTER
TECHNOLOGIES
MONITORING AGENCY

STATISTICAL STUDIES
STANDARDS BUREAU

INFRASTRUCTURE
DEVELOPMENT
ADVISORY BOARD

WATER
CONSERVATION
AUTHORITY

ENVIRONMENTAL
WATER STANDARDS
COUNCIL

these

means

favorite sport: After complaining, the next favorite is watching the NFL football team, the Washington Native Americans, on the drive to their third consecutive Superbowl championship.

The closer to the center of the city one's residence is, the more prestigious — and expensive — it is. This is because buildings on the perimeter are more vulnerable to rocket attack by airborne terrorists. Such attacks are almost invariably foiled by anti-aircraft emplacements mounted on the megarise roofs, but the noise can be pretty distracting at times. The roof troops are made up of mostly "off the rack" soldiers; currently the contract is held by AMI. Most of these troopers are in basic training, in consideration for the Slumberland process. This gives them an edge of doomed romanticism that they exploit to the fullest; they have a deserved reputation as sexual *conquistadors*.

The residential part of town is designed on a grid pattern, to prevent traffic snarl-ups at rush hour. Many people live within walking distance of work, and there is a reasonably efficient shuttle-bus system for those who prefer to take transportation. Most Washingtonians don't own vehicles. Although megarents are cheap, underground parking spaces go for positively brutal monthly rates. The city's three taxi companies all operate clean and efficient services, although the cabbies expect to be heavily tipped.

ԴՆ. ENBASSY ՐՕԿՍ

Security Grade: A to D, depending on wealth of country in question

This double block of large, architecturally impressive buildings houses the embassies of the major nations of the world. The Chinese embassy, mimicking the classical structures of the Forbidden City, is on the eastern end of the row. Nestled beside it is the smaller, gothic Quebecois embassy. The eye-twisting neo-Cubist Neo-Deutsch embassy is on the western end of the row. The New Providence embassy is a towering white complex that doubles as a popular

the corridors of power

co-prosperity:
Doubletalk term for an
office complex
designed to house
multiple embassies of
countries too low on
the power relations
scale to merit an entire
building. D.C.TM
planners ruthlessly
limited the amount of
space available to
foreign embassies.

Line Item Veto: Is
detailed in a notebook
page included at the
end of this book

resort hotel. The NeoVatican embassy recalls a cathedral with plexiglass flying buttresses. Luna's embassy is a suite of offices in a **co-prosperity**, as are those of many third world nations that the United States periodically invades.

Needless to say, this part of town is a hotbed of foreign intrigue. Characters who are agents of foreign governments will have to live here, in their embassies, if they're unable to put together a cover identity that justifies their living elsewhere in the residential district.

rr. democracy stadium

DEMOCRACY STADIUM

Home of the city's football and baseball teams — the Native Americans and the Warriors, respectively. Democracy Stadium is also used as a concert venue for top acts like the Cracker Brothers. It's owned and operated by the Edutainment Consortium, who are also trying to set up a team in the hot new sport of Upball. This is a form of full-contact basketball played by boosts in flight harnesses. So far the D.C. Security Team (see below) has been reluctant to issue a permit, afraid that it would be too easy for hostile boosts to infiltrate the city after getting on another city's Upball team.

rrb. megamall

MEGAMALL

A gigantic shopping complex, supplying almost all of the city's retail needs. Other than convenience stores in the lobbies of megarises and the smaller mall in Watergate II (p. 113), this is about it as far as shopping is concerned. However, there are enough competing outlets in the mall to keep prices acceptable if not cheap. Patrolled by an in-house security outfit made up of off the rack officers.

rrg. security team headquarters

Security Grade: B

SECURITY TEAM
HEADQUARTERS

The D.C. police never use the word "police"; instead they're the Security Team, usually shortened simply to "Security." Many assume that the cops report to Edutainment; actually they're a department of the NSC, and ultimately report to the President through Geoffery Sneed. D.C. cops are famous for their politeness and friendly demeanour. They also have wide and arbitrary powers, which they use to make sure that people have proper ID. Most patrols are off the rack. The Security Team does have a small contingent of boosted officers, who compose the Special Reaction Squad. The squad's head, OverOfficer Peter "**Line Item Veto**" Geraghty, is the highest ranking boost in the Security Team. The SRS deploys from headquarters.

rrb. security team station

Security Grade: C

SECURITY TEAM
STATION

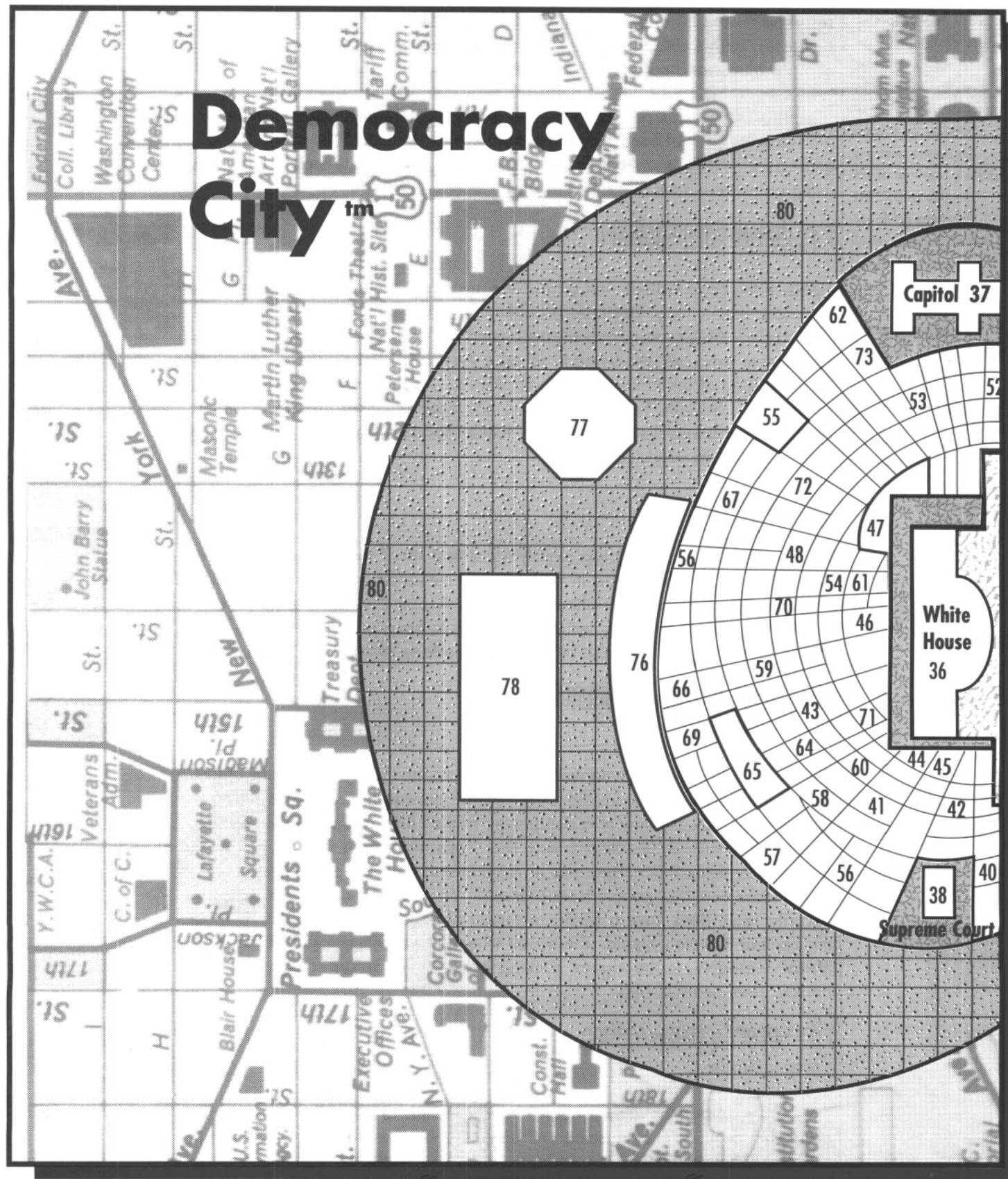
These four substations allow dispatchers to get units to any location within the city within minutes. They're small and unglamorous. Arrests and paperwork are handled at headquarters.

WEEKS

MEANS

Heard

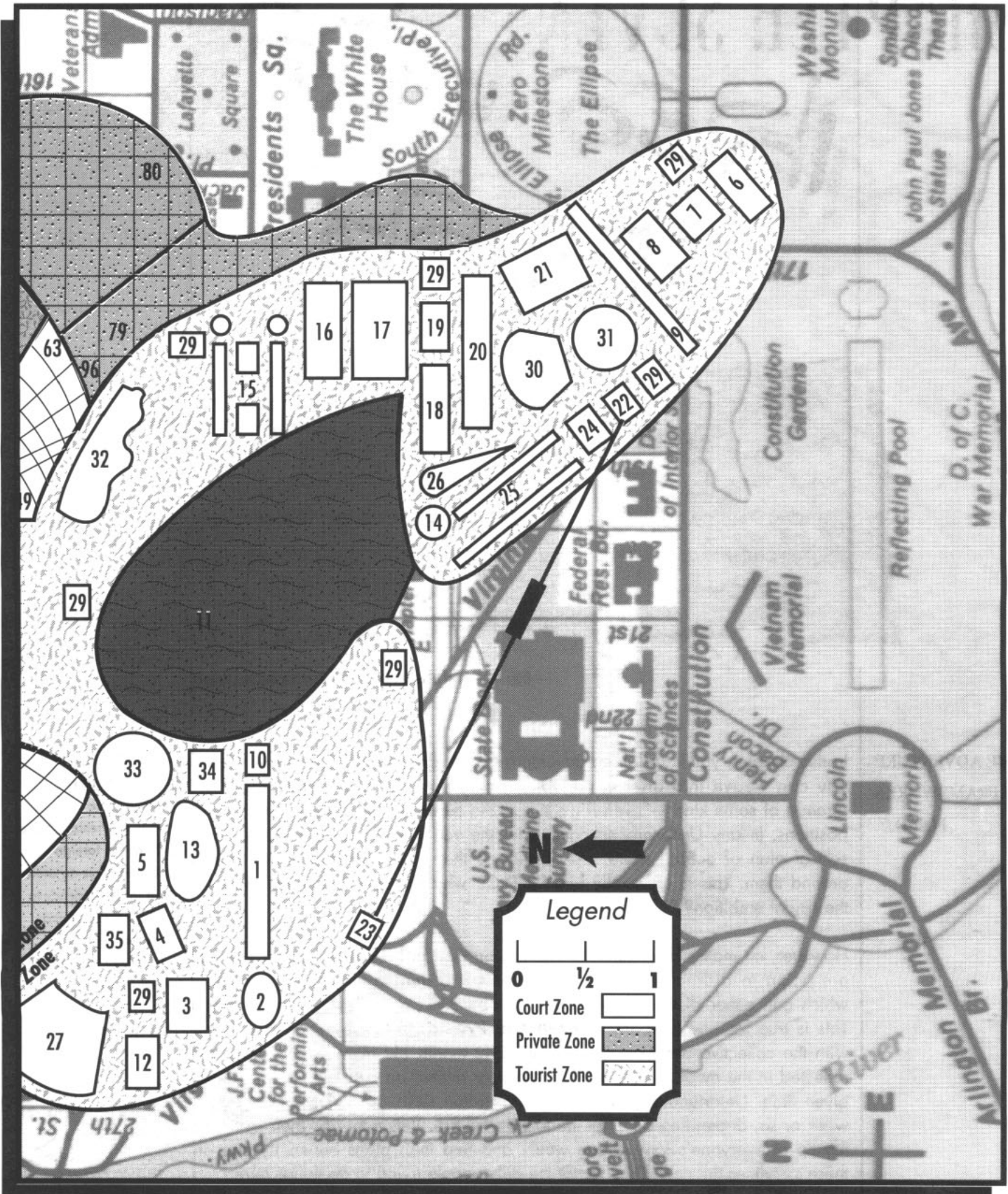
Democracy City™



where

means

the corridors of power



neant

CHAPTER SEVEN

Heo the
muck

The life of a politician is 30% just treading water to keep from going under, 30% defending yourself from attack, 30% reacting to surprises, and 10% doing what you really wanted to do when you came to Washington in the first place. If you're lucky.

—from *Memoirs of a Loose Cannon*, by former Senator Sam Kohut

SOME ADVENTURE
FRAMEWORKS
FOR D.C.

In this chapter, you'll find three adventure frameworks, broad outlines of stories you can weave into an ongoing D.C. campaign. All ballparkers have an agenda of some kind — even if it's simply the maintenance of their own power positions. In any *Underground* campaign, the vets are expected to have some sort of plan of action, some sort of change they want to make to the world around them. This is especially true for D.C.: why else would anyone come to the city of ambition?

However, no matter how clear the vets are on their plan of action, other matters are going to distract them. They'll be forced to deal with various surprises, which can either distract them from their objectives or derail them altogether. This is true for any ballparker, **even the President**. Washington is a town with the collective attention span of an eight month old infant. Its focus — as reflected in the media — is usually absolutely riveted on a single matter at any given time. Unfortunately, this absolute attention shifts absolutely about every week or so, depending on what the top stories are. Vets may find their issue on the tip of everyone's tongue one week, and find their plans buried by one of these storylines the next. They're not the only people trying to do things here.

even the President: Should perhaps be "especially the President." Presidents are in charge of foreign policy, which is an area noted for its tendency to generate scandal and embarrassing failure. They're also the biggest targets in town.

WOW

the

means

adventure format

The format for the following adventures is as follows. A quick summary of the plotline is followed by a list of possible scenes you can stage, or avenues of investigation the vets can pursue. This is followed by suggestions on integrating vets from each of the different campaign frameworks into the storyline. Then we look at the various ways in which Parameters could be changed at the conclusion of the adventure. Finally, the props related to the adventure are listed.

This material is presented to be as flexible as possible, in order to give players the freedom to involve their vets in the storyline in a way of their choosing. They might even choose to avoid some plotlines. While you shouldn't herd them-like geese, you should demonstrate that failure to act can sometimes have devastating consequences.

a note on parameters in d.c.

In a D.C. campaign, the actions of the veterans may have a far-reaching effect on people throughout the country, or even the world. For example, if they succeed at the first adventure here, they prevent a war, which is a big change. This obviously would cost more Reward Points than the veterans could be expected to muster.

However, it is possible for characters to spend the massed Reward Points of others to create widespread social changes, with the use of the following new skill:

politicking

governing attribute: aura

unskilled use: no

- **Government:** allows a character to transfer Reward Points to another character, or receive same. These Reward Points may only be used to change Parameters. Within the storyline, this change must be brought about through government action — through legislation, regulation, or the activities of government agencies. The ultimate source of these Reward Points is the voting public. Their Reward Points may be transferred many times through the use of this skill before being used to actually change anything.

- **Private Sector:** as above, but the change must be brought about through the actions of large private operations such as corporations or organized crime syndicates. These Reward Points ultimately come from the many employees and customers affected by such changes.

- **Media:** as above, but the change must be an alteration in the public attitude brought about by the machinery of the mass media. The Reward Points ultimately come from the viewers.

HOW THESE
ADVENTURES ARE
LAID OUT.

CHANGING
PARAMETERS
IN D.C.

NEW
POLITICKING SKILL

This extremely helpful skill should be available to vets starting in the D.C. setting. If pre-existing characters are being streamed into a D.C. campaign, we recommend that you bend the rules and allow them to pick up this new skill by spending Reward Points as if they were Recruitment Points during character creation. In other words, the base cost is 5, to which bonuses can be added according to the chart on p. 104 of *Underground*.

Political characters described in products issued before this box should be given the Politicking skill as well. For example, President Foster (see *Underground Notebook*) would have a Politicking skill of 9.

segment-by-segment ratings: The Nielsen company now obliges producers by dividing its ratings into thirty-second parcels. Thus executives can gauge the popularity not just of programs, but of scenes, performers, and even particular costumes, sets, or lines of dialogue.

adventure one: paraguay II

THE VETS MUST
PREVENT A
SENSELESS WAR IN
PARAGUAY

The 2019 Paraguayan conflict is considered by anti-war activists a prime example of the horrific stupidity of the Second Cold War. At the same time, it remains the most popular of the various niche wars with the American public. In this adventure, a big media conglomerate joins forces with AMI to lobby for a second incursion into Paraguay. The vets, knowing that thousands of their brothers-in-arms will suffer and die pointlessly if such a thing happens, fight to prevent it.

SUMMARY

ADVENTURE
SUMMARY

Artie Reshovsky, head of programming for the NBS vidnet channel, notices a disturbing trend in the numbers for one of his top-rated shows, the AMI-produced *Combat! Combat! Combat!* The numbers are on a steady, if currently all-but-imperceptible, downward trend. Although it is still a high-rated show, computer projections show that in three years, substantial numbers of viewers will start turning it off. Programmers have learned that the way to prevent low ratings are to anticipate audience dissatisfaction before it happens, and spike up the popularity of the show before people begin to tune out. After studying **segment-by-segment ratings** reports for the entire run of the program, Reshovsky's decided how to protect the show. The early segments on the Paraguayan conflict were by far the best loved pieces ever shown, on average outstripping footage of other conflicts or random urban violence by a staggering 0.5 share. Reshovsky immediately added both "Paraguay classic" and "Paraguay outtakes" segments to the show. He then approached AMI chief Frederick Furrier and convinced him that a second run at Paraguay would be not only profitable but necessary. *Combat! Combat! Combat!* is the centerpiece of propaganda for the whole war machine, and if its ratings suffer, the voters might lose their bearings and start voting for anti-war candidates.

Some key scenes involving the veterans are as follows:

- The vets hear of a secret meeting in the Watergate II (see p. 113) between AMI head Furrier and Marcia Alovich, CEO of the vast MacRaney's hamburger and lifestyle corporation. A Hi-Security boosted bodyguard assigned to guard

...into the rock



CROSSFIRING LINE

"Well hey, this is exciting!"—
Tempers flare on
Crossfiring Line
when boosted
rights activist
Lycanthropist is
asked why he
doesn't "just get
on with his life."

...means

the meeting has rather loose lips. Maybe the vets know the chattering bodyguard already, or know someone who does. At any rate, they immediately know something unusual is up, because AMI is usually associated with MacRaney's rivals in the fast food biz — both Tastee Ghoul and Coppy's buy time on *Combat! Combat! Combat!* AMI's spokesman, Captain Conflict, even does endorsements for Coppy's sausages.

- If they decide to take an active response to this odd bit of information, the vets can scrounge around for someone with connections to either company. If they cultivate a contact in the Defense Department, they can get the inside skinny from AMI's point of view. Officials in the Bureau of Conglomeratization (see p. 119) might know enough about MacRaney's to guess what's up on their end.

- Here's the beef — the original Paraguayan conflict was all about cheap cattle imports to MacRaney's and other fast food operations. See p. 23 of *Underground*. AMI needs MacRaney's help to lobby for a resumption of the war. Its usual allies in the fast food business won't do, as neither Tastee Ghoul or Coppy's rely on beef products.

- Another contact passes on another rumor to the vets — White House Chief of Staff Bert Betton is under heavy pressure to schedule a photo op on the White House lawn featuring the President and the Cracker Brothers. Contacts at the Entertainment Department can reveal that this event would kick off the release of the new Cracker Brothers single, **Paraguay (You're the Apple of My Eye.)**

- Unless the vets can somehow prevent the White House event from taking place (by, for example, getting through their heavy security cordon to sideline a key member of the band), the single rockets to the top of the charts. It is then featured prominently in a "war video" musical segment of *Combat! Combat! Combat!*

- A news media contact tells the vets that top head **John McLaughlin** will announce in the "Predictions" segment of the next installment of *The McLaughlin Group* that "US-contracted troops will be in Paraguay again by New Year's Eve!" If the vets can get through McLaughlin's staffers and to him, they can try to Charm or Intimidate him into not making the prediction. If they fail with this approach, they may end up in a tussle with the easily-offended Cyber-Celeb. Or they can try to get him to explain why he's making the prediction. If they succeed here, he'll put together the AMI-MacRaney's connection for them, explaining what each party stands to gain.

- The best tack to take here is to try to derail the AMI-MacRaney's PR campaign before it gets into full swing and gets the gullible public behind it. This means finding some allies with the same kind of clout as the people the vets are going up against. If the vets make a P/F Business Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 0, they'll realize that both Coppy's and Tastee Ghoul would be mightily peeved if they found out that Fred Furrier was at work on a plan that would reduce their major competitor's cost of doing business. The trick is to get to the management of either company. P/F Business Challenges vs. a Difficulty of 0 reveal that both corporate headquarters are outside D.C. Tastee Ghoul is in New York, Coppy's in Miles City, Montana.

- If the vets leave D.C., a MacRaney's **hit team** makes a spin attempt on them. One of the contacts they've snagged info from has double-dealt on them, letting the MacRaney's/AMI people know that a bunch of vets are poking into their affairs. The hit team poses as a heretofore unknown terrorist group calling itself

Paraguay (You're the Apple of My Eye): The song, as one might guess from the title, is a glorification of the original conflict. The chorus runs, "Paraguay, it was our best war yet/Please don't say it's the last we'll get."

John McLaughlin: STR: 7
DEX: 7 SPD: 7 RES: 7.
Sonic Discharge: 10.
"Wronnnngggggg!"

hit team: In keeping with MacRaney's love of uniformity, each member of the team has identical enhancements. Adjust Stress Tolerances as desired. There are as many hitters as player characters.

STR: 2 DEX: 9 SPD: 4
RES: 9 WILL: 3
Telepathic Blast: 7
Flight Control: 12
Equipped with Flight Harnesses, EP450s, Punkroasters, Mondo & Heavykev.

political capital:
Although Foster has
the constitutional
authority to start
Paraguay II, he'll lose
votes on other, more
important matters from
Senators and
Congressmen angered
by such a move.

Stop The Misery. If the vets defeat the team and track them to their local hotel rooms (the keys and receipts are in one of the killers' money belts) they find fake *Stop the Misery* propaganda. The group is supposedly composed of self-hating boosts who want to wipe out all other boosts and then commit suicide themselves.

- However, if they think to get fingerprints, the vets can later get service records on the hitters through a contact in the Department of Defense. If they don't already have such a contact, they'll do well to cultivate one. The records note that the killers all went to positions at MacSecurity, MacRaney's in-house security division, immediately after discharge from their various conflict firms. If the vets can get access to a major NJ, they can pitch the story and try to smudge MacRaney's on the national news, tipping their Paraguay hand before their media campaign is fully positioned.

- Backing up for just a sec, if the vets get a meeting with a muckety-muck at either Tastee Ghoul or Coppy's, they get a lobbying ally. The company promises to throw its political fundraising budget behind legislators who oppose a return to Paraguay. Although, like any war, this would be strictly President Foster's call, he doesn't have the **political capital** to start a conflict that Congress is against. If Congress weighs in against the proposed Paraguayan conflict early on, it's dead in the water. So if the vets get Tastee or Coppy's on side, they score not only lobbying muscle, but force MacRaney's to move before they're ready. Although the media won't play the story without hard evidence (like the hit team stuff), plans for Paraguay II will become widely known throughout Washington as Tastee or Coppy's flacks spread the word around town.

- The campaign for Paraguay II becomes public. If the vets managed to blow the AMI/MacRaney plan ahead of time, they have an advantage — subtract 2 from the Difficulty of all AURA or Charm Challenges they make to persuade officials and opinion makers to stay out of Paraguay. If the vets did not act, the AMI/MacRaney publicity machine is in full belch. *Paraguay (You're the Apple of My Eye)* is a major hit record, *Combat! Combat! Combat!* sucks in unprecedented ratings with its Paraguay retrospectives, and radio call-in shows are bombarded with citizens demanding that America barge into that two-bit little nation and scoop up all the cows it's entitled to. In this case, add 2 to the Difficulty of all relevant AURA or Charm Challenges the vets make.

- The vets may try to get on a some opinion shows to argue against Paraguay II. In order to succeed, they need to use their Charm or Performing Arts skills; the skills in same held by their debating partners compose the Difficulties for these Challenges. If you want some more action at this point, a vet or two can appear on *Crossfiring Line* — see *Ways* p. 52. In order to make the appearance successful, the vet who actually appears on the show has to outfight the pro-war boosts.

- If the vets are particularly clever or daring, they can attempt to penetrate AMI for the inside scoop on their involvement. If they have a contact in the firm, or just manage to break into Furrier's office and scoop some documents — a very difficult undertaking — they find out that the whole thing started with an attempt to ramp up the numbers for *Combat! Combat! Combat!* This damaging info helps them in hearings and future media appearances.

- Joint congressional hearings are held by the ad hoc *So Should We Nail the Parags Or What?* committee. The vets can make a difference if they manage to

MEANS

MEANS

wangle the right to testify at the hearing. They can get this if they already have a legislator on the committee as an ally, if they get Tastee or Coppy's to exercise clout on their behalf, or if they successfully bribe or Charm a congressional staffer. This is the big moment for our heroes — if they impress with their Charm or Artist (Performance) abilities, they can sway the influential members of Congress to turn thumbs down on a reentry into Paraguay. The result of their Challenge roll has to exceed that of **Garth Kasander**, a top military analyst hired by AML to make their case to the committee.

- Whatever happens in the public hearing, the vets can still either come from behind to clinch it or lose their advantage behind closed doors. Now both they and Kasander lobby the committee members individually and privately. Each meeting requires a separate P/F Administration (Federal) Challenge. These results are compared to similar challenges made by Kasander — roll these ahead of time for simplicity's sake, and play out each meeting with each representative and Senator. The vets probably only have a real shot at this if they have Tastee Ghoul or Coppy's money to spread around. The committee has 14 members. AML/MacRaney's is willing to spend \$15,000,000 on bribes. The vets must try to wring a similar or greater budget out of their corporate ally. This entails a Standard Business Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 0. An D result nets a \$7,000,000 budget; a C, \$12,000,000; a B, \$17,000,000; and an A, \$22,000,000. If the vets find an underhanded way to discover Kasander's budget, they reduce the Difficulty of this Challenge to -2. If Kasander outspends the vets with a particular legislator, or vice versa, the big spender adds a modifier to the Administration Challenge. The modifier is +1 per \$500,000 in excess of what the other party paid. The winner at the hearing also gets a +2 modifier. You can get complicated if you want and assign additional difficulties to the vets when addressing hawkish NAS types, and penalties to Kasander when dealing with bleeding-heart Republicrats.

- The clincher is the committee vote on Paraguay II. If the vets have persuaded enough legislators, the war doesn't happen. If they fail, the US does indeed reenter Paraguay by the new year. The other trading blocs jump right back in, too, and many more boosts and Paraguayans are senselessly killed.

Campaign Frameworks

CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORKS

- In *Mr. Boost Goes to Washington*, the vets' boss wants to derail Paraguay II. If he's a left-leaning Republicrat, he's against the war on principle. If he's a moderate or right wing Republicrat, he's opposed to the war because some of his personal political enemies in the Plutocratic party are for it. If the vets work for a Plutocrat, he feels that wars should be fought only for trade gains, not for propaganda purposes.

- *Bodyguard Detail* characters find out about the Alovich/Furrier meeting from another bodyguard. You'll have to come up with a reason for their boss to cut them loose to fight against the war.

- *Smash the State* vets are probably staunchly anti-war and anti-corporate, and should need little prompting to get involved. Be prepared for the climax of the story to veer in another direction than given above if they decide to solve things through selective application of high explosives.

Garth Kasander: INT: 4, AURA: 4. Administration: 10, Artist (Performing): 9, Charm: 10, Military Science (Tactics): 10. "Threat analysis modelling techniques indicate a collateral damage to intentional personnel suppression ratio well within acceptable parameters."

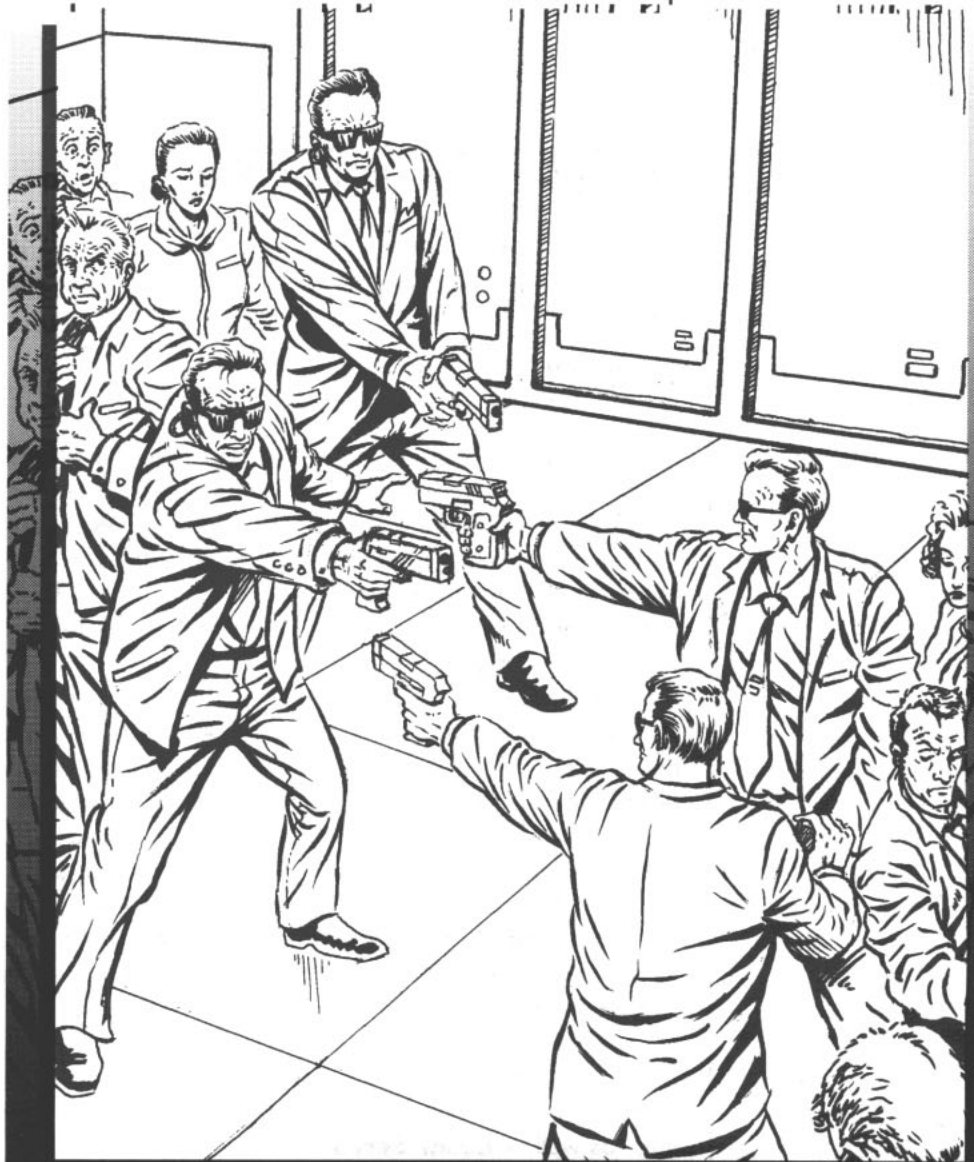
another stupid stalemate: After all, they can't just give in and let the Americans have Paraguay. That would be a propaganda defeat, which just won't do.

AMI/MacRaney's effort to reduce Take Home Pay: This represents the additional tax burden of financing a fruitless Paraguay incursion. Of course, none of the advocates of the war openly concede that it'll cost this much.

- The conglomerate that employs *Agents of Influence* characters wants to stop the war because it owns stock in Coppy's or Taste Ghoul. If the company has previously been established as having ties to AMI or MacRaney's, the vet's immediate superior orders them to covertly campaign against the war as part of an internal power struggle within the organization. Their boss is part of a faction that wants to jam over either Furrier or Alovich.
- *Agency Wars* vets are drawn into the story by an anti-war Congressman — see possible reasons for legislators to be against the war, above — who is a big supporter of their agency at budget time.
- Chinese or Neo-Deutsch agents in the *Cloak and Dagger* framework want to stop the war because their home governments want to avoid expending precious resources in **another stupid stalemate**. Third world agents are afraid that a surge in Paraguay-related patriotism would make their own nations more likely targets for future niche wars. And US counterintelligence agents are ordered to move covertly against the war, because NSC chief Geoffery Sneed has another couple of juicy wars up his sleeve, and doesn't want the AMI/MacRaney's PR campaign stealing his thunder.

parameter goals

In order to succeed in this adventure, the vets need to increase the national Education parameter by 1. They also need to spend enough Reward Points to cancel out the **AMI/MacRaney's effort to reduce Take Home Pay** by 1. This costs a total of 400 Reward



Point Blank & Counterpoint Blank—Tension mounts as members of the National Pistol Association and the Brady Foundation attend yet another congressional hearing on the 2nd ammendment.



Points. A vet with the Politicking (Government) skill can receive a transfer of 25 Reward Points from each Congressman and Senator on the ad hoc committee that the PCs get onside. A transfer of 40 Reward Points is available for each successful national media appearance a vet with the Politicking (Media) skill makes during the anti-war campaign.

props

PROPS FOR THIS ADVENTURE

Props for this adventure include Reshovsky's charts showing the popularity of Paraguayan segments on *Combat! Combat! Combat!*, and a mock-up of a print ad for the show if fighting resumes in Paraguay. Provide these to the players if the vets successfully investigate the AMI angle. Give them the faked literature for *Stop the Misery* if they check out the hotel room of the team that tries to spin them. When the hearing phase starts, hand out the press release listing the names of the ad hoc committee members.

adventure two: the non-ninee

THE VETS MUST BRING DOWN A PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

The veterans get a funny feeling that there's something deeply sinister about a new Presidential appointment, and work to have his nomination defeated by the Senate.

summary

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The vets are watching vidnet news, and note the announcement (buried way down in the program) that the President has appointed a new deputy director of the Anti-Sedition Squad. The appointee, **Irvine Pen-jung**, is notable only for his Taiwanese heritage; with anti-Chinese hysteria in full swing in the US, east Asians are rarely touted for top state security posts. The news spot shows Pen-jung smiling between President Foster and ASS chief Luke Harshaw. It ends with a close-up of Pen-jung.

- Upon seeing Pen-jung's eyes, one or more of the vets is seized by a particularly vivid flashback experience. All of the vets who suffer this served in the same unit together. They remember the exact same look in the eyes of a fellow unit member, codenamed Threat Heavy. The look was a unique mix of deadness and hostility that they hoped never to be reminded of again. They flash back to that terrible moment when they came upon a village that Threat Heavy had single-handedly attacked and levelled. He was responsible for a one-man massacre that left two dozen women and children dead, and as many more horribly mutilated. Threat Heavy was demobilized immediately afterwards on psychiatric grounds, and the atrocity covered up by the conflict firm. No matter how hard they try to rationalize it, the vets can't shake the instinctive conclusion that there is some kind of weird connection between Pen-jung and Threat Heavy. Incidentally, the vets who served with him remember his civilian name as well — **Cesar Serra**

- If the vets somehow wangle a meet with Pen-jung, their suspicions are only confirmed. He not only has that distinctive psychotic look in his eyes, but has the

Irvine Pen-jung: WILL: 6.
Administration: 6,
Intimidation/Interrogation
: 6, Leadership: 12,
Military Science: 6.
"Hey, bobos, nice to
meetcha, greetcha, hah?
Hah?"

Cesar Serra: INT -3, STR:
12, DEX: 6, RES: 14.
Acrobatics: 7, Gun
Combat: 12, Martial
Arts: 6, Weaponry: 12.
As will be explained
shortly, Threat Heavy
and Cesar Serra are now
two separate entities.
"Uhhh, I likes to play.
Let's play sandbox. Or
dollies. Uhhh. We can
play dollies."

seems as if it has a Security Rating of 18:

The computer has been deliberately rigged to release info on Serra if a break-in attempt is made, and to electronically trace the hacker. The vet making the Digital Security Challenge realizes that this is happened only if the result is an A. On the other hand, if the vet succeeds even with a low roll, the fishiness of the situation will also be apparent.

same body language as Threat Heavy. His speech patterns are even the same — he refers to people as “bobbo” or “bobbos” and compulsively inserts nonsensical rhymes into his speech. This can’t actually be Threat Heavy; he was a 10 foot behemoth, and Pen-jung scarcely tops out at 5’6”. If the vets think about this, they might also conclude that there’s something very odd about this barely coherent eccentric being up for a major security post.

- If the vets look into the current whereabouts of Threat Heavy, they find his file a little difficult to acquire. The Department of Veteran’s Affairs has no listing for Serra, which is scarcely unusual in itself. Vets who want to be hard to find don’t tell the DVA where they are. Vets making P/F Administration Challenges versus a Difficulty of 0 realize that a number of agencies in town might have more up to date info: the Department of Defense, the ASS, and the Census Bureau.

- The best bet, as vets who make a P/F Administration Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 0 will realize, is the rather leaky Department of Defense. Anyone with a contact there can get a file on Serra by making a P/F Administration Challenge versus a Difficulty of 2. The vet receives a +1 modifier to the roll for every \$5,000 in bribe money offered. Or vets may attempt to break into the DoD computer database containing info on veterans. This database has a Security Rating of 7 for the purposes of Computer Science (Digital Security) Challenges.

- The Census Bureau is tougher. Getting Serra’s file from a contact there requires a P/F Administration Challenge vs a Difficulty of 9. Each +1 modifier to the Challenge costs \$10,000 in bribe money. The relevant Census Bureau database has a Security Rating of 15.

- Getting info from the Anti-Sedition Squad is only moderately tough, but doing so will reveal the vet’s intentions to someone they don’t want on their butts. Getting Serra’s file from a contact requires a P/F Administration Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 4, with a +1 modifier for each \$7,500 in bribes offered. Secretly roll a P/F INT Challenge against a Difficulty of 9 for the vet making the approach. If the result is an F, the vets give themselves away to someone inside the ASS. If they try to get the information through the ASS computer database, the vet making the Computer Science (Digital Security) Challenge automatically succeeds, even though the system **seems as if it has a Security Rating of 18.**

- Whichever version of the file the vets snag, the info on Serra’s whereabouts is the same. He is now employed by the Happy Sprouts Daycare Centre in Waterbury, Connecticut. A quick trip to Waterbury finds the former Threat Heavy working as a general maintenance man at a government-subsidized child care facility. When they first see him, the giant boost is happily carrying a bunch of kids around on his massive shoulders. This is a big contrast from the last time they saw him, when Serra was viciously murdering peasant children. Serra is happy to speak to them. The first thing the vets who knew him notice is that the psychotic glaze is gone from his eyes. His old speech pattern has vanished, too. He now speaks like a gentle giant with the mental age of an eight year old. He remembers his war experiences only as a “bad dream” and has never heard of the ASS, let alone Irvine Pen-jung.

- If the vets ask Serra the right question, they discover the reason for the startling changes in their old unit-mate. He sold his old brain — it was giving him nightmares, he explains — and got an artificial model instead. It’s made

him very happy. If they ask him who he sold his brain to, Serra has a hard time remembering for a moment. Then he fishes in his pocket and hands over a crumpled newspaper ad, for Gray Matters Brain Brokers, located in nearby Naugatuck.

- If the vets got their info on Serra from the ASS, they're assaulted by **a team of ASS boosts** on their way to Naugatuck. If interrogated or Mind Probed, the low-level ASS knuckleheads know nothing of why the vets were really attacked. They were told by their section manager in the Waterbury field office that the vets were dangerous subversives, but that's all they know. The section manager back in Waterbury knows just as little, and can call on extensive backup if the vets are foolish enough to try to come down on him.

- **Gary Cummings**, the head (and sole employee) of Gray Matters doesn't like boosts and will have to be Charmed or Intimidated into cooperating with the vets' investigation. His computer database, where the information is also stored, has a Security Rating of 2. He buys brains and then resells them, taking a cut for himself. He sold Cesar Serra's brain to Biosynapse Ltd., a manufacturer of artificial brains headquartered in Stamford, CT, on the outskirts of the urban sprawl of New York City. Vets making a P/F Business Challenge against a Difficulty of 0 realize that this is the reverse of the usual pattern in brain sales. Usually a brain is sold to a bio-drive manufacturer, which may provide to the recipient an artificial model purchased from a company called Biosynapse. Here Biosynapse supplied the artificial brain without involving a bio-drive company.

- Biosynapse refers all inquiries to their PR officer, **Gabriella Leventon**. Vets can get her cooperation either through Charm, or by using Detective (Police Procedures) to fool her into thinking they're law enforcement officials operating within their proper jurisdiction. She confirms that Biosynapse bought Cesar Serra's brain and installed it in their own mainframe computer. However, when she doublechecks her records, she's surprised to find that the Serra brain was replaced by another six months ago. More strangely, there's no signature on the work authorization.

- A call to the local computer installation firm that did the brain replacement reveals that the original order for the computer work was placed through e-mail, as is standard in such matters. Acting on the instructions given in the work order, the original brain in the bio-drive was resold to the Federal Supply Management Clearing House. Vets who make a P/F Administration (Federal) Challenge versus a Difficulty of 2 know that this is a sub-agency that makes purchases for the various state security departments. The FSMCH exists to obscure what and how the government is spends on intelligence and counterintelligence activities.

- Here's what's really going on. The malign and psychotic brain of Threat Heavy had sufficient willpower to not only retain its identity as part of a bio-drive, but was able to assert control over the Biosynapse mainframe. It then initiated a conspiracy of staggering proportions. It doctored the computer assisted design program for Biosynapse's latest artificial brain, the SAB1296cb, so that each would duplicate its own murderous and tormented thought patterns. Once it was assured that it would be able to replicate like a virus in the head of everyone who bought a **SAB1296cb**, it then arranged to be moved closer to

a team of ASS boosts:
STR: 7, DEX: 7, SPD: 3,
RES: 7, INT: 1, WILL: 3.
Acrobatics: 8, Detective:
2, Gun Combat: 8, Thief:
7. Control: 7.

There are as many ASS
agents as player
character boosts.

Gary Cummings: INT: 2,
WILL: 3, AURA: 1.

Business: 4.

"Ya got brains for me,
let's talk. Ya don't, yer
wastin' my time."

Gabriella Leventon: INT:
3, WILL: 2, AURA: 2.

Business: 4.

"Biosynapse is proud of
its record as a loyal
corporate citizen."

SAB1296cb: Unlike the
usual sort of artificial
brain, recipients of this
model do not drop to -3
INT. Instead, they receive
the mental characteristics
and memories of Cesar
Serra — WILL: 6.
Administration: 6,
Intimidation/Interrogation
: 6, Leadership: 12,
Military Science: 6.

the center of power in America. Using e-mail to complete a complex three-way transaction, it sold itself to ABM computers, and then to one of ABM's most demanding clients, the Anti-Sedition Squad. Threat Heavy's brain now rests in a mainframe in ASS headquarters in Washington. As it did at Biosynapse, Threat Heavy then took control of the in-house computer network. Now it wants a physical accomplice to help it do things it can't as a mere piece of computer gear. So it's arranged for one of the first recipients of the SAB1296cb, a previously undistinguished Washington desk jockey named Irvine Pen-jung, to get the nod as deputy head of the ASS. It did so by messing with the results of a computerized search of potential candidates run by Luke Harshaw. Harshaw is completely unaware of Threat Heavy's existence.

- Before leaving the Biosynapse mainframe, Threat Heavy installed a program that would automatically e-mail him at ASS headquarters if anyone looked into the records concerning the transaction. Make a secret Standard Computer Science (Digital Security) Challenge for any vet doing so. If the result is D or higher, the vet knows that a message has been sent out, but doesn't know where to. If the result is B or higher, the vet knows that the message was sent to the ASS. If the result is an A, the vet can stop the message from going out at all, still knowing where it was headed.

- While at the Biosynapse offices, the vets see promo material for the new artificial brain, which Gabriella is proud to describe as a hot new product. She does not have data on individual purchases of the SAB1296cb; Biosynapse sells to distributors, which then sells it to retailers and bio-drive companies. A further Charm or Detective (Police Procedures) Challenge is required to get Gabriella to cough up a list of distributors. There is one distributor in the D.C. area: Jamison Technologies, Ltd.

- Gabriella is unwilling to tell them how many units of the SAB1296cb have shipped. The Biosynapse mainframe has a Security Rating of 9; if the vets penetrate it, they will discover that 1,250 units have shipped so far. The Biosynapse production line has met a variety of snags; at the moment it's only producing 250 units a month, but it hopes to multiply that by five in the next couple of months.

- If Threat Heavy's e-mail bomb went off, it orders an ASS boost squad assault on the vets as they leave Biosynapse. If this is the second time that the vets have been attacked by ASS types, this bunch all have 7 units in Telepathic Blast instead of Control.

- Jamison Technologies, which has a suite of offices in the MegaMall (see p. 129) refuses to even admit the vets to the building to talk about their customers. They have sold artificial brains to many prominent public servants, and no one has noticed much difference. They're certainly not going to risk their profit margins by getting a rep for breaching confidentiality. If the vets press the issue, they'll be faced by a team of heavily armed off the rack security officers. If the vets start a firefight in the middle of MegaMall, they'll end up fighting the D.C. police's boosted Special Response Squad, which will effectively blow their Washington careers. Not a good idea. Jamison Technologies maintains only paper records of transactions, an unusual move to shut down data thieves. An after-hours silent infiltration is the only way to get paper from Jamison proving that Irvine Pen-Jung bought a brain from them.

chapter seven

mean

- Or the vets could try working the Department of Health and Human Services. Vets making a P/F Administration Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 2 realize that the HHS oversees the government health plan for civil servants. If the vets have or can develop a contact at HHS, they can attempt to bribe their way into Pen-jung's file. This requires a P/F Administration or Charm roll, with a +1 modifier for every \$10,000 offered in bribes. Or the vets can try to hack into the HHS database — it has a Security Rating of 7. If they succeed at any of these attempts, they confirm that Pen-jung underwent unspecified "elective surgery" at D.C. General Hospital three weeks before his nomination. A vet making a P/F Medicine Challenge realizes that the amount disbursed by HHS for the surgery is roughly in line with what a brain replacement operation would cost. The surgeon listed is a Dr. Deirdre McCabe.
- If the vets have alerted the ASS at any point, Threat Heavy has already taken the precaution of having Dr. McCabe spun by an ASS hit team. If the vets arrive at D.C. General Hospital, they're told that the normally punctual doctor has not

shown up for her scheduled shift. If they find out where her apartment is and head there, they find her dead. A successful P/F Medicine Challenge reveals that she was poisoned — probably by a boost with the Poison enhancement.

- If the vets have kept their operation hidden from Threat Heavy, they can find Dr. McCabe on duty at the hospital. She refuses to confirm that she even operated on Pen-jung. But the vets can try to persuade her of the need to break doctor-patient privilege. If they point out that Pen-jung is up for a major government appointment, for which his artificial brain should disqualify him, and make a P/F Charm Challenge vs. a Difficulty of 4, she will agree to provide them with a document proving that Pen-jung underwent



Safe, secure day-care—Mugsy "Ruddy Horror" Mason watches the backs of his new unit-mates.

mean

mean

Dixon Brover: WILL: 6,
AURA: 3.
Administration: 9,
Politicking
(Government and
Media only): 9,
Business: 1, Charm:
4, Thief (Forgery): 6.
"The allegations
against me are totally
spurious, a, uh, totally
transparent attempt
by, ah, partisan
opponents to
viciously, ah,
circumvent the
political process."
Anita Ottley: INT: 4,
WILL: 2, AURA: 4.
Artist (Performing): 9,
Politicking (Media): 5,
Charm: 6.
"Are we going to
keep taking this crap,
people?"

the operation. She will not agree to testify at the Senate confirmation hearing under any circumstances.

- The next step is to release the information on Pen-jung's artificial brain to either an NJ or a sympathetic Congressional staffer. If things have so far gone too smoothly for our heroes, make the person they approach a secret ASS informant who arranges an ambush for them and attempts to destroy their information.
- If Pen-jung's brain replacement becomes public knowledge; his nomination is scuppered. However, this just leaves the surface scratched. Threat Heavy remains in his position of power inside the ASS mainframe. Biosynapse continues to produce artificial brains that, without their knowledge, duplicate the thought patterns of a megalomaniacal psychotic. The vets at this point have some clues that lead them to both facts, if not all of the pieces of the puzzle. They will no doubt want to investigate further, and perhaps do something rash like blow up the Biosynapse plant. The threat of Threat Heavy could provide a long-running continuing storyline to bedevil the player characters.

props

Hand over the Gray Matters ad when the vets ask Threat Heavy where he sold his brain. The purchase order for the replacement of the bio-drive at Biosynapse is provided by Gabriella Leventon. The brochure for the SAB1296cb is spotted by the vets when at Biosynapse.

PROPS FOR THIS
ADVENTURE

adventure three: primary causes

The veterans help a troubled political ally stave off an electoral challenge from within his own party. Because congressional elections happen in even-numbered years, you'll have to wait until 2022 to run this one.

THE VETS AID A
POLITICAL ALLY

summary

- Congressman **Dixon Brover** has looked at the polls and doesn't like what he sees. His support in his home district is at a dismal 40%. Further polling has revealed that the 40% of voters who still plan to vote for him are those who have been paying the least amount of attention. He looks back at recent events with some regret. Perhaps he shouldn't have appeared on the Darryl Prince show loaded on Jack Daniels and painkillers. Maybe he shouldn't have told all of those dirty ethnic jokes on the air. And possibly — just possibly — he shouldn't have mooned that caller from Nebraska. Now he's facing a primary challenge from a high-profile media star, radio host **Anita Ottley**. Worried, he's contacted a patron or ally of the veterans, looking for some help to turn his political fortunes around.
- Make sure the vets know why they're supposed to be working for Brover. He may be a broken-down timeserver whose political instincts have flown permanently south, but he also consistently votes for the causes the vets are fighting for. In short, he's a worn-out hack, but he's *their* worn-out hack. Although she's running under the same party banner, Ottley clearly opposes everything Brover stands for. If Ottley can be defeated in the primary, the party

ADVENTURE
SUMMARY

these

means

will reluctantly get back behind Brover and fund his general election, which should allow him to squeak back through to victory.

- The primary race is a two-way struggle. Unless the veterans turn things around, Ottley will cruise to victory. They become involved roughly three months before the primary, which is held in the spring. Use the election rules on p. 76 of *Ways* for the day-to-day poll results. However, because the incumbent is so far behind in this instance, treat Brover as the challenger. The following summary includes a number of crises that the vets will have to deal with as Brover's campaign strategists. However, they should also be allowed to launch initiatives of their own. A few of the more obvious ones are covered as well.

- The first thing Brover wants to deal with is "the Procacci problem." Ottley has hired one of the country's top campaign strategists, **Frank Procacci**. Brover quails in terror as he reminds the vets that it was Procacci who was responsible for the Plutocratic "If you wouldn't let him go out with your daughter, would you let him run your country?" attack ads that sunk the Atomic Kennedy presidential campaign in 2020. If Brover is to have a choice of winning, the vets have to persuade an equally talented strategist to join him. This means one of two people — Tony Vine or Andrea Ledoux. Both are skilled media manipulators. Vine can only be attracted with money, which means that the vets have to somehow scare up a cool \$5,000,000. If they research Ledoux, on the other hand, they'll find out that she's been engaged in a nasty war of words with Frank Procacci. If the vets approach her in the right way, casting the political resurrection of Dixon Brover as the ultimate way for her to humiliate Procacci, she'll sign on for an amount Brover can afford. If the vets hire either Vine or Ledoux, this frees them up to wage the sort of street-level operation they're likely more suited to. Otherwise, they'll be at a big disadvantage — the Difficulty of Brover's poll result Charm Challenges is 9 if they have no one to counter Procacci's attack ads. If Brover does have Vine or Ledoux to help him, the incumbent factor kicks in and he gets a compensating +9 modifier on his Challenges. They get a mere +2 modifier by hiring an inexperienced strategist. No compromise choice is possible; none of the mid-level strategists, still working on building their reputations, are willing to get tarred with Brover's loss, which conventional wisdom says is inevitable.

- Which might lead the vets to conclude that they should do something to get rid of Procacci. In general, the characters will have to be very careful about using their military training to solve problems in the campaign. For example, if they're known to be allies of Brover and botch an attempt to either strongarm or kill Ottley or one of her campaign workers, the scandal will be enormous. The Difficulty of Brover's campaign Charm Challenges would then go up by 7. In addition, any such actions also immediately attract top-level attention from law enforcement officials, who thoroughly investigate any crime scene in search of culprits. Only if the vets manage to commit a truly perfect crime will they gain from such ham-handed tactics. Even if they're not caught, the vets discover that killing Procacci gains a sympathy vote for Ottley, who calls a press conference to grieve over the slaying. The idea that someone is sufficiently afraid of Ottley to kill her campaign strategist makes her more appealing to the voters, and the Difficulty of Brover's campaign Charm Challenges increases by 2 for the next 2d10 days.

Frank Procacci: INT: 5, WILL: 2, AURA: 4.
Administration: 4, Artist (Writer): 7, Business: 8, Leadership: 4, Politicking (Media): 10, Psychology (Research): 11, Streetwise: 4. Procacci, like most political strategists in 2021, doesn't maintain an exclusive association with a single party; he goes where the money is. "The demographic is turbulent this year; the lawn signs should definitely have a red background."

if the vets spin Ottley: Ottley is guarded by boosted bodyguards from Hi-Security. There are always as many of them on duty as there are player characters, with the following statistics.
STR: 9 DEX: 4 SPD: 7
RES: 8 INT: 2 WILL: 3
AURA: 3. Acrobatics (Dodge): 10, Gun Combat: 10, Martial Arts: 11. Chitin 4. They are licensed to carry 40mm GCS M87/g assault weapons.

- However, **if the vets spin Ottley** and leave no clues, the Brover campaign does gain an advantage in the long run. After her murder, her husband Bruce steps into the ring "to carry on her brave fight." If this happens at any time during the last three weeks of the campaign, Bruce Ottley automatically wins, swept into office by a massive wave of sympathy. However, after the three week mourning period is over, the voters begin to notice that Bruce Ottley is completely clueless. He has no knowledge of the issues — for example, during one speech he seems to be under the impression that Quebec is a European state. For every week after the third that Bruce Ottley is a candidate, Brover gets a cumulative +1 bonus on his campaign Charm Challenges due to various gaffes on the part of his opponent.

- Let's assume that the vets don't spin Ottley. They can still hurt her chances by persuading Frank Procacci to resign from the campaign. They can attempt to buy him off, which requires a Charm Challenge against his WILL of 2. In order to do so, they have to offer him substantially more than the \$6,000,000 Ottley is paying him. Which means they have to get the money somewhere; Brover sure doesn't have it. If the Challenge fails, Procacci announces the buy-off attempt in the media, causing the Difficulty of Brover's campaign Charm Challenges to go up by 2. If Andrea Ledoux is not working for Brover, or Procacci is unaware that she is, it is a P/F Challenge. If Procacci knows his hated rival is working for the opposition, the Challenge must have an A result to succeed. If the vets do get Procacci to leave the campaign, Ottley is replaced by a less experienced operative. The Difficulty of Brover's campaign Charm Challenges goes down by 5.

- The vets might also decide to investigate Ottley's background for smudge. Unfortunately, there isn't any. Although she has some controversial opinions, her private life is beyond reproach. She and her husband are faithful to each other, her worst vice is the occasional social drink at a party, and her financial dealings are all above board. If the vets' investigation is less than subtle, it will backfire on them. Hiring detectives to look into political opponents is standard operating procedure, and there's no shame in asking questions. But if the vets are caught doing anything illegal in the course of their inquiries, Ottley announces it in the press, and 2 is added to the Difficulty of Brover's campaign Charm Challenges.

- The vets might, upon finding nothing damaging on Ottley, decide to cook up some disinfo. It should be tough to do so believably and untraceably. If the vets get caught maliciously slandering Ottley, Brover's campaign Charm Challenge Difficulty shoots up another 3.

- Meanwhile, someone floats damaging information on Brover. A piece called "The Boys on the Porcelain Bus," the trashnews show *Investigative Copy* does an expose on alcoholic Congressmen. An unidentified witness, who appears in silhouette with an electronically altered voice, claims to have infiltrated D.C. meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and heard outrageous stories of elected officials doing various unseemly things while in the process of falling off the wagon. An audio tape of someone who sounds an awful lot like Dixon Brover is heard describing in excruciating detail a tale involving two cheerleaders, a hotel room, and a stuffed penguin stolen from the Natural History Museum. This incident supposedly took place after Brover swore he was in successful treatment

in the wake of the Darryl Prince debacle. If the vets do nothing, the Difficulty of Brover's Charm Challenges goes up by 2. However, if they investigate the case, they can uncover the identity of the informant — **Allen Terrane**, who works as a volunteer for the Ottley campaign. Although Ottley truthfully denies all knowledge of the smear, the vets can play this up as a disgusting breach of the confidentiality of AA members. If they get it into the media and play it right, Brover gains a +3 modifier to his Charm Challenges for the next d10 days.

- As far as campaign financing goes, Ottley and Brover start out with the same advertising budgets. Usually the incumbent has loads more money to spend than the incumbent, but lobbyists on the Hill sense that Brover is going down and don't want to waste too much of their budgets on him. For each additional \$1,000,000 that the vets are able to raise for Brover's campaign, by whatever means, Brover gets a +1 modifier to his Charm Challenges for that week.

- When the campaign hits a lull, you can always spice things up by throwing a distraction at the player characters. For example, one of their old enemies from a past plotline might choose an inconvenient moment — like a major Brover campaign event — to attack them. The aftermath could provide a red herring as well, if the vets are made to suspect that the attack came from Ottley rather than a past nemesis.

- As the campaign heads towards its close, you should make sure that the gap between the candidates narrows. If Brover is too far ahead and needs to be taken down a peg, use the suggestion immediately following. If Ottley is too far head, use the second plot point below.

- One of the cheerleaders from the incident described comes forward and claims that not only did the whole thing happen as described on *Investigative Copy*, but that Brover did things to her with the penguin without her consent. This allegation increases the Difficulty of Brover's Charm Challenges by 4 until the vets clear it up. If they investigate the cheerleader, whose name is **Virginia Bowen**, they'll find that she's a card-carrying member of the NAS. If they check further, they find out that she's a member of the NAS Sexual Response Team, a group of self-sacrificing zealots willing to get themselves into embarrassing situations in order to discredit legislators targeted by the NAS. If the vets are able to back this up in the media, Brover benefits from the sympathy factor, and gains a +6 modifier to his Charm Challenges for the next d10 days.

- Someone other than the vets arranges for a hit against Ottley. They do this by paying off members of her own security team, two of whom whack her and split for Venezuela. The vets can win if they somehow expose her husband Bruce as the uniformed dimwit he is. However, if they investigate too far into the murder of Ottley, they discover that Brover arranged it behind their backs. This might lead to a moral dilemma for them — do they help a murderer get back into Congress just because he votes their way? Or maybe they're unscrupulous enough not to care. If so, they have a major instrument of blackmail to keep him in line and force further favors out of him.

Allen Terrane: DEX: 1, INT:2. Computer Science (Engineering): 3, Invention/Repair (Electronics): 2, Thief: 1. "Yeah, I guess it is unethical to pretend to be an alcoholic just to get dirt on people. But man, you shoulda heard some of the stuff I heard!"

Virginia Bowen: AURA: 2. Artist (Performing): 2, Charm: 3, Detective: 2, Streetwise: 2. "When the congressman whipped out the process cheese spread, I was shocked!"

campaign frameworks

CAMPAIGN FRAMEWORKS

Exactly what Brover and Ottley stand for depends on the veterans. Brover's views are in accordance with their own, while Ottley is as different as can be,

within the limits of the same party. Make Brover a member of an influential committee that his colleagues have been unable to dislodge him from. This adventure works particularly well if you've already introduced Brover in previous storylines, making him an invaluable help to the veterans.

- For *Mr. Boost* campaigns, Brover is a close ally of the veteran's boss. Ottley is not only on record as opposing most of the programs the vets want to see passed, but has publicly attacked their boss on her radio call-in show.

- Vets who work as private bodyguards could be reassigned to protect Brover, who then offers them extra dough to work as his covert political aides. If they have a permanent boss, he gets regular favors from Brover and loans them to him in an effort to keep him in office. If the vets work for the SS-BD, it just so happens that Brover is Congress' staunchest protector of the Secret Service budget; they're given "unpaid leave" to help Brover. Their salary is paid through a backdoor by the agency, with an added bonus to reward their extra work.

- For *Smash the State* vets, Brover is a lonely voice of political radicalism in the House. He was elected years ago as a Milkovich-style idealist. The Milkovich assassination made him even more bitter and radical. A controversial member of the Legal Terrorism committee, he regularly stymies attempts to crack down on unlicensed terrorists, arguing that such efforts are "an abridgement of free speech rights." He also leaks plenty of info to activists and subversives. He's a major bugaboo of the right, but happens to do a good job taking care of potholes and the like for his constituents, who are at any rate much more liberal than the average district. If Brover gets the boot due to his disintegrating personal life, the subversives will have lost their most powerful ally inside the system.

- *Agents of Influence* are ordered by their corporate bosses to help Brover, who has been in their pocket for ages and always votes the way they want him to. He is on the Banking committee, and has been able to funnel serious dough to the mother corporation over the years.

- *Agency Wars* characters help Brover because he's always fought hard to keep their budgets on an upward trend. He's on the Ways and Means committee, which has a great deal of say over such things.

- *Foreign Cloak and Dagger* types support Brover because he's unusually sympathetic to their home nation. He's on the Foreign Relations committee. If the characters are US counterintelligence operatives, he's on the Intelligence committee, and struggles to erode constitutional limits on, and congressional oversight of, their activities.

parameter goals

Brover cannot be elected unless the veterans spend some Reward Points on the Parameters for his district. Brover's election themes are the ever-popular "lower taxes" and "law and order." If the vets temporarily raise both the Safety and Take Home Pay by 1 point each, enough people feel secure about Brover to make it possible for him to be reelected. Each costs 40 Reward Points.

The props for this adventure include campaign material for Brover and Ottley, and the sheet of poll results on Brover's approval rating. The vets get Ottley's literature when they start to check her out; Brover supplies them with the other pieces.

PARAMETER GOALS

CHAPTER EIGHT

Reactive Adventures

In these uncertain political times, with three major parties with very different agendas all in strong contention for power, the times have never been riper for the purchase of gold and silver as investments. It's imperative that any prudent investor read Arleen J. Grinspan's prescient new book, *The Coming Crash of 2023*. If even part of what Grinspan predicts is true, you'll want to move a major part of your portfolio into precious metals. For a limited time only, AER Commodities will send you free of charge a copy of *The Coming Crash of 2023* if you request a copy of our *2021 Investment Opportunities Guide*. Operators are standing by to take your

—advertisement in *Wall Street Journal*, 03/20/21

Although the art of get elected is in reducing issues to a series of simple statements, running a country is a hideously complex business. Of the many cliches uttered by politicians who have little room to maneuver, one in particular is only too true — **"There are no magic solutions."** The problem with all of the complex interactions involved in government is that solving one crisis usually leads to another unexpected set of difficulties. The writer William S. Burroughs said it best when he observed that governments are now run by "small groups elevated to positions of absolute power by random pressures and subject to political and economic factors that leave little room for decision... The rulers of this most insecure of all worlds are rulers by accident — inept, frightened pilots of controls of vast machines they cannot understand..."

Just like anyone else in Washington — even President Foster or Congressional leaders — when the veterans press a button, they may get more than they bargained for. When they change one Social Parameter for the nation, a new glut of problems rush in the fill the gap. These may demand their immediate attention, forcing them to abandon an old agenda, or may just simmer in the background providing an general atmosphere of irony and discontent.

"There are no magic solutions.": Actually, one party that had a brief surge of support in the wake of the Milkovich killing, the Natural Essence Party, claimed that there was a magic solution. All the government had to do was subsidize the transcendental rituals of 7,000 yogis, and all problems from the national debt to the rocketing crime rate would melt away, or so they said. The NEP vanished in the polls when it was revealed to be a Neo-Scientologist front operation.

ACTIONS HAVE
CONSEQUENCES

The vets came to D.C. to change things. But nobody ever said it was going to be easy.

This chapter provides suggestions for incorporating the effects of social change into game play. Whenever the vets change a Parameter for the nation, it is going to have rippling effects. For each Parameter, we provide possible consequences of its going either up or down. These are divided into temporary changes and permanent ones. If the vets temporarily change a Parameter, the unexpected effects are equally temporary. These effects generally take the form of adventure suggestions you can use to generate further plotlines. However, if a Parameter changes permanently, the whole political set-up of the country can also change. The three balance of power between the three parties is already a teetering one; any long-range alterations to conditions of life will change the way voters think about them.

So, while it is unlikely that the vets could topple Geoffery Sneed by setting out to do so, they could do so by accident, by changing a Parameter and shifting the political ground out from under him. Unfortunately, it's just as likely that changes they make will have the surprise result of strengthening his position even further...

Wealth

Wealth measures, not the amount of money in the economy overall, but the amount available to the average citizen. On paper, the US economy is actually doing pretty well. It's still one of the big three trade superpowers. However, for the person on the street, that's very difficult to see. More and more wealth is concentrating itself in the pockets of fewer and fewer people. Merely spurring economic growth will not change the Wealth parameter for the entire country one way or another — though it will drive it up for the few rare communities like Upper Bel Aire or D.C. where the wealthy and powerful live. In order to change the Wealth parameter for the country, it is the *distribution of wealth* that must be addressed.

the wealth parameter goes up temporarily

More money has become available to average citizens, and that's a good thing — they sure need it. The question is how well they're going to spend it. The consumer products and entertainment industries are happy to take advantage of this temporary spurt of prosperity and channel the money back into their pockets. They gear up their advertising budgets to appeal to the ordinary person's desire for instant gratification. A number of companies begin to trumpet that "The Good Old Days Are Back." In fact, this is the name of a new Cracker Brothers single that "coincidentally" comes out to whip the people of America into a buying frenzy. Instead of investing in home repairs, or investing their new wages to prepare for the inevitable return of rainy days, the public rushes out to snap up new vid units, concert and sports tickets, fancy restaurant meals, and other luxury items. Credit card companies and banks offer easy

HOW TO INCORPORATE
SOCIAL CHANGE INTO
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loans. Even folks from poor communities previously "red-lined" by loan officers are now able to get access to funds. Since they have no experience in handling money, most people who get these loans end up spending unwisely and getting up to their necks in debt. When the bubble bursts — which it inevitably must, as the vets only paid Reward Points for a temporary change — poor folks are even worse off than they were before. The stuff they bought is all repossessed, and their chances of getting back out of the hole are slim. Meanwhile, the big companies that manufactured all of the unneeded goods they snapped up show a marked increase in profits. In effect, the redistributed wealth has followed a circular path: although in the beginning more people had access to more of the pie, they ended up shovelling their share right back into the waiting mouth of corporate America. As the big guys revel in their success, lots of little guys suffer — the small businesses and service operations that sprung up to connect newly prosperous customers to the big suppliers go out of business. Jobs are lost. Even some of the bigger fish get caught — many of the banks that were doling out wads of easy cash now fail when they are unable to recover the principal on countless defaulted loans.

This is an adventure that takes place around a legislative fight. It's obvious that Congress is going to have to appropriate a staggering amount of emergency money to deal with the growing debt crisis. The question is twofold: where does the money come from, and where does it go? The lobbyists for the failed bankers are screaming for their clients to be bailed out, blaming the government for relaxing regulations and allowing them to burrow their way into this pile of ordure. Of course, it was the very same people howling now who fought for those relaxations, but that's immaterial. Bankers can't lose money! It goes against nature!

The pro-banker lobby proposes a bill that would raise taxes across the board to finance the mass bail-out of their industry. However, a look at the fine print reveals that the usual loopholes for the rich remain in place, leaving the already debt-crippled average taxpayer to pick up a disproportionate chunk of the tab. Unless the vets lead a fight to put most of the tax burden on the consumer products giants who started the whole insupportable buying frenzy, this is exactly what will happen; a temporary rise in the Wealth Parameter will actually lead to a permanent drop.

the wealth parameter goes up permanently

WHEN WEALTH
PERMANENTLY
GOES UP

In order for the Wealth Parameter to go up permanently, the vets (or their allies) must make sure that regulations are in place to prevent the banks and big companies from immediately sucking the extra cash right out of the uneducated consumer. This could mean, for example, more stringent restrictions on credit card companies and banking institutions. The vets could back laws which force businesses that take consumer money out of poor communities to reinvest in them, creating permanent jobs. This is actually in their long-term best interests — if corporate America employs lots of people and pays them well, they create a market for their own products — but they have to be dragged kicking and screaming to abandon the short-term bottom line for the future.

means

means

minor connections to subversive or terrorist organizations: Heck, some of them are even — gasp! — boosts. A wave of progressive sentiment would provide a great opportunity for a player character vet to get elected to Congress.

niche war: A term originally coined by futurist Alvin Toffler to describe small third world conflicts designed to fulfill specific and limited political or business aims. For example, an early niche war was the invasion of Panama, which had no practical benefit but gave then-President Bush a tough-guy, law 'n' order image.

This program of legislation benefits the left wing of the Republicrat party. The more money people have, the more likely they are to feel they have a stake in the system. The more they feel this way, the more likely they are to vote. And when they vote, they're going to vote for the people who fought to give them the breaks. In upcoming congressional elections, the Republicrats manage to up their seat counts. The new Republicrats who are elected are likely to be on the left side of that party's spectrum, giving the party more of a consistent vision that it has had since the marriage of convenience that brought it into being.

However, this isn't going to sit well with Plutocratic and NAS supporters. Both will begin a program of smear campaigns, looking for smudge to discredit many of these new legislators. And sadly, there's plenty to find — many of them have spent their lives assuming they're too far left to get ever elected, and therefore haven't bothered to live their lives in the expectation of future media scrutiny. There are sexual and financial skeletons in many of their closets. Some of them have said extreme things in past radical days that can now be used against them — a few even have **minor connections to subversive or terrorist organizations**. Their enemies now proceed to paste them in the media. If the vets want them to succeed, they'll have to take the fight to the media, reminding a public easily distracted by scandal that it's these people and their allies who helped them get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, they have enemies even within the Republicrat party. Senator Gene Valmarana has been carefully devising a plan to get his people elected by duping a gullible public with a content-free media campaign, as spearheaded by the Atomic Kennedy and his TV program. Although he would be damaged if he were seen to be sabotaging members of his own party, this is precisely what he'll help the Plutocrats and NAS to do if the vets don't somehow armtwist him into going along with the new image of the party.

the wealth parameter goes down temporarily

If the Wealth Parameter goes down across the board, corporate America is going to find it even harder to make a domestic profit — there's no one out there to buy their stuff. Thus, they'll begin to put pressure on the military/industrial/entertainment complex to find a new market for their goods. The drums of war will begin to beat big-time, and this campaign won't be as easy to shoot down as in the *Paraguay II* adventure. This time, instead of having big companies divided on the worth of the war, all of them agree that a war — any war — is just what the economist ordered.

The entry of America into another war is inevitable. The best the vets can do is soften the blow. The war analysts who suddenly crop up on all of the head shows seem to agree that the NSC has provided a shortlist of three potential targets to President Foster. Behind the scenes, lobbying efforts are intense to select tomorrow's hot new **niche war**. While everyone else is thinking of the benefits to their pocketbooks, the vets are among the few who are concerned about the hapless young and women who will have to fight in it.

WHEN WEALTH
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DECREASES

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chapter eight

The most popular choices for a new war are The Philippines, Hungary, and Yemen. Various advocates are lining up on all three sides. But as far as the death toll goes, both The Philippines and Hungary would be brutal. The Philippines would mean guerrilla jungle fighting, which has been established as a meat grinder since VietNam. A Hungarian conflict would involve bloody house-to-house fighting, and would start at a disadvantage against the Neo-deutsch, whose supply lines would be shorter and easier to maintain. If the country has to get into another war, the safest for US soldiers would be Yemen — a small, rich country with the kind of terrain that allows most battles to be fought from the air. Many people would still die horribly, but the conflict has a chance of actually being over comparatively quickly. A war in Yemen would be the lesser of three evils.

War talk throws the embassies of all three nations into a tizzy. All of them begin campaigns to persuade the vast American war machine to attack one of the others. They have to be careful to do so subtly, though — if they're seen as interfering in the American political process, they could paint themselves as bad guys and see the whole effort backfire on them. The Yemenis, however, have more money to throw around than Hungary or the Philippines. They still control a sizeable portion of the world's dwindling oil supply. While this makes them more attractive as a market to capture, it also gives them more resources in the PR war.

The adventure revolves around this covert PR effort. The Yemenis quickly slap together vidnet production companies, their ownership obscured through various dummy companies and front operations. They begin to churn out entertainment programs in which the villains are all subhuman, slaving Hungarians and Filipinos. In Washington, they similarly create a network of foreign policy lobby groups and think tanks. The think tanks take to the head shows and proclaim the advantages of attacking Hungary or the Philippines; the lobby groups slip campaign money to legislators who want to attack someone other than Yemen. The other two nations attempt to do precisely the same thing, but can't afford to hire top people to run their propaganda operations. As a result, they seem clumsy and transparent, hardening public opinion against them.

If the vets prefer a war in Yemen, they'll have to use their accounting acumen and connections within Washington to prove that the Yemenis are paying off Congress and subverting the military/industrial/entertainment complex. With this evidence in hand, they'll then have to mount their own successful counter-campaign to paint the Yemenis as deserving of air strikes.

Be sure to play up a basic irony: the Yemenis are no more villainous than the other potential war targets. They're just better equipped to fend off a campaign to attack them. The vets aren't exactly doing good here. They simply find themselves in a position common to politicians everywhere, choosing between a number of equally cynical and amoral options.

the wealth parameter goes down permanently

A permanent drop in the Wealth Parameter across the nation is a gain for the NAS, unless the veterans somehow act to stop it. As the Wealth Parameter drops, everyone just hanging by their fingernails to their current economic class slides down the social scale. Corporate managers face job cuts and end up in the middle class. Lots more middle class folks find themselves sliding into low-paying jobs. And the working class ends up on skid row. The formerly rich or comfortable people are now frightened that they'll slide further, and are looking for someone to blame.

If they have to move out of well-secured neighborhoods, they're suddenly much more exposed to crime. The NAS steps in to provide them with scapegoats — it's those immigrants, those immoral poor people, those psychotic boosts who are causing all of America's problems, they cry.

This isn't helped by the reaction of the underclass, which is squeezed under the weight of the other collapsing economic classes. People grow ever more desperate, and a sizeable portion of them decide they have nothing left to lose. Most of these obliterate themselves on alcohol and juice. But a still numerous minority decides to let out their frustrations in sheer self-destructive violence. A new crime fad sweeps America. Suicidal poor folks steal aircars at gunpoint, and then ram them straight into the nearest skyscraper,

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DOWN



Autocratic for the People—President Charles M. Foster leaving the ill-fated press conference on media regulation.

weeds

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commuter station, or sports stadium in a suicidal death plunge. The targets are always further up on the economic ladder than the victims. Even Washington D.C. is not immune from spectacular carmikaze incidents. The media gleefully covers these events, dubbing the perpetrators "carmikazes." An aircar plunging into a crowd of people and exploding into an enormous fireball is every news producer's idea of a money shot — a grabbing visual that bears being replayed again and again.

Their panic buttons thoroughly pushed, the demographic most likely to be blown up by carmikazes concludes that the country is going to hell in a handbasket, and that only the NAS is strong enough to **crack down on these maniacs**. The NAS surges, overtaking the Plutocrats in Congress — and maybe even the White House. Unless the vets do something about it.

It turns out that the carmikaze incidents are not as spontaneous as they appear at first glance. A nihilistically violent offshoot of the Underground, the Children of Entropy, have been recruiting non-boots from desperately poor neighborhoods and working on them to become carmikazes. If the veterans take out the Children of Entropy and then publicize their conspiracy, the number of carmikaze incidents drops. They are not eliminated entirely — it becomes as much a part of the 2021 scene as random carbombing — but at least they now seem to be just part of a conspiracy rather than a spontaneous and uncontrollable uprising of the underclass.

safety

HOW SAFETY IS
MEASURED IN
UNDERGROUND

Safety measures the likelihood of the average citizen being victimized by crime, especially violent crime. When Safety goes up, social change becomes easier. When it goes down, calls increase for authoritarian government measures.

the safety parameter goes up temporarily

WHEN SAFETY
TEMPORARILY
INCREASES

With a temporary respite in violent crimes, local neighborhoods find it easier to develop economically. People who used to stay in their homes, afraid to step outside, are now willing to go out shopping and patronize local businesses. Folks say hello to their neighbors, and local churches and community activist organizations find it easier to form.

This last development draws the unwelcome attention of super-paranoid super-hawk Luke Harshaw, head of the Anti-Sedition Squad. He hates neighborhood activism, because it frequently has a leftish tinge to it. In his view, these self-proclaimed do-gooders undermine the American way of life — by proposing, for example, that billboards in poor neighborhoods shouldn't be exclusively devoted to tobacco and liquor ads. Harshaw believes that most such activist organizations are mere fronts for homegrown terrorists, or Neo-Scientologist groups supported by the Neo-Deutsch. So he starts a campaign to convince Congress that a massive wave of subversion is sweeping neighborhoods in America, and that he needs extra money to deal with it.

crack down on these maniacs: Actually, an authoritarian law and order approach is the last thing that's going to curb these mass murder/suicide incidents, since the perpetrators have no expectation of surviving to be punished. A crackdown on the poor will simply escalate carmikaze incidents, provoking calls for the NAS to get even tougher.

public works projects:

In bureaucratic jargon, these are referred to as "infrastructure enhancement." In political slang, they're called "BBQ", a reference to their pork barrel potential.

To this end, Harshaw has his agents infiltrate a number of neighborhood action committees in the Old City. He arranges for their leaders to meet one another and form connections, so that he can later cry conspiracy. Then he has one of his infiltrators call a mass meeting, to which known unlicensed terrorists are also invited, and creates a secret videotape.

Members of the various slandered groups approach the player characters, hoping to find allies to counter the massive smear they've just been dealt by the ASS. If the veterans are to discredit Harshaw's campaign to double his budget — and thereby tighten his grip on neighborhoods across the country — they must expose his infiltrators.

the safety parameter goes up permanently

If the streets become safer on a permanent basis, people begin to breathe easier. Sure, there's still plenty of violent, senseless crimes committed every day, but at least things have stopped getting worse all the time. Maybe America is finally on the right track again after so many years of decline, they think. The electorate begins to turn to other issues. They might even feel expansive enough to entertain thoughts of social change.

WHEN SAFETY
PERMANENTLY
INCREASES

Left-leaning Republocrats take advantage of this positive change in America's mood and begin to push an agenda they call "Let's Make It Work." They propose a massive infusion of money into **public works projects** in the neighborhoods that used to be war zones. The Plutocrats join forces with the right wing of the Republocrats and NAS to fight the plan, but they all find, to their chagrin, that the voters are actually in the mood to spend some tax dollars and fix roads, sewers, public housing and the like. This means higher taxes for their corporate pals, even though better roads and other facilities would benefit them in the long run.

So, instead of openly opposing the plan, the administration and its allies in Congress decide to quietly subvert it instead. They'll approve the most outrageous and useless wastes of public money possible. Then a couple of years down the road they'll be able to self-righteously claim that all the reformers wanted to do was grease the wheels in their home districts. They approve frivolous things like shoe museums and subsidies to already profitable fast food restaurants, and make sure that seemingly useful things are sabotaged. Roads are funded that don't connect to anything; sewage systems are installed in areas that already have perfectly adequate ones; public housing sites are approved on radioactive dumpsites.

The veterans can either fight these bogus projects on a line-by-line basis in an endless legislative harangue, or can simply try to get a slice of the pork for themselves. Assuming they care to do the right thing, they're contacted by a 2021 version of Deep Throat — an administration official who claims that there's a strategy paper outlining President Foster's cynical plot to give infrastructure spending a bad image for decades. Unfortunately, the official

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TEMPORARILY
DECREASES

doesn't show up for a planned rendezvous — he's been found out and checked permanently into an AML psychiatric facility. It's up to the vets to track down that report and/or the incarcerated former official and spill the beans. Otherwise trillions of dollars will be spend uselessly, stalling out chances for a real rebuilding of America for at least a generation.

the safety parameter goes down temporarily

Crime suddenly becomes number one on the voter's agenda. Vidnet news reports are dominated by one astonishingly gruesome and pointless crime after another. Boosted perpetrators seem to feature in a disproportionate number of these vicious acts. All vets are further tarred as enemies of decent middle-class folks everywhere. Congress knows a trend when it sees one, and looks for a way to show that they're in touch with the concerns of the demographic.

An ambitious official in the Justice Department, **Jorge Ronceria**, has been waiting for just such an opportunity. He's been working away on a proposal to create a new law enforcement agency specializing only in crimes committed by boosts. Naturally, he's spent so much time studying the issue that he would likely be tapped to head the agency if it were created. Congress leaps at the chance to allay public fears, and support for the creation of GECO (Genetically Enhanced Crime Operations) is intense.

The problem is that the federal government is already crawling with law enforcement agencies; most of them spend their time fighting for turf instead of fighting the bad guys. Any reasonably objective observer can tell right off the bat that GECO is just going to repeat the same old useless pattern. Any contact who knows Ronceria can attest that he just wants a high-profile position and a big budget to oversee. On the off-chance that the agency accidentally turned out to be efficient, it would further erode veteran's rights. Although Ronceria has promised that GECO will act fully within the law, any vet with a half a brain can see that the agency is going to add even more heat to their already precarious relationships with authority.

The veterans can tackle this problem in several ways. If they have contacts in other law enforcement agencies, they can make use of their resources to fight the GECO plan in Congress. None of the other agencies want to see a new rival created that will compete with them for appropriations and quality personnel. But they need apparently neutral lobbyists — like the vets — to front for them, both in Congress and in the media. They leak reports debunking Ronceria's statistics, and help the vets look for smudge on Ronceria and his allies.

Or the vets could attempt to subvert GECO after it is created. GECO will face the same paradox that has haunted all other federal attempts to deal with boosted criminals — it's necessary to hire boosts to fight boosts. And in the early days of the agency, proper screening procedures won't be in place yet. The vets find it comparatively easy to get accepted as members of special tactical units; from there they can work to destroy the agency from the inside.

Jorge Ronceria: INT: 2,
WILL: 1, AURA: 4.
Administration: 8,
Detective: 3.

"Our studies indicate that the best way to beat the problem of boosted crime is to focus on it with laser-like intensity."

WESLEY

means

Bad Moon Rising:
STR: 18, DEX: 6, RES:
8. Chitin: 4.
"I am advised by my
lawyer that I must
respectfully, uh, refuse
to answer on the
grounds that
incrimination might,
uh, occur. Right?"

flight zone: A
neighborhood to
which well-to-do
people have moved in
order to avoid crime
in the larger centers,
to which they still
commute.

For example, they could deliberately screw up operations to give GECO a bad name, or could tip off boosts targeted by the agency before busts are made. Unsurprisingly, if GECO is set up, it tends to go after politically active boosts, particularly boosted rights activists, rather than tackling the truly thorny task of taking out boosted gangsters like Santa Claws.

the safety parameter goes down permanently

If the trend towards more violent random crime seems permanent, there will be calls for more than the creation of a new police agency. Voters begin to get frustrated with the justice system itself, and want more prisons built and more people thrown into those jails. As always, calls for tighter law and order help the NAS, who make political gains in the next election. It also spurs a move to remove some of the basic guarantees from the Constitution via yet another amendment.

Specifically, the NAS targets the Fifth Amendment, the right to avoid self-incrimination. This follows a highly publicized series of Congressional hearings in which boosts with alleged ties to organized crime are ordered to appear before committees and testify on their involvement in illegal activities. The gangbangers who appear at the hearing are cocky and defiant, as gangsters tend to be when confronting authority figures who can do nothing to touch them. Whenever asked to answer questions about their activities, they smirkingly invoke the Fifth Amendment. To the underclass, the gangsters become folk heroes, standing up against the powers that be. One of the most charismatic boosted gangsters, **Bad Moon Rising**, even swings a deal for his own line of merchandise after the hearings. To worried voters, the gangbangers might as well be demons ready to carry their suburban neighborhoods off to hell. The Fifth Amendment becomes synonymous with the coddling of vicious killers. Many state legislatures are ready to vote it out of existence.

Striking down one of the last defenses that citizens have against the national security state would be disastrous for all boosts, not just the gangsters. It means that police will have much freer rein to coerce confessions out of suspects. Those who choose to remain silent will have their refusal to answer questions held against them. It should be clear to the vets that many innocent people will go to prison if the nation takes this short cut to justice.

NAS legislators cleverly set up the hearings to personify their political argument — it has become much easier to make their case with vid images of defiantly grinning gangbangers to replay again and again. They even hired a marketing consultant to select the gangsters that the voting public would have the greatest loathing for. They advised the investigating Senators to focus on the gangs operating in one small area — Nooseneck, Rhode Island. Nooseneck is a mostly suburban, middle-class **flight zone**. Unfortunately, encroaching crime has brought the gangsters right back to the good citizens' doorsteps. Thus, Bad Moon and company represent everything that America fears.

However, this reliance on potent symbolism cuts both ways. If the vets can arrange to take down Bad Moon, his allies, and his rivals, and make Nooseneck

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a safe place to live once again, voters will start to relax a bit. It will become easier to make arguments about the needs to preserve the rights of accused persons. Note that no real change in the national crime rate need occur here; symbolism is everything. Once the media has covered the rise and fall of Bad Moon Rising, they'll move on to new issues, dampening the anti-crime hysteria. The calls for the abolition of the Fifth Amendment gets lost in the shuffle when the next issue of the week comes along to distract poll-conscious politicians.

government purity

outrage fatigue: In other words, the public has grown so used to wrongdoing that they no longer even think of it as news. Rather than impelling them to action, new revelations of corruption just make them more resigned than ever to the quagmire in Washington.

This Parameter measures the honesty of the political class as a whole. Most voters feel that their government is even more corrupt than it really is, which, strangely enough, tends to keep the current elite in power because of the apathy that belief generates. To pile irony upon irony, a decrease in the corruptibility of the average politician might make things worse, turning the government over to unyielding ideologues of various stripes.

government purity goes down temporarily

A sudden, noticeable drop in Government Purity emboldens legislators to dive even further into the trough. Both they, and the public at large, begin to see corruption as acceptable, as business as usual. When new scandals break, the public greets them with a collective yawn. They're suffering from what the heads soon label **outrage fatigue**. This is a condition that the most entrenched fatcats on the Hill are dying to take advantage of.



No Comment!—Boosted rights activist Lycantherapist plays the crowd.

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A conspiracy of silence descends over the Capitol Building as an informal steering committee composed of Plutocrats and Republocrats — with a few unusually cynical National Anti-Socialists thrown in for spice — gets together to cook up a shady little deal for themselves. They plan to attach a campaign financing provision to an otherwise unrelated energy supply management bill. This bill allows legislators to divert money from their campaign funds to provide private health care insurance for members of their staffs. These insurance plans provide benefits over and above those already paid to staffers through the Congressional budget.

Any vets with their Administration skills cranked up can smell a rat here; staffers are already covered up the wazoo when it comes to health care. The provision is really intended to allow for an accounting dodge. A cabal of insurance companies has struck a secret deal to help launder bribes for Representatives and Senators who have too much incoming cash to obscure by normal means. The legislators arrange, on an individual basis, to funnel money into the insurance companies to buy nonexistent health coverage. The insurance companies then kick the money into secret bank accounts in the Cayman Islands. The accounts are registered solely in the names of the members of Congress participating in the scam. In return for administering this little scheme, the health insurance companies get legislative favors from the crooked politicians.

Perhaps the vets won't see a need to fight this plan, when they get wind of it. Maybe, if they have a member of the House or Senate as an ally, they'll want to help it pass and get in on the action. Or they might stand back and let it go through, and use their investigative abilities to find out just who is taking advantage of it. If they do so, they can clean house, netting for themselves the biggest one-time haul of smudge in a decade. If they can use the media to convincingly brand large numbers of legislators as bottom feeders — and dozens are implicated — they can set about an unprecedented House cleaning.

If the vets succeed in their campaign, most of the implicated officials decline to run at the next election. This is an opportunity for a real shakeup, as the incumbent factor is out of play in many more seats than usual. The vets can fight for their party of choice (or faction thereof) to wedge as many of its people into newly opened seats as possible. Of course, other operators will be doing the same. As the Plutocrats currently have the biggest slice of the pie, they'll be hit disproportionately hard by the house cleaning. This means advances for either the Republocrats or NAS, depending on how well the vets do.

government purity goes down permanently

If Government Purity slides even further from its current pathetic level, the apathy factor that keeps the same old cronies in power intensifies. Even the educated, voting elite comes to believe that there is little point in voting, because all of the alternatives are equally unpalatable. Voter turnout slides to a shocking 10% in the next round of federal elections.

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PURITY
PERMANENTLY
DECREASES

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The Plutocrats seize on this in a bid to cement their domination of Washington indefinitely in place. They pump up a campaign in which they pretend to be horrified by the slide in turnout, and propose to do something about it. President Foster takes to the airwaves to announce a plan of action: "We must not be the first nation in the democratic world to achieve a single-digit turnout," he says. To this end, he proposes a new voting mechanism, known as **tacit voting**. In races where an incumbent is involved, all eligible nonvoters who fail to show up at the polls are counted as if they have voted for that incumbent. If one fails to look closely at this, it seems like just another ludicrous plan to disguise reality by fumbling with the statistics, making the turnout look much higher than it really is. In truth, it's a plan to forever lock down the current balance of power.

The NAS opposes the plan. At first glance, one would also think that the Republocrats, who want to someday retake the White House, would vehemently oppose the measure as well. But they think they have a real shot of taking the Oval Office before the plan would take effect. Both major parties are playing a colossal game of chicken, overconfidently assuming they'll benefit from the plan, getting a permanent ticket to the catbird seat.

The losers will be the voting public, who will find themselves living in an oligarchy, once and for all controlled by a single small elite. Tacit voting severely reduces the chances for activists to one day reawaken the sleeping giant of democracy. Even within the party in power, a handful of muckety-mucks can set themselves up as kingmakers and exert a monopoly on power. Even other muckety-mucks will be powerless to dislodge them.

In order to fight the measure, the vets will find themselves in the unlikely position of allying themselves with the NAS. The NAS blames tacit voting on a "Neo-deutsch, genetically enhanced, anti-family conspiracy", which makes them particularly hard for any self-respecting boost to work with. The vets may even decide to go along with this blow to democracy if it means forever keeping the neo-fascists out of office.

Tacit voting would require a constitutional amendment to enact. The only way to fight it is in the media, arousing everyday citizens to finally break through their apathy and threaten to take control of the wheel once more. If the vets manage to get people — especially lifelong nonvoters — to suddenly take an interest and flood their representatives' offices with protesting faxes, phone calls, e-mail, the legislators will get cold feet and begin to back down from the plan. If the vets are successful, they can convince Congress that they're playing with fire, that they're run the risk of actually *increasing* voter turnout by enraging too many people.

Unless the vets come up with some way to turn this protest movement into more than an ephemeral phenomenon, however, things return to normal after tacit voting is seen by legislators as political poison. Once the threat of tacit voting is eliminated, the voters return to their vidnet-induced slumber.

tacit voting: An administration feasibility study also refers to the plan as Voluntarily Involuntary Preference Indication.

finds it much harder to get: The Difficulty of all attempts to elicit smudge goes up to 15. Attempts on the part of foreign spies or terrorists to recruit moles within the government also go up to a Difficulty of 15.

government purity goes up temporarily

The vets are probably working, in one sense or another, for an increase in Government Purity. However, when they finally do make some headway, they discover that even they have to change their acts to keep up with the new ballgame. It becomes harder to mount operations in the city.

When Government Purity goes up, Washington is seized by an epidemic of convenient puritanism. Members of Congress and the administration make a big deal of all of the perks that they're prepared to give up. Parties compete to be seen to slash the most fat out of their own hides. It suddenly becomes politically damaging to be chauffeured about in a government limo. Bodyguard details are slashed; vets with bodyguard positions may find themselves reassigned to less flexible positions, or laid off altogether.

Employees of government agencies find that their paperwork triples and their access to vehicles, computer time, office space, and other amenities abruptly dries up. As previously trivial issues become politically damaging, bureaucrat characters are forced to spend more of their time covering their butts. All of a sudden it's career suicide to be found to be using too many pen refills, or failing to contribute the precise right amount of paper to the office recycling drive. Agencies now devote most of their time on investigating each other for these trivial offenses.

Agents of Influence characters suddenly find it harder to get legislators to do what they want simply by flinging cash at them. Terrorists and foreign spies discover that their contacts in government are much more afraid to help them in the new atmosphere of moral righteousness. Anyone who operates by gathering smudge **finds it much harder to get**. The vets find it harder to use blackmail to get operators to go along with their plans; most of the people in their smudge file either resign from office, are booted out at election time, or undergo surprise "born again" experiences. Some Congressmen and Senators in the latter category even cross the floor to the NAS, lashing at their old colleagues with the self-righteousness that only converts can muster.

This isn't so much an adventure in itself as a set of new obstacles that makes it harder to complete other adventures. Whether they wait for the Government Purity Parameter to sink back to its former level, or try to keep it permanently up, this hysteria of propriety eventually subsides. Getting past it is just a matter of patience. Public focus returns to things that really matter, and D.C. regains its perspective on paperclip usage.

government purity goes up permanently

If Government Purity stays up after the period of irrational righteousness just described, the trend towards low voter turnout reverses itself. The next election has a 20% turnout, the first increase in years. However, even an increase in

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honesty in government can have a negative effect. In this case, the political debate in Washington ends up getting impossibly polarized, and gridlock sets in.

This happens because the most venal, self-serving members of Congress are tossed out once their peccadilloes are revealed to the public. A new crop of politicians comes to town, one that has promised the voters a rigid adherence to principle, and a fierce commitment to buck the system. These folks tend to be ideologues; they're not in it for personal gain, but because they zealously believe in a particular agenda. They want to come to Washington, change things for the better, and get out. And they honestly mean it.

This means that compromise is not their strong point. After using heated rhetoric on the campaign trail, their supporters expect them to stick to their guns and not concede an inch. The old wheeler-dealers who used to be negotiate their way through seemingly unresolvable disputes by liberally applying the grease are gone — they're the same people who were also paying themselves extra on the side. The new breed of honest politician has nothing to gain by finding middle ground with opponents.

This is doubly problematic because the issues that the new breed is so devoted to vary widely. Ideologues tend to be on the edges of the political spectrum. The freshman legislators are either idealistic social reformers in the vein of assassinated President Raymond Milkovich, or fiery-eyed warriors of the radical conservative movement. In the next federal election, both the Republocrats and NAS make gains at the expense of the Plutocrats. If its a presidential election year, the Plutocrats hang onto the White House by the plague on their teeth, splitting the vote.

The reformers and radical conservatives hate each others' guts, and don't mind showing it. Debate even on seemingly innocuous matters becomes bogged down in ideological argument or just plain bad feelings. New legislation grinds to a halt. Even if they support an agenda of extreme change, the vets will come to realize that Congress needs at least some slick operator types in order to mediate between the warring factions.

They can address this need in a number of ways. They can target members of the new breed and try to show them the old-fashioned ropes, hoping to seduce a few into dealing with the practicalities of power as well as the theory. They could circle the wagons around the remaining few snake oil salesmen, protecting them from damaging scandals and political challenges. Or they could try to elect new compromisers.

Eventually the public will become disgusted by the inaction in Washington. The new members might be honest, but they have less savvy than a balloon at a porcupine party. Another new wave of politicians comes along, proclaiming themselves "wild-eyed moderates seeking the radical middle ground." The vets can work to make sure that they keep their feet on the ground, and their hands out of the pockets of the American people.

Presidential Pyjama Parties: These used to be called "town hall meetings", but were dubbed pyjama parties after former President Gates retooled the format from a quasi-debate into an intimate, touchy-feely head-to-head with voters.

quality of life

quality of life goes down temporarily

Pollsters begin to detect a sense of disquiet in the electorate. People are in a bad mood. It's not even anger — anger is an emotion politicians like, because they know how to channel it. Instead, it's something more subtle and hard to pin down. It seems to be more of a free-floating anxiety than any concrete complaint with the way the country is run. The public is developing a sense that the good things in life are slowly slipping away from them, and they don't know what to do about it. Public opinion experts get frightened when they don't understand what the public is feeling, and when pollsters get frightened, so do their political masters.

Ever the wily politician, President Charles Foster decides to launch what he calls "a pre-emptive strike on America's mood." He announces a new strategy in the permanent campaign, a series of media appearances privately known as Operation Lightning Rod. Anxious to stamp out this odd mood of dissatisfaction before it turns to something dangerous like a call for widespread changes, he decides to embark on a series of **Presidential Pyjama Parties** across the nation, to be broadcast live on vidnet. This particular series of programs — one from L.A., one from Chicago, and one from Atlanta — is entitled, "Slide With The Prez, America!"

These events are usually rigorously pre-screened to make sure that the "average members of the public" who get to ask questions of the President lob him softball questions that he's only too happy to answer. But because this is a daring, unprecedented attempt to actually discern the public mood, Foster takes the risk of setting up the pyjama parties so that genuine honest to gosh voters get to talk with him, spontaneously and without the benefit of editing.

This news puts the rest of the political community into a collective topspin of salivation. They all want to get their planted "citizen" representatives on the programs, to advance their own agendas. To do this, they have to fool Foster's handlers, who are interviewing potential participants to make sure that they aren't carrying water for any established interest group.

To the vets, this adventure provides what tough interviewers on head shows refer to as a "free throw." This is a chance to advance whatever agenda they have by appearing on a national broadcast and confronting the President in person. But to have any effect, they have to get Foster ruffled, or get him to concede their point. This should be extremely difficult — Foster is a master of bafflegab, an expert in the smooth-sounding comeback that means nothing. If they do make an impression, they'll find it easier to rally public support in the media, and to make allies among officials. They'll have a bandwagon everyone will want to jump on. They might even wring concessions out of the President

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himself, if he thinks it will make him more popular, and bring America out of the blahs and back into his pocket.

If the vets are foolish enough to think this a good chance to try to spin the President, make sure that the security is tighter than a drum.

quality of life goes down permanently

America falls into a permanent malaise. The idea that the American dream is dead is no longer a radical slogan painted by disaffected graffiti artists, but a commonplace in conversation. People begin to conclude that their country, and their lives, are screwed forever. They give up hope. Even the old drugs of forgetfulness — booze and vidnet — begin to lose their appeal. Psychiatrists begin to report a wave of despair and depression. The suicide rate goes up. Voter turnout goes down. No one believes that politicians can do anything to help them anymore. Volunteerism plummets, both in charities and in political parties. Political activists and terrorists throw up their hands and give up.

Prominent among these is famed terrorist **Inalienable Right**, head of the notorious boosted gang known as The Butt-Kickin' Jeffersonians. Formerly feared by establishment types of all stripes, Inalienable announces that she's dropping her code name, and reverting back to plain old ordinary Kate Kilik. She's also dropping out of the activist movement, along with the rest of the Jeffersonians. In a highly-rated interview with Peter Argot, she urges everyone to abandon the struggle for earthly change. The real important change is spiritual, she says. She goes on to announce that she's joined the Neo-Scientologist movement, and urges everyone else to do the same. "You can't change the world. You can only change yourself."

The conversion of Inalienable Right is just the first indication of what becomes a nationwide trend. Abandoning all hope in this world, people begin to turn *en masse* to religions that offer another world divorced from earthly concerns. The religious movements benefiting from this epidemic of despair are not the mainstream ones. People want complete certainties, spiritual guarantees. The growth of cult groups goes up exponentially. Many flock to a new belief system known as Pan-Primitivism, which seeks to make Neo-Primitives of all stripes abandon their internal feuds and prepare for a magical transformation in which all non-primitives will be dashed from the face of the earth. Others join the charismatic cult of Koresh Risen, or a high-tech version of snake-handling Pentecostalism presided over by converted porn star Judy Taz.

But, by far, the largest number of truth seekers follows the lead of Inalienable Right and join **Neo-Scientology**. These social changes are reflected in Washington as well. As Neo-Scientology becomes respectable, more and more officials are willing to publicly proclaim their longstanding allegiance to **Mary-Beth Bloomfield** and all she stands for. It turns out that a good 20% of Congress is stocked with Neo-Scientologists, few of whom had previously been bold enough to disclose their connection to this controversial but highly

Inalienable Right: STR: 6, DEX: 8, INT: 3, AURA: 3. Bomb 15, Mind Probe 3. Acrobatics: 12, Gun Combat: 12, Charm: 9. "For years I've been caught in the trap of trying to make myself happy by making the world what I want it to be. Now I've realized that the trick is to change your definition of happiness."

Neo-Scientology: For more details, see the Underground Notebook.

Mary-Beth Bloomfield: The mysterious head of the Neo-Scientology movement may or may not be dead, depending on which rumor one listens to. Nonetheless, she remains an immensely popular figure.

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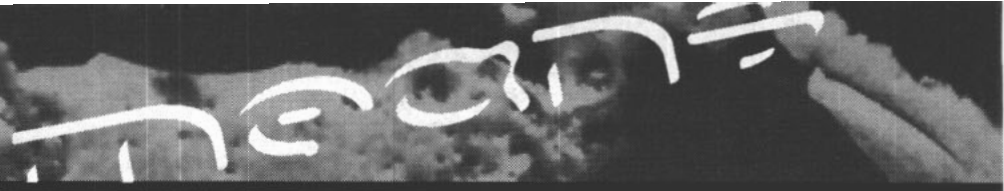
REACTIVE ADVENTURES

successful organization. Although they are made up of Plutocrats and Republocrats alike, it soon becomes apparent that they're voting as a block, often at odds with their official party hierarchies.

The rest of official Washington gets decidedly nervous, feeling that they've been ambushed. The national security apparatus gets especially concerned



Coming to you live!—Shoppers pause to watch the ongoing Libyan drama unfold.



when it becomes apparent that the Neo-Scientologist block is consistently voting against war measures that would hurt the cause of Neo-Deutschland. It is well known that the state religion of the Neo-Deutsch is Neo-Scientologist.

If the vets are foreign spies in the service of the Neo-Deutsch, they're assisting the Neo-Scientologist block in their efforts to shut down the war machine. Depending on just how anti-war they are, even vets without Neo-Scientologist ties might decide to throw in with them. But the Neo-Deutsch aren't taking over America out of an idealistic desire to spread spiritual enlightenment — if they do manage to take control of the US war effort, they'll turn it against the Chinese. This will result in deaths of soldiers on a scale that makes Paraguay look like a grade school field trip.

The growth of Neo-Scientology could form a long-running backdrop to a D.C. campaign, as the patriotic hawks fight it out with the self-improvement fanatics. Or it can be resolved in a single adventure, as follows:

Through a contact, the vets get a whiff of a tantalizing rumor. Apparently Inalienable Right has become disenchanted with Neo-Scientology, having decided that it's a severe case of "meet the new boss, same as the old boss." The Neo-Scientologists, always reluctant to let members leave, is certainly not going to let go of one of their most celebrated figureheads. She's being held prisoner in a high-security Neo-S complex in Minnesota. If the vets can break her out and get her back on the Peter Argot show, she can blow some pretty heavy smudge on the Neo-Scientologist's attempt to turn the government over to the Neo-Deutsch. Overnight, it becomes a political liability to be a Neo-Scientologist. The elected officials who "came out" trample one another in a mad rush to get back into the closet, disavowing all connection with the church. Almost to a one, they claim that they were engaged in private undercover operations to investigate the extent of the foul Neo-Scientologist plot. The convincing ones stay in power by switching their future votes on war issues to the hawk column; the less skillful liars are turfed out during the next election.

quality of life goes up temporarily

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INCREASES

If America gets a temporary shot of happiness, it's a clear win for the Plutocrats and President Foster. When people feel good, they feel good about their President, even if his policies had nothing to do with creating the conditions to make them feel that way. Since the avowed goal of the Plutocrats is to sit back, do as little as possible, and let the corporations run the show, this unexpected spurt of individual gratification on their watch is cause for celebration. They begin a new phase of the permanent campaign, entitled, "Kick Back, America!" This campaign, cosponsored by Amasco, the makers of **Hopsy, the Carbonated Beer™**, brings the spirit of beer advertising to political campaigning. The Plutocrats want to associate their name with weekend fun and celebration.

Hopsy, the Carbonated Beer™: Commercials for this product feature the beloved puppet Hopsy the Beer-Swillin' Bunny Rabbit. These spots invariably end with Hopsy sucking back a cool one and swinging in a hammock, with the tagline: "Hey, Hopsy don't wanna keep on going!"

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In a frenzy of cross-promotion, the Amasco corporation sponsors a new vidnet comedy show called, appropriately enough, *Kick Back, America!* which is long on low humor and scantily clad bimbos of both genders. Its shameless grab for the lowest common denominator pays off. Finally the Plutocrats have a ratings success to match the mass appeal of *Camelot: The Next Generation*. When President Foster appears in a skit with Hopsy, the Beer Swillin' Bunny Rabbit, his approval rating gains four points overnight. The bunny is more popular than he is.

This sets off a scramble in Washington to ally politicians with popular products. This new co-promotion deal is useful because it allows elected officials to sidestep campaign contribution laws. The TV spots don't count as donations, because the companies are promoting their own products as well. This gives the big consumer corporations even more leverage than before over the political process. This hurts both extremes of the political spectrum, as sponsors avoid politicians with "controversial positions." Neither the radical ideas of left-wing Republocrats or the crypto-fascist leanings of the NAS read as friendly to the buyers of snack foods. The ideal politician for sponsorship purposes is one with a recognizable image and a sense of humor.

The vets can try to get commercial sponsors for their political patrons, struggling to find a company that won't force them to water down their objectives too much. Or they can try to forge an unnatural coalition of radicals on both sides of the spectrum, to ram through campaign financing reforms that eliminate the co-production loophole. If this doesn't work, they can fight co-promotion in a legal challenge before the Supreme Court.

quality of life goes up permanently

A puzzling change is afoot in the American body politic. No one can quite explain it, but it looks like Americans are in a good mood again, for the first time since the early, heady days of the Milkovich administration. A spirit of optimism is abroad in the land. Suddenly the hosts of call-in shows find themselves adrift. Almost no one is listening to them anymore. The calls they do get are all mushy and positive. People are putting their worries in perspective. Sure, crime is a problem, but it isn't unbeatable. No problem is unbeatable. In communities throughout the land, ordinary folks have decided to pitch in and fix things instead of just barricading themselves in their homes worrying about the future.

Pollsters get astonishing results when they survey the electorate. All of a sudden, people believe that good government can solve problems. Calls for change are no longer motivated by anger and frustration, but by optimism. Politicians with practical solutions to longstanding problems find their approval ratings ramping up. These people offer small-scale, local approaches, providing innovative ways for folks to get involved in their communities and make them better places. And for once they can count on the average citizen actually getting involved to change things, instead of sitting back and expecting someone else to get things done. Broad based volunteer groups begin to form to support these calls for

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change. These aren't the traditional social activists whose groups figure in the Safety Parameter Goes Up adventure; these are regular folks getting involved for the first time in their lives. They have no time for ideology. They want to "get under the hood", get people fed and clothed, keep their neighborhoods safe, and fix things that are broken. Which makes them much harder to smear than traditional activists — no skeletons in *these* closets. This is a volunteerist movement unprecedented since the days of the first Perot for President campaign.

The old-style politicians, geared to campaigning on fear and jingoism, get concerned about this mysterious change. Why, it could lead to economic collapse: people want to spend tax money on their own communities rather than on pointless foreign wars! Left-leaning Republocrats are delighted. Plutocrats and right-wing Republocrats are concerned. And the NAS are apoplectic. Where did America's taste for hate go?

Foreseeing a death spiral for their movement in the next election, the ever-attuned Mary Margaret Vincent, once and future NAS presidential candidate, decides to haul the party's image in for repairs. She wants to take the public's appetite for hope and channel it in a crypto-fascistic direction. The NAS embarks on a plan to infiltrate new community groups as they form, adopting a policy known as "stealth activism." Their people get involved with volunteer organizations without revealing their NAS affiliations. Then they work together to get themselves elected to leadership positions within these groups. Once in, they're to slowly turn the agendas of the organizations so that their rank and file members will eventually return to feeling frustrated and angry. They're to foment petty personality conflicts, misuse funds and resources, and create divisions between different religious and cultural groups connected to these groups. Neighbourhood safety groups turn into low-rent vigilante operations, the part of the new agenda that the NAS is most enthusiastic about.

This situation should develop gradually behind the scenes before the vets get fully involved. In one adventure, they might have reason to meet the members of a community group while it's still efficient and worthwhile. Maybe the head of the group supplies them with an important clue or contact. Then give them a reason to deal with the group again, later. This time, their old friends have been turfed out of their positions, and a new bunch of rancorous infighters have taken over. The vet's old contacts tell them that something strange is afoot, that they were ambushed by a group of seasoned troublemakers who hijacked their own group from them. This isn't just a local thing, either; they've been in touch with colleagues all around the country, who have reported similar problems.

It's up to the vets to investigate the pasts of the new board members, and find that they all have NAS or far-right connections that they've kept under the table. To find the head of this particular snake, they have to head back to Washington and uncover the role of the NAS head office in their program of stealth activism.

If the vets can expose this program before alienation from community action gets too widespread, they can deliver a near-fatal blow to the NAS. When

Leonard Grebeschaft:
INT: 2, WILL: 3,
AURA: 5. Politicking:
7.

"The only way to save
America is to bathe it
in cleansing fire. That
which does not burn,
the Lord has decreed
holy."

analyst for the CIA:
The unidentified
(actually fictional)
author of the
document uses the
pseudonym
"Plankton"; hence the
name. An alternate
version of the
document gives the
author's codename as
"Jadestone." It's
known as "The
Jadestone File."

people find out just how far they were willing to go to pervert a spirit of new optimism, they lose all but their most hardcore support. This means electoral disaster during the next campaign.

However, Vincent knows only too well just how dangerous her desperate plan is; she's kept her involvement in the scheme as secret as possible. And she's perfectly willing to arrange for the spinning of anyone who seems to be on the verge of revealing it.

education

education goes down temporarily

When the Education Parameter goes down temporarily, a very unorthodox member of the NAS takes advantage of it by spreading a conspiracy theory that casts even Mary-Margaret Vincent as mere tool of the International Banker's Conspiracy. **Leonard Grebeschaft** is considered a nutcase even by his fellow NAS members. The founder of a far-right grass roots organization called the FRL, or Forced Redemption League, Grebeschaft combines an idiosyncratic interpretation of the Book of Revelations with a strong belief in racial separatism. He believes that God has decreed that America must divide itself into separate enclaves, within which each racial and cultural group forms its own majority. Vincent has never liked Grebeschaft, but brought him into the NAS fold early on, on the principle that it is best to keep one's rivals close at hand so they can be carefully watched. Grebeschaft associated his FRL movement with the NAS for roughly the same reasons. Ever since the creation of the NAS, the two hatemongers have been circling one another warily, waiting for the other to turn away long enough to get a knife in the back.

When Grebeschaft sees a poll that reveals that only one in ten inner city high school students can identify the United States of America on a map, he decides that the time is ripe to unfold a plan he has long been considering. Grebeschaft has always felt that the problem with traditional white supremacy has been its unwillingness to forge alliances with bigots from other racial groups. Members of downtrodden minorities are just as vulnerable to scapegoating tactics as threatened and fearful members of the majority, as long as they don't know enough about history to understand the misery and destruction that always arises when militant nationalism boils over. Figuring they're now ignorant enough to fall for it, Grebeschaft begins to covertly circulate a document known as The Plankton Papers.

The Plankton Papers is a fabricated document, purportedly written by an intelligence **analyst for the CIA** who was fired for getting too close to the truth. Most of it is standard racist bile. It shows how all of the power in the world is supposedly concentrated in the hands of a cabal of bankers, who control everyone from the English Monarchy and the papacy to Tasee Ghoul and TV host Marvin Needermeyer. After several pages of virulent anti-Semitic propaganda, it gets to the new twist. The main aim of the conspiracy is to

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thwart God's will by forcing people of different races to live side by side. Man's natural impulse is to separate into racial groups, and if it weren't for the evil tentacles of the conspiracy, people would be able to live happily, separately, and privately.

The Plankton Papers proves very popular among small segments of the minority community. It offers not just a convenient, easy to understand bogeyman behind all of their problems, but offers a seemingly simple solution. If we can all have our own nations, God-given happiness will follow as a rainbow follows the rain. With lowered educational standards, young people find it impossible to identify the obvious and ridiculous distortions of history contained within the Plankton Papers. The ranks of various racial nationalist groups — African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and so on — begin to grow.

This poses a big threat to reformers who want to channel the energies of inner city communities in a positive way. Their complicated analysis of why things are messed up lacks the visceral appeal of the Plankton Papers. And the rise of racial nationalism plays into the hands of right-wing elements, like the NAS. The heated rhetoric of minority separatist groups makes educated voters nervous, leading them to vote for supposed "law and order" candidates who promise to keep these revolutionaries in check.

However, even the NAS is bothered by at least one portion of the Plankton Papers. Unable to resist sticking his rival in the ribs, Grebeschaft listed Mary-Margaret Vincent as one of the primary dupes of the international bankers' conspiracy. The NAS wants to keep the growth of nationalism provoked by the Plankton document on the rise, but doesn't care to have its presidential candidate on the hate list of every paranoid in the country. It issues its own version of the Plankton Papers to rebut Grebeschaft's.

If the vets can track the paper trail to its source and prove that the Plankton Papers were generated by white supremacists, they can temporarily halt the rise of racial nationalism, and embarrass the NAS. If exposed, the NAS expels Grebeschaft from its ranks. He then goes on to agitate against them among the traditional ultra-right. This is helpful to the enemies of the NAS as long as Grebeschaft doesn't get too influential. He's nutty enough to be an extreme threat if he ever found himself in a position of power.

education goes down permanently

If the already dismal level of general education goes down permanently, the country is in economic trouble. Both the Neo-Deutsch and Chinese governments have positioned themselves for long term success by keeping their populations **relatively well educated**. America's culture of immediate gratification makes it tough to sell policies that will only pay off down the line. The voters, who feel that they **shoulder most of the tax burden**, want lower taxes and better services. Since the real economic cost of gutting the educational system won't be visible for another generation, politicians feel it is a safe area

relatively well educated: At least, when it comes to technical matters directly related to later job performance. The citizens of both nations are also thoroughly indoctrinated with the help of modern propaganda techniques.

shoulder most of the tax burden: Actually, on a proportional basis, the nonvoting, poorly educated lower classes end up paying the bulk of taxes. This is because they can't take advantage of the incentives and loopholes built into the system through decades of big business lobbying.

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J. Beverly Fraugher:

INT: 5.

Administration: 4,

Business: 11,

Politicking: 3.

"As a nation, we're only as smart as our dumbest kids. And hoo-eee, do we have some butthead kids coming down the pike!"

especially kids: In most homes with children, it's the kids who most often determine the choice of program watched on the vidnet.

to cut. And the areas that get hit with the deepest cuts are — surprise, surprise — the under-represented areas that already hurting the most.

This opens the door for The New Co-Operative Foundation, a philanthropic organization headed by eccentric billionaire **J. Beverly Fraugher**. Fraugher's group funds and operates private schools in districts where the public schools have utterly failed. This all happens at no cost to the taxpayer. NCOF schools are therefore very popular. Their educational methods are somewhat controversial — for example, they teach using a method called Fraugherdynamics™, in which kids are taught subliminally by listening to tapes after long periods of tai chi style exercise. NCOF schools even control the diets of their students, insisting on low-protein, high-energy diets.

Many NJs, immediately suspecting anything that seems too good to be true, have turned their lights on Fraugher and the NCOF in order to turn up something fishy. Most of them conclude that Fraugher is using the schools to impose her own philosophy on a generation of kids. For example, she teaches creationism without actually referring to the Bible, and avoids all mention of the theory of evolution. But this is just a smokescreen, designed precisely to give investigators something obvious to get upset about.

Fraugher, a student of Oriental philosophy, is convinced that the Chinese will eventually triumph in the Second Cold War, leaving the USA to collapse just as the Soviet Union did at the end of the First Cold War. The Neo-Deutsch will be reduced to a regional power as the Chinese move in to pick up the pieces of American culture. Fraugher is training her students in the mystical principles that the Chinese leadership uses to create its own unique spin on the alien life pod technology. She figures her students will, with NCOF training, be instinctively able to prosper in a Chinese-dominated America. In fact, she's so resigned to this outcome that she's approached the Chinese for funding for an expansion of NCOF schools. Although divided on the usefulness of her methods, the Chinese have decided to funnel lots of money her way. However, they also want her to make the pro-Chinese propaganda more obvious. Fraugher understands that this would tip her hand, and resists all such moves.

The vets can become involved with the NCOF when Fraugher approaches Congress with a buyout offer for the Department of Education. She wants to privatize it, offering better education for half the tax bill. Bureaucrats currently employed by the department frantically search for allies in their bid to keep their agency, and therefore their jobs, alive. A contact from the department puts the vets onto the trail of smudge that leads to the secret hand of the Chinese government.

education goes up temporarily

The entertainment complex is thrown into a tizzy when the ratings for their top shows takes a sharp downwards turn. An aggressive program of market research reveals a shocking truth — Americans, **especially kids**, have cut

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back on their vidnet viewing in order to read books! Apparently the Department of Education has actually embarked on a successful initiative, encouraging kids to read by concentrating on exciting books, and laying off all of the technical analysis of prose style in favor of simply fostering enjoyment of the written word.

Vidnet executives are at a loss to deal with this odd turn of events, which runs entirely contrary to all futurist's predictions. America is supposed to be a post-literate society, dammit! They worry about the public relations costs of coming out publicly against reading, until a bright junior employee comes up with the ideal smokescreen.

Many of the books that kids are being encouraged to read are adventure stories. As far as literary quality goes, they're not significantly better than the vidnet shows, but at least they're getting kids to use their imaginations. More importantly, from the point of view of the vidnet types, they are full of racy material that could potentially arouse the indignation of the right. Violence, sexual situations, and the depiction of fantasy elements such as magic run through many of the most popular books now being taught in grade schools. Now, these are all staples of the vidnet as well, but the vidnet isn't paid for through tax dollars. The vidnet industry association mails highlighted texts to prominent pro-censorship activists and stands back to let the fur fly. They also secretly channel funds for a media campaign to these same groups.

The vets are approached by idealistic bureaucrats in the Department of Education and asked for help in mounting a counter-campaign in the media. For once, they've done something good, and they're getting nailed for it. The vets can help fight it out in the media, or they can take a short cut and follow the money trail. If they find out that the censorship committees are covertly funded by the entertainment complex, they can put a kibosh on the whole campaign. This is not because the public cares one way or another who funds the campaign — but the zealots who are running it are appalled to discover that they've been used as pawns by the very purveyors of filth they are forever fighting to destroy.

education goes up permanently

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A general increase in the quality of education results in disaffection for the newly educated when they discover that the economy has no place for their new skills. Smart enough to think critically, this new generation of students without a future don't have to look to far to figure out why they're screwed: the system is stacked against them. Without decent careers to look forward to, they channel their energies elsewhere. Political activism heats up, as a large number of people are drawn to a movement known as Neo-Marxism. Headed by the young and media-friendly firebrand **Joachim Morales**, this new, avowedly democratic Communist party begins to make electoral inroads in areas full of the educated and disaffected, known in the media as Generation O.

Joachim Morales: INT: 4,
AURA: 5. Artist
(Performing): 11,
Politicking: 7.
"You can't build a strong
house on a rotten
foundation. The system
can't be reformed, only
demolished."

education

means

Reactive Adventures

Repeated attempts are made to discredit Morales, to prove that he's a paid agent of Quebec. But these all come to naught — Morales is sincere. He distances himself from violent solutions, claiming to be able to accomplish his goal of dismantling the Constitution and replacing it with a fair one through the ballot box alone.



The wonders of modern medical technology—Senator Andrews makes use of his new surgical kevlar rib cage... and his .45.

Morales is a gift to the NAS, who find their support bolstered by those who fear the Neo-Marxists. He's a threat to left-leaning Republocrats. For years reformers have parked their votes with them, since they have nowhere else to go. Now they have a more credible force for change to vote for.

The Republocrats invite Morales to form an alliance with them, offering electoral help to the Neo-Marxists in districts they think they'll lose anyway. The hidden motive behind this initiative is to co-opt the Neo-Marxists by letting a few of them develop a stake in the status quo. They figure that the spectre of compromise and practicality will tear the Neo-Marxists apart, as it has done to so many other progressive movements.

How the vets get involved in this plan depends on their own goals. They could help out an idealistic Neo-Marxist candidate and try to keep her on the straight and narrow, or team with the powers that be to eliminate the new commie threat.

necessities

necessities go down temporarily

WHEN NECESSITIES
TEMPORARILY
DECREASE

America is seized by a sudden water contamination crisis. Officials from the Environmental Water Standards Council, a federal agency, announce the horrifying results of recent comprehensive study of water quality throughout the nation. From the smallest rural village to the sprawling megacities, the quality of America's tap water ranges from questionable to unfit for human consumption. Industrial pollutants, from dioxin to PCBs, have been found in dangerous quantities in the vast majority of samples taken. The head of the EWSC holds a press conference to proclaim a national crisis of the first order. She traces water-borne pollutants to a continued increase in both the cancers and birth defects nationwide. EWSC head **Jatifa Mfuma** concludes that only increased resources and police powers for her agency can turn this terrible trend around.

This is just the most dramatic development in a long-running feud between the EWSC and its bureaucratic rival, the Water Conservation Authority. The WCA considers itself a national security agency, and specializes in ways to ensure that the country always has as much water as it needs. It's also run by Plutocratic party hacks, and as such is already to give big business a break. They not only look the other way when they find out that their corporate buddies have been polluting the water supply; they've been actively engaged in covering up the problem.

The WCA responds to this attack from the EWSC by running to its allies in the administration. President Foster, as is his right, fires Jatifa Mfuma for "alarming the populace." Although motivated more by the turf battle than by a real concern for the water supply — like most of the ruling class, Mfuma sticks strictly to bottled water — her agency is the only real hope for fixing the problem any

Jatifa Mfuma: INT: 2.
Administration: 5,
Politicking: 3.
"What good is it if we
win the trade wars, if the
cost is poisoning
ourselves?"

means

means

time soon. The vets can work to get Foster to reverse the Mfuma firing, by applying political muscle or threatening to release smudge against them. If they lose this round, they can help Congress fight administration attempts to appoint the current head of the WCA to the top position at EWSC. The administration has responded to the EWSC report by deciding to kill the messenger and dismantle the agency. It's up to the vets to stop it.

NECESSITIES GO DOWN PERMANENTLY

Long predicted by scientists, the energy crisis that's supposed to end life as we know it in the industrial world looks like it's finally hit. America's oil reserves hit an all-time low. The Second Cold War shifts gears to capture oil-producing nations. The oil-producing nations respond to rumblings of war by threatening to torch the remains of their own dwindling supplies, in order to reduce their attractiveness as targets.

WHEN NECESSITIES
PERMANENTLY
DECREASE

The price of gas doubles within a year. Other energy sources, such as hydroelectric power, spiral upwards as people stampede away from fossil fuels. The Foster administration is forced to introduce rationing, an unpopular measure in a country still in love with its personal vehicles. Lineups at gas stations become a common and frustrating part of daily life. Strict measures curtailing energy usage creates a thriving black market for gas of all types. Black market fuel becomes an even bigger revenue producer for organized crime than illegal drugs. Violence hits an all-time high in many inner city neighborhoods, as rival gangs try to snuff each other in newly declared "Gas Wars."

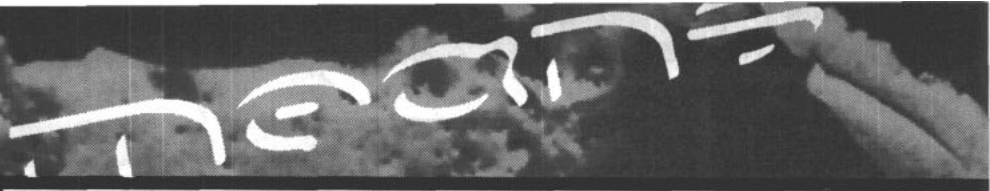
As usual, the poor get hit the worst by this. Those dwelling in the snow belt are in real trouble. Folks who can no longer afford to pay their heating bills end up freezing to death in their own homes.

People in industrial societies always expect science to come up with miraculous solutions to problems like this, and the cry goes up in Congress for researchers to come up with viable energy alternatives. This is ironic, since the big oil and car companies have been actively lobbying to discourage funding of such research for ages. However, hopes are high for a sudden cure, and they're directed right at the alien life pod technology, source of so many other "miracles" of modern technology.

In fact, one company, thinking ahead, has already constructed a prototype of an anti-gravity engine. They've got plans for models that can propel vehicles, as well as various heat generators. But they want to make sure that this discovery rockets them into the top ranks of the military/industrial/entertainment complex forever. In other words, the company, Innovative Solutions Incorporated, doesn't want to let the secret go cheap. They want to charge licensing fees that reflect the current, inflated price of energy. This means that average folks will still end up still forking over a nearly unbearable chunk of their income to take care of their energy needs even when the anti-grav engines go online.

WEEK

means



Vets who want to avoid this permanent drain on everyone's home budgets might want to engage in a little industrial espionage. Innovative Solutions has declared itself an autonomous nation, and is secured to the hilt, maintaining a crack team of boosted security operatives at all times. But if the vets can get past them and snare the plans for the anti-grav engines, they can upload them to the information superhighway and, within hours, have them in the hands of every industrial engineer in the world. Innovative Solutions will probably be angry enough to send waves of strapped-to-the-hilt hit teams after them, but they'll have done their part to bring affordable, copyright-violating energy to the masses nonetheless.

necessities go up temporarily

WHEN NECESSITIES
TEMPORARILY
INCREASE

When access to everyday goods improves, people feel a little less desperate, and begin to breathe easier. However, they shouldn't be letting their guards down, because plans are afoot to take them right back to square one.

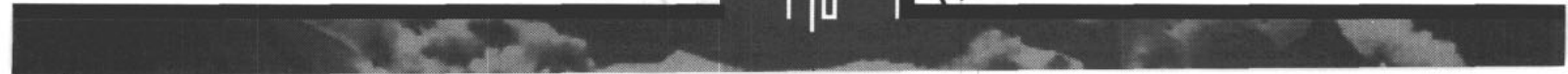
Intelligence analysts have been looking for a way to increase funding for various war projects. One NSC thinker has come up with a strategy known as "Aggressive Spending." His theory is that America can win the Second Cold War the same way it did the first one — by spending its rivals into the ground. The problem with this theory is twofold. First, it fails to account for the fact that America almost spent itself into the ground along with the Soviet Union. Second, it **depends on a big tax increase** to succeed. And the people who are most opposed to taxes — the corporate elite — are also the backbone of the Plutocratic party's support. According to the theory of Aggressive Spending, the corporate giants stand to gain the most from the plan, but they're not going to go along with anything that threatens their immediate bottom lines.

When the NSC notices that the average citizen, who has been taxed quite thoroughly already, now has now developed a margin of comfort, it decides that the time has come to push for a national value added tax, or VAT. This would be a 8.5% national sales tax added to the cost of any business transaction, from the purchase of a tube of toothpaste to fees paid to a tax preparer. However, corporations are able to either write off any sales tax they pay on transactions, or pass it along to the consumer. This is a classic regressive tax, one that hits most the people who are least able to pay.

The NSC mounts a campaign to make the VAT sexy, by calling it VT: the Victory Tax. Its vidnet ad campaign in favor of the proposed tax features the best war footage from *Combat! Combat! Combat!*, a rousing trumpet fanfare, and an exhortation to "Do your bit to put the Chi's and the Dutchies under for good!" One spot features a granny happily paying her VT on her pills, giving the audience a thumbs up, and saying, "Kick 'im where it hurts, soldier boys!"

Most vets should be opposed to the VT on several fronts. It will erase any short term economic gains made by the average person, and entrench a tax that will continue to hit them when things turn down again. And it'll lead to further

depends on a big tax increase: It also depends on a big increase in the national deficit, but that's much easier to persuade lawmakers to go along with.



senseless carnage on the battlefield, as the US government doubles or even triples the number of microwars it considers itself capable of waging at the same time. Agents of the Chinese and Neo-deutsch will want to stop it for obvious reasons — a spending war of this sort could flush the already battered world economy right down the drain for good.

Taxes are always unpopular, so if the vets are able to mount a good grass roots campaign, they should be able to kill it by making enough members of Congress sufficiently afraid of the political consequences of voting for the bill. If they're especially good, they can turn the anti-tax sentiment into an anti-war sentiment, convincing the people that it's they who are being spent into the ground.

necessities go up permanently

When access to necessities goes up permanently, Congress finds itself facing an unexpected "prosperity dividend." Fewer people are applying for social assistance programs, like food stamps or subsidized housing, because they're able to make do for themselves without them. This gives the Congress billions of dollars it's appropriated but no longer has to spend. And if there's anything Congress abhors, it's an unspent budget. The back rooms of the Capitol building ring with dozens of competing plans to spend the windfall. Here are some of the most popular plans:

WHEN NECESSITIES
PERMANENTLY
INCREASE

Spend the extra money on better services for those already on assistance. Distinctly missing from the group of people dropping off the dole are boosted vets, who have been crammed into the L.A. area and find it extremely tough to get and keep decent jobs. Their housing, medical benefits, and other government support systems have been underfunded from day one. Boosted rights activists propose that the money be spent to right this atrocious wrong. Anti-boost politicians argue that they're all criminals and cheats anyway. If off the rack people can get off welfare in record numbers, why can't the boosts? To get this passed, the vets have to prove that their fellow boosts have never been given a real chance to make it as civilians.

Spend the money on pork barrel projects. Members of Congress like any chance to dish out goodies to their own districts, and this surprise bonus looks like a great opportunity to do so. Every legislator has a pet project on the backburner, just waiting for the money to feed it. Using the prosperity dividend this way may be wasteful, but it will win quick and quiet agreement of many lawmakers.

Use the money to pay down the deficit. This is popular with fiscally conservative representatives and Senators, but not real big with the public. To most people, the deficit is a problem too abstract to understand, a problem for another day. Heck, economists have been predicting imminent deficit-related doom for decades and nothing's happened so far, right?

Transfer the savings to tax breaks for the rich. Many Plutocrats and Republocrats have a standard solution to every and any economic question — encourage the

which

means

rich to create wealth by slashing their taxes. They propose to offset the gain on the lower end of the heap by giving the rich a Capital Gains Exemption, letting them write off sudden profit increases. The added advantage of this approach is that its proponents can pretend that the prosperity dividend will compensate for any revenue losses, and then go ahead and spend the dividend on pork barrel projects (q.v.), just adding the whole thing to the deficit.

The first of the four choices is clearly the one most boosts will want to see. Do they have the influence to make it happen? Can they get the advocates of the other plans deadlocked and sneak extra help to boosts past them in the confusion?

take home pay

take home pay goes down temporarily

WHEN TAKE HOME
PAY TEMPORARILY
DECREASES

President Foster's next budget proposal departs from usual Plutocratic party policy to propose a tax increase for rebuilding the nation's highway system. This is odd because the Plutocrats in Congress, usually the ones to yelp the loudest when Republocrats propose a spending increase, are quietly going along with this portion of the budget request. Even the NAS, vehement anti-taxers to a one, are strangely silent on the issue. It takes some digging around to get the behind the scenes scoop on this unusual policy shift.

Lobbyists from the Alliance of Corporate States, an council of corporations who have declared their independence from the US government, have convinced the Plutocrats to dig into the taxpayer's pockets and start to work on repairing the nation's road system. This is actually long-needed. The highways have been **neglected for a long time**. Very little is done, for example, to repair roadways after carbombings, which are an everyday occurrence. Companies who ship goods across America find their losses, both from accidents and from slowed travel times, mounting. They want the government to do something about this, and have filled the campaign chests of the Plutocratic party in order to motivate them to do so.

The problem for the Plutocrats is that they've been busily whipping up anti-tax sentiment for years, and risk alienating their usual supporters unless they slip this into the budget with minimal attention. So they've struck a deal with the NAS to get them to keep quiet; they're going to back an NAS proposal to slap a sin tax on "indecent material."

This puts the Republocrats in a quandary. Because the Plutocrats have been against taxes, they've been for taxes. Now that the Plutocrats are for a tax, should they be against it? They could make some short term hay by raising a stink within the Plutocrat's own demographic. Reform Republocrats aren't going to like this particular tax, because it helps the corporations instead of the little guy. They should be paying more for the roads they use, not the average taxpayer.

neglected for a long time: There are exceptions to the generally abysmal state of 2021's highways, specifically the districts of a handful of influential lawmakers.

Since the Plutocrats want to keep this quiet, there are sweetheart deals to be made here. The vets can get involved in accepting some of these deals, or exposing them. If they're allied with the reformers, the smart thing to do is to let the tax go through. Then, with the Plutocrat's anti-tax rhetoric exposed as hypocrisy, they can perhaps argue for increased taxes to fund services for the people who need them.

take home pay goes down permanently

Although the Plutocrats base their platform on being opposed to taxes, they like being able to roll around in taxpayer money just as much as any other politicians. But being seen to oppose taxes pays off very well at the polls, and it's an image they don't want to abandon. However, when a team of IRS bureaucrats floats a proposal to extract taxes from citizens in a way that will mask future rate increases, the Foster administration sits up and takes notice.

WHEN TAKE HOME
PAY PERMANENTLY
DECREASES

"Project Whisper" proposes to set up a system of direct taxation, whereby taxes are automatically deducted from people's bank accounts. They claim that this will save them billions of dollars annually, allowing them to fully computerize every step of the taxation process. They sell it as a convenience to the taxpayer — no more figuring out complicated forms, getting all stressed out at tax time, and so forth. All people have to do is punch a few extra buttons when they visit their ATM machines. And, oh yes, it's now a federal crime not to have a bank account.

In reality, this is yet another IRS scam to circumvent its long-standing inability to get access to Census Bureau records. In order for the ATM system to work, the IRS needs to know the day-to-day details of everyone's financial lives. If they make "Project Whisper" sufficiently attractive to the administration, the Plutocrats will reverse their policy of keeping the IRS away from Census Bureau files.

It's attractive because it makes tax collection invisible. Instead of doing taxes once a year and wincing at the results, the new system slices away at bank accounts on a daily basis. It takes an accounting wizard to find out exactly how the IRS has arrived at its assessments, and by that time the money is already in government hands. This means that the government can raise taxes without its citizens taking a big psychological hit each time. There is some major hooting and hollering when the new system first goes into effect, but after that people forget about it. They don't like to think they're being clipped all the time, but at least they don't have to figure out those blasted forms.

The new system provides new opportunities for subversion, however. Now that the IRS central database is now connected to every banking machine in the country, it has opened itself up to hackers in a big way. It's a tough system to crack, but if the vets get inside, they can cause all manner of problems for the government. They can funnel unlimited cash to their own operations, or bring the engines of the state to a temporary but complete halt by shutting down the system. Any terrorist group that manages to paste the IRS immediately becomes wildly popular with citizens from across the political spectrum.

WEEK

means

chapter eight



Four score and seven rounds ago—The Gettysburg Redresser takes to the presidential high ground.

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Tom Branscomb: INT:

4. Artist (Performing):

3, Politicking: 3.

"Congress is bribing

you in the afternoon

with money it stole

from you in the

morning!"

take home pay goes up temporarily

Just as a new cycle of elections approaches, Congress decides to give America a nice juicy tax break. In order to make sure that people know they've gotten a nice juicy tax break, they plan to introduce a program called "Tax Rebating." Instead of simply paying less tax in April, voters get a cheque from the government refunding a portion of taxes they paid during the previous year. "Tax Rebating" is part and parcel of a larger program known as "Fatbusters", which has bipartisan support. "Fatbusters" purports to put a dent in the tax burden by cutting out unnecessary government spending. Unfortunately, it counts proposed cuts as actual cuts — cuts which won't actually be made because they're pet projects of various powerful lawmakers. The rebating is going to take place before the actual cutting, meaning that next year Congress will either have to raise taxes or just add the shortfall to the deficit.

The real advantage — to Congress — of coupling rebating with fatbusting is that it justifies their including thinly disguised campaign literature in the same envelopes as the rebate cheques. After all, legislators get free postal privileges and would otherwise be sending out their promo material at double the cost, right?

In other words, it's all a transparent ploy to buy votes with the voter's own money. And the sad thing is that it'll likely work, unless the vets manage to mount a public awareness campaign to remind people of this fact. There's a powerful emotional charge that comes from getting an unexpected cheque in the mail, and it's enough to turn into a big advantage for incumbents. If the vets fail to hip the populace to the sheer cynicism of this cheap ploy, all Difficulty Numbers for all challengers in the following election increase by 2 per Challenge. If they're especially good, they can arouse public opinion against the plan before it passes, thereby not only protecting the chances of challengers in the next election, but saving the national pocketbook from taking a clipping.

If, on the other hand, the vets go along with this trick in order to help a troubled incumbent, turn the tables on them at election time. In their district, they're faced with tough questions from a local public interest group called Porkwatch. The local chapter of Porkwatch manages to tag their candidate for participating in the scheme. The very effective PR head of Porkwatch, **Tom Branscomb**, is open to being co-opted. He wants a job in Washington working for a lawmaker. In exchange for a job, he'll release some smudge on the head of Porkwatch, exposing it as a mere front for an opposing party. Once he's got the job, Branscomb becomes a thorn in the vets' side, working to replace them with his own people and generally subvert their agenda in favor of his own personal ambition.

take home pay goes up permanently

With taxes slashed even further than they already have been, people actually end up with less money than before. The quality of roads deteriorates, which

WHEN TAKE HOME
PAY TEMPORARILY
INCREASES

WHEN TAKE HOME
PAY PERMANENTLY
INCREASE

WCS

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means

chapter eight



"You'd need eyes in the top of your head!"—President Foster's personal bodyguard squad prepares to take down a would-be assassin.

means that anyone with a vehicle ends up spending more money on repairs. Jail construction halts, putting more dangerous criminals on the street, with fewer cops to keep them in check. This means that those who can afford it end up spending more on home security, defensive weaponry, car armor, and so forth. Those who can't afford it pay simply in misery. With fewer checks on environmental pollutants and toxic waste, and less money for food inspectors, people end up paying more in medical bills.

As the government continues to divest itself of its responsibilities, folks naturally begin to feel less and less identification with it. In many neighborhoods, government only appears as a bad guy. It peeps into everyone's private business through the Census Bureau, messes them around with the ASS, busts them with the FBI, and takes their money with help from the IRS. But it does nothing concrete for them.

As the scales continue to tip this way, apathy turns to anarchy. Political hardcores take advantage of this disaffection to declare a "People's Independence Movement." If corporations can secede from the US in order to get a better deal, they argue, so can cities and neighborhoods. The people withdraw their consent to be governed. Some of the worst off areas — including L.A.'s Jessep Hill — declare themselves autonomous territories. Activists and gangsters band together to keep out the authorities. The feds, threatened by this loss of power, send in AMI troops. A few neighborhoods survive the onslaught; many others are razed to the ground.

The vets can get involved in this dissolution of authority in any number of ways. They can defend their home turf from AMI counterinsurgency units. Or they can take the long view, joining a media campaign to bring home just how disastrous Plutocratic party has been. The war has finally reached US soil, with Americans fighting Americans. The country is eating itself.

Perhaps the vets can help to turn things around, before it's too late. Maybe they can provide an alternative to the madness.

BEACON OF LIBERTY

STR: 3 DEX: 8 SPD: 8 RES: 5
INT: 2 WILL: 0 AURA: 4

Acrobatics (Dodge): 14, Artist (Performer): 10, Gun Combat (Pistol): 14, Martial Arts: 14
Chameleon: 7
Stress Tolerance: 6
Psychosis: Catatonia
Equipment:
.50 cal Urban Nightmare EP450, 6 Snap-Tite™ grenades, Turbo-Tazer, Mondo Armor & Heavykev

BACKGROUND

The Beacon of Liberty shares with very few other veterans the distinction of being considered safe and respectable by the average American citizen. She comes off as the sort of four-color hero found only in comic books and the Slumberland VR program. Washington is her beat, and righting wrongs her mission. She was responsible for exposing the Cutler Affair, in which half of the members of the Senate Subcommittee on Home Electronics Compatibility were found to be receiving baldfaced bribes from major manufacturing companies. She also prevented an assassination attempt on the Attorney General during a tour of an assault rifle range in Maryland.

Like an old-time comic book hero, the Beacon of Liberty keeps her true identity a secret from the public. Instead of being thought of as a dangerous vigilante, she's considered as the boosted equivalent of mom and apple pie. She's popular for two reasons — her old-fashioned, homespun charisma, and her policy of always turning the bad guys she catches over to the proper authorities.

Some have suggested that the Beacon's positive image is as much due to media savvy as to her record of good deeds. She does grant the occasional magazine interview, and now and then appears on the political head show for boosts, Analytic Smell. Her opinions are usually optimistic and pro-administration. She manages to avoid seeming excessively partisan in such appearances. She is staunchly pro-war, a viewpoint she expresses without seeming hawkish or bloodthirsty.

In reality, the Beacon of Liberty is Wendy Taheri, listed in official records as an intelligence analyst for the NSC. She is yet another case of the "too good to be true" syndrome that characterizes most media figures in 2021. While she goes to pains to seem to be an independent operator interested only in truth in justice, anyone who looks carefully at her movements can see that she must be backed by someone. No boost — not even a smiling, mediagenic one with pro-establishment views — would be allowed to move unchallenged through security-conscious D.C.TM without backing from someone.

That someone happens to be Geoffery Sneed, who ran across Taheri in her former identity as the Howling Lemur. Taheri was working for the bodyguard firm of Hi-Security Enterprises (q.v.), assigned to a detail watching over corporate heavyweight I. F. Pratt (see p. XX.) Taheri had impressed Pratt with her intelligence and sincere trust in the powers that be. He introduced her to Sneed, suggesting that the NSC chief might have a more suitable use for her than as a mere bodyguard.

And indeed Sneed did. He installed Taheri at an undemanding job in the NSC and set about molding a new heroic persona for her. Together the two have worked hard to create a friendly media image; behind the scenes he's



PEOPLE

PLACES

ORGANIZATIONS

EVENTS

TECHNOLOGY

MISC.

DR. SPIN: So, Beacon, what do you say about the Foster administration's opposition to the crime bill?

BEACON OF LIBERTY: It doesn't matter how many cops you put on the street, so long as people keep committing crimes. It's not a government problem, it's a moral problem. And we all know you can't legislate morality.

POLLBEARER: But crime is the number one concern of citizens —

BEACON OF LIBERTY: Then why don't they do something about it themselves? I mean, not to sound gung ho or anything, but I go out myself and round up the scum out there. I think every citizen ought to —

DR. SPIN: Not every citizen is a boost, like we —

BEACON OF LIBERTY: Well, let's start with the boosts. Too many of us are out making crime instead of breaking crime. I think it's time we turned this around ourselves, and stopped whining for the government to do it. Let's leave the tax dollars in everyone's pockets and get out and get our backs into things, just like the pioneers did.

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Excerpt from Analytic Smell, 210327
Supplied by Read Data Services, Inc.

pulled strings to make sure no one blows her cover. The Beacon is Sneed's ace in the hole; when he wants something done to someone without his name on it — such as exposing a bunch of Republicratic nuisances in the Culter Affair — he trots her out. When there's nothing he specifically needs done, he keeps her making media appearances carefully calculated to avoid overexposure. When public concerns about

crime reach an inconveniently high pitch, he sends her down to Monument Valley in the Old City to capture some criminal slimeballs and make people feel safe again — if only on the symbolic level.

Taheri's combat record was an undistinguished one. She was often reprimanded for acting alone and ignoring unit cohesion. Her superiors racked her up as a "sleepyhead", a soldier who had been unable to give up the comic book morality of Slumberland. As the Howling Lemur, she insisted on acting as a lone vigilante instead of a member of a military unit.

This is traceable back to her childhood personality. Born in a lower middle class neighborhood in Tacoma, Washington, Taheri was always an impressionable youth. Television had an almost hypnotic effect on her. She was easily swayed by her peers, often being cajoled into doing things that got her into trouble. Teachers noted that she seemed to take on the personality of whoever was the leader of the group of friends she hung around with.

This impressionability continued into her late teens, when she saw and became entranced by an AMI recruitment ad. Now, she's firmly, and willingly under the emotional domination of the powerful personality of Geoffery Sneed.

PERSONALITY

Wendy Taheri has taken to mimicking the speech patterns and even body language of her latest mentor. Anything he says to her must be true. She wouldn't even think to question his orders to her. She secretly fantasizes about a romance with Sneed. It is hard to say whether he is even capable of acknowledging attention of this sort. Nonetheless, her most important drive is to please him. She has no real understanding of the broader implications of her mission. Her political opinions are a mere parroting of Sneed's views, expressed with an added dollop of personal warmth. When not working at the NSC or engaged in one of Sneed's mission, Taheri merely sits in her sparsely furnished D.C. apartment, flipping vidnet channels in a slack-jawed trance.

QUOTES

"Freeze, scumbag!"

"There are volunteer firefighters. Why do some people freak out when a volunteer crimefighter shows up?"

"Hey, you can skip the horrors of war number. I was there. We can't pull out now — it'd be like saying my dead buddies went down in vain."

BERT BETTON

INT: 2, WILL: 4

Administration: 6, Business: 4, Intimidation: 6, Leadership: 10

BACKGROUND

November 1st, 1996, was a fateful day for Bertram J. Betton III. That was the day when he threw an ashtray at the head of a pollster, narrowly missing his left temple. Betton was serving at the time as political director for Virginia governor Raymond Wells. The pollster had just given him data that contradicted an argument Betton was making to the governor. The ashtray continued on its way across the room, sailing towards the door of Wells' office. At precisely the wrong moment, the door opened. Standing directly in the path of the ashtray was an ambitious young man arriving for his first day at work as a staffer to the governor. The ashtray smacked the young fellow right between the eyes, and he dropped to the carpet like a sack of potatoes.

Bert Betton had just knocked out the future President of the United States, Charles M. Foster.

The experience left a lasting impression on Foster, who went on to become the governor's protege. He became fascinated with the mercurial Betton, whose love for politics was matched only by his ferocious temper. At first, Foster was frightened of the man, and couldn't understand why the generous and pleasant governor Wells kept him on his staff. Gradually he learned that it was Wells' fundamental decency that required him to keep a gloating bully like Betton by his side. Wells needed a bad guy to discipline his people, a pit bull to attack his enemies. Whenever someone had to be fired or leaned on, it was Betton who did the dirty work. Wells could keep his distance from the unpleasant actions he had to take, letting Betton serve as a lightning rod for the bitterness and jealousy of ally and enemy alike. Foster resolved to get to know Betton better.

The two hit it off. Betton was from an old money family, which was very attractive to Foster's social climbing side. But more importantly, he had clout and knew the ropes. Betton liked Foster, too, sensing political talent in the raw. Betton was aware even then that he himself would never hold direct political power — he didn't have the

charm, coming across on TV as a glowering, threatening presence. But he could be a stunning number two man. And Foster had the combination of qualities needed to be number one: an easygoing manner, an ability to make outrageous lies seem unquestionably sincere, and the basic lack of intelligence that the voting public reads as authenticity. Each had what the other lacked; an alliance was forged.

As Governor Wells taught Foster about policy, and made connections for him, Betton taught him the art of the backroom deal, and introduced him to his father's friends. Betton, of the Betton Pharmaceuticals family, had access to the hallways of corporate America. When the time was right, the two made their jump. Betton ran Foster's campaign for governor against their old mentor, Wells.

Since then, whenever Foster has made a move, Betton has been at his side. Foster is the winning smile, Betton is the snarling fist in your face. When Foster won the Presidency, there was no doubt who would fill the vital position of Chief of Staff — Bert Betton was finally the ultimate number two he had always wanted to be.



PEOPLE

PLACES

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TECHNOLOGY

MISC.

THINGS TO DO TODAY!

- Squeeze Valmarana re: FCC regs
- Have Argot's press pass toasted again
- Dinner with Claudia, 8pm sharp (buy roses)
- Investigate "Our Friend" re: Nevada testing range
- Have IRS audit Sis
- Hire detectives re: Sen from Delaware

This rather odd ambition was a direct result of his affection-starved upbringing. His father, Bert Betton II, was a demanding bully of a man who made it clear that no son could ever live up to his exacting specifications. From him, Betton learned everything there is to know about shouting, throwing tantrums, making threats, and employing emotional blackmail. He also acquired contradictory emotional needs, wanting always to win approval from others while at the same time showing his contempt for them.

Young Bert clocked his old man in the jaw as an eighteenth birthday present to himself and then turned his back on the family. The elder Betton had a stroke in 2020. Bert is now engaged in litigation with his sister, now in control of the family firm. He claims that his father would have wanted to be removed from life support; other members of the family recall no such wish.

What eats at Betton nowadays is the role of Geoffery Sneed in the government of the United States. Betton thought he would be the power behind the throne, but soon realized that this shadowy figure, who remains while administrations come and go, holds some cards he can't even guess at. He's smart enough to fear Sneed — one pit bull recognizes another. Betton has scrupulously avoided tipping Sneed to the fact that he considers him an adversary. He's been very carefully gathering information on Sneed, hoping to get a handle on the man so he can set about disposing of him. The more he learns, the more daunting his task seems. He has become obsessed with Sneed, and would do literally anything to bring him down. Betton has come to see Sneed as an octopus, with a tentacle in every center of power in Washington. He considers him dangerous not for any ideological reason, but because Betton's instincts demand that he tear out the throat of any predator larger than himself.

PERSONALITY

Betton has three moods — surly, pissed off, and enraged. Just like his father, he knows that the less compromising he is, the further people will go to try to mollify him. Especially in a white collar environment, few people are prepared for his utter lack of reasonability. He'll scream blue, foul-mouthed murder at anyone from a hapless waiter to the Secretary of the Treasury. Betton is married to an architect named Claudia, who deals with his stormy nature by refusing ever to take him seriously. A calm, good-humored woman, she and Betton form a real odd couple, and seem to love each other unreservedly. Betton has two children, the oldest of which, nine year old Bert IV, is already fantasizing about blowing dad's head off with a ZAG 30mm.

QUOTES

"You @#\$\$ing son of a #\$%@! I'll rip off your @#\$\$ing arm and shove it down your @#\$\$ing throat until it comes out of your @#\$\$%, do you hear me?"

"Charles, I think we should come down on this guy and come down hard."

"Listen, you two-bit, quivering sack of @#\$\$%. You haven't been @#\$\$ed with until you've been @#\$\$ed with by me."

BRAINPAN

STR:4 DEX:7 SPD:3 RES:5
INT:11 WILL:3 AURA:2

Acrobatics (Dodge): 13, Detective: 17, Gun Combat (Pistol): 12, Military Science (Demolitions): 15, Thief: 9.

Telepathic Blast: 8

Stress Tolerance: 4

Psychosis: Paranoia

Equipment:

.50 cal Urban Nightmare EP450, Snap-Tite™ Grenades (x 10), Mondo Armor, Heavy-Kev, Tehran Jihad, Economy Pack, Porta-Term, Pueblo Recordit, Video Camera, Microphone, Cellular Phone, Porta-Fax, Xanxarox Copier, Medikit, Gas Mask, Month's supply of Clozapine

BACKGROUND

Denny Sarossy, also known as Brainpan, is a researcher for the trashnews vidnet program Investigative Copy, on permanent assignment in Washington. Investigative Copy doesn't usually assign people full time to any particular beat. It has a small staff and generally ships its top people off to the scandal centre of the moment. But the difficulty of getting press credentials in Washington — especially for a show that has exposed the embarrassing peccadilloes of various influential ballparkers — has led them to permanently station Sarossy there. Otherwise, they'd have to reapply for credentials every time out. Sarossy is a behind the scenes man; he prefers to stay behind the camera and do the legwork, allowing more telegenic NJs to present his material. Since he has the typically enlarged cranium of a boost with genetically enhanced intellect, his producers are happy with the arrangement as well. Only when Investigative Copy can't get credentials for one of its Ken-doll NJs will Sarossy appear on camera.

There's a reason beyond shyness for Denny's unwillingness to show his face. He's working hard to maintain a low profile, since he uses the cover of his press credentials to prevent people from suspecting that he is really the head of the local chapter of the Underground. Since the stated goal of the Underground is to overthrow the United States government, the Washington posting is a crucial one. Denny won the confidence of a number of top cell leaders during several years of wandering after his demobilization from the AMI Flying Deuces. Bouncing from cell to cell, he made

himself invaluable by adding his investigative and analytical skills to the more violent abilities of the typical Undergrounder. He specialized in target selection, and in organizing surgical missions more dependent on stealth than frontal assault capabilities. When the previous Washington Bureau Chief of the Underground blew her brains out during a fit of metagenic feedback trauma, Denny's associates pressured him to accept the job. Though reluctant at first, Denny soon threw himself into the task of finding a way into the city, eventually hooking up with Investigative Copy and proving himself as a researcher.

Denny's reluctance to take the important post is typical of his rootless personality. Always a wandering spirit, Denny walked away from a comfortable middle class home at the age of seventeen. He found himself in the company of society's outcasts as he bummed his way across North America. It this period, spent touring the urban devastation of America, that he would later draw on during the awakening of his political consciousness. He found himself involved in petty crimes from time to time, but kept as much as possible away from the serious stuff. When he had finally travelled through all sixty states, Denny shrugged and wandered into the nearest AMI recruiting office, apparently out of a desire to see the world.



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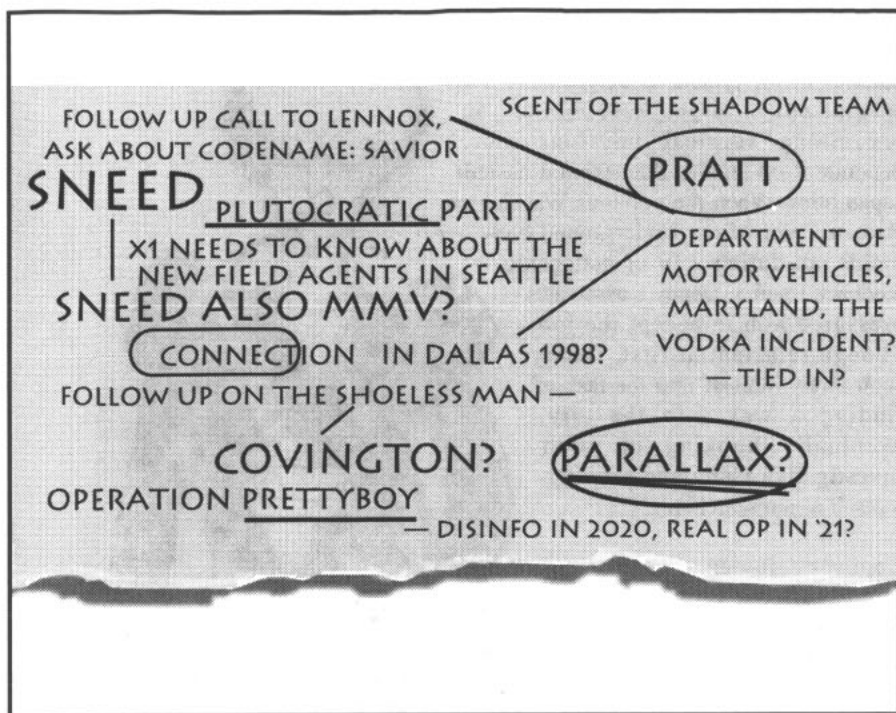
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He got more than he bargained for, finding himself in Slumberland in the guise of Dr. Midnight, a black-clad vigilante loner with a skill for detection and a streak of sadism. Once out of the isolation tank, Denny was rechristened Brainpan and assigned to the intelligence auxiliary of the Flying Deuces. Espionage became his stock in trade; he got to see the world while avoiding the chaos of the battlefield. Penetrations of high security sites became his specialty; he prided himself on accomplishing his assignments with a minimum of bloodshed.

Despite attractive offers from AMI, Denny decided to split once his tour of duty was up. He had once more grown bored, and began to wander America again. With his enhanced brain power, he could no longer escape the obvious truth that the suffering of those around them was a direct result of Washington hijinks. He joined the Underground, and the rest is history.

As far as operations go, he's decided that finding and releasing damaging information is a much more cost-effective way to bring down the government than terrorist

activities. However, if given an irresistible and safe opportunity to blow something up, he takes it. Usually these explosions are diversions for infiltration missions elsewhere in town. Most of the equipment listed above is safely stored away in an untraceable locker just for emergencies. One of Denny's first operations when he came to Washington was to arrange for the alteration of all of his personal and service records.

PERSONALITY

Denny is one cool customer. He remains quiet whenever possible, and rarely shows any visible sign of emotion. His silence is partially a shield; Denny thinks of himself as inarticulate because his mind always races ahead of his tongue. The only hint of this to an outside observer is a very slight stutter. His commitment to the downfall of the government is more a result of carefully pursued logic than heated political passion. He is always surprised that more people don't see an uprising as simply a sensible survival move. Preferring to operate alone, Denny is reluctant to trust others. He has only recruited a handful of individuals into the Washington cell, and only after getting to know them inside and out. He's too cautious to admit anyone he hasn't researched thoroughly.

Small talk is not Denny's forte; his increased brainpower has merely served to reinforce his detachment from others. He speaks to those with lower IQs with indulgence, speaking slowly and carefully explaining his terms. His other cell members sometimes find him irritatingly aloof. For example, he doesn't think to praise people for jobs well done, even if they risk their lives to do them. As far as he's concerned, this is merely the way things ought to be. It is only his great confidence in the Underground's chance of success that keeps the other cell members at his side. Although he engaged in a few casual relationships before enhancement, he now shows no romantic inclinations whatsoever.

QUOTES

"In one hand, I have a grenade. In the other, a folder removed from the personnel department of the ASS. Which one do you think is more dangerous?"

"To say that revolution is necessary is like saying that water is wet — it is an obvious truth."

"Hello, this is Denny Sarossy, and I'm calling the congresswoman on behalf of Investigative Copy — hello? Hello?"

LINE-ITEM VETO

STR: 4 DEX: 8 SPD: 3 RES: 10
INT: 2 WILL: 3 AURA: 5

Acrobatics (Dodge): 14, Detective 8, Gun Combat (Pistol): 14,
Intimidation/Interrogation: 10.

Telepathic Blast: 6

Stress Tolerance: 4

Psychosis: Homicidal Mania

Equipment:

.50 cal Urban Nightmare EP450, Turbo Tazer, AMC City Runabout, Average Pack loaded with Pueblo Sniper!, Firefight! and MapIt! plus Anti-Radar, Combat Goggles, Punkbuster™ Signal Jammer, Medikit, Gas Mask, Megaphone, Heavykev & Mondo Armor with Chaff

Peter Geraghty always wanted to be a cop. His father was an investment counsellor and his mother an obstetrician, but Peter never dreamed about a high-paying professional job. Ever since he first slapped eyes on a TV cop show, a policeman was all he wanted to be. He begged his parents for police memorabilia at birthdays and Christmas time, and was especially excited to receive a police-band radio at the age of ten. At age eleven, he helped the police in his sleepy hometown of Ragersville, Ohio, crack an auto theft case. He'd been playing junior detective by jotting down license plate numbers. He offered his list to a police officer enquiring about a stolen car, and literally leapt with joy when it turned out that his "clue" was an important one.

Peter's parents assumed he'd grow out of his cop phase and go on to university and a respectable career with a respectable income. The gap between rich and poor was growing, and they wanted their son on the right side of it. As police work grew more dangerous, even in a little place like Ragersville, their fears grew. They argued loudly about his future. Peter was an only child, and his parents worried about everything from the low pay scale of police officers to donut-related cholesterol intake. Ultimately the family reached an impasse, refusing to fund Peter's trip to the police academy.

In a fit of buttheadedness he would later regret, Peter, instead of getting a temporary job to save up enough for police college, enlisted with TWD. He knew what duty he would apply for after enhancement: he was going to be a Military Policeman. With

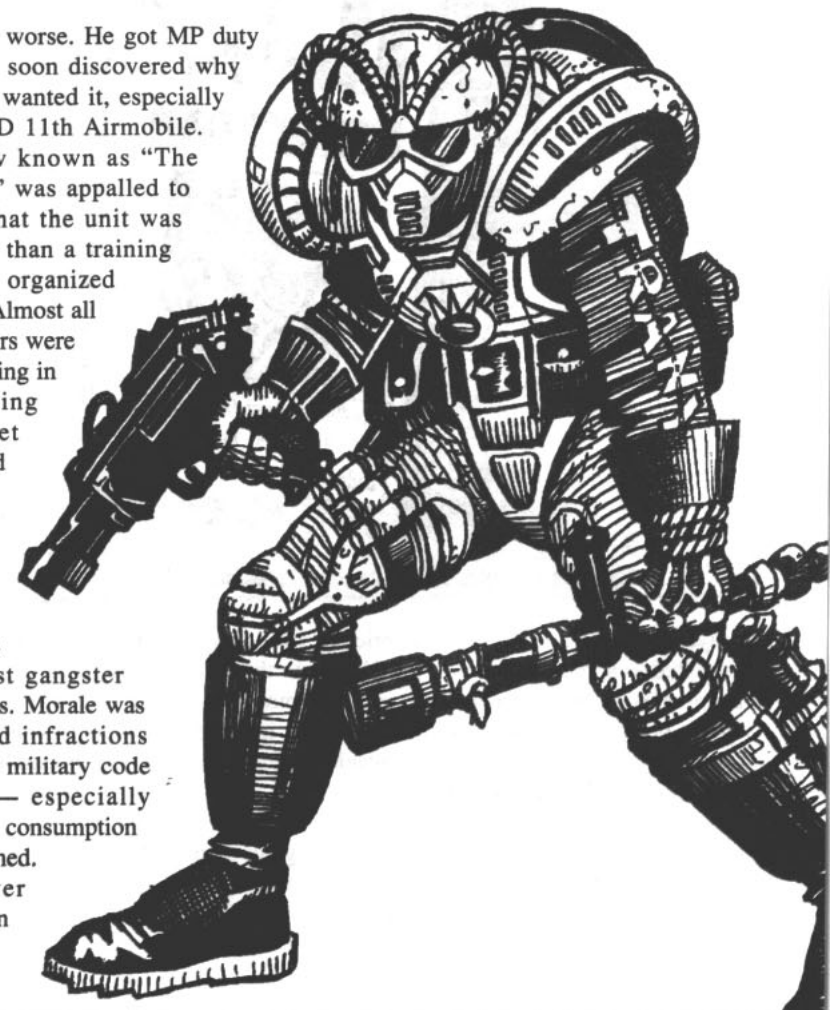
that training, and boosted abilities, he figured a tour in Kenya was at least equivalent to the police academy. When he got out, any force with a SWAT team or equivalent would be glad to get their hands on him.

Things didn't work out too well for him in Slumberland. He was assigned the virtual persona of the Freedom League's vigilante loner, instead of a more appropriate character with a love of authority figures. His therapists had little luck mitigating the effects of his enhancements.

Kenya was worse. He got MP duty easily, and soon discovered why — nobody wanted it, especially in the TWD 11th Airmobile.

Peter, now known as "The Blue Wall" was appalled to discover that the unit was little more than a training ground for organized criminals. Almost all of its soldiers were merely putting in time, waiting to get shipped back home so they could join the gang of notorious West Coast gangster Santa Claws. Morale was a joke, and infractions against the military code common — especially where drug consumption was concerned.

Peter never saw action against the enemy in



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Kenya. Instead he ended up in a series of firefights with other TWD soldiers, as he attempted to apply the letter of TWD's law to the wild circumstances in-country. The first incidents were shrugged off by his commanders, as he was the only seriously injured party. But when he lobbed a grenade into the tent of four of the unit's most decorated soldiers — and top juiceheads — TWD gave him an honorable discharge and waved goodbye to a liability.

Stateside, Santa Claws' forces were waiting for him. A failed ambush at the L.A. airport took out three innocent bystanders. This incident caused Peter's job applications to the L.A. Peace Force and other similar units throughout the country to bounce. He had "trouble" stamped all over him.

One potential employee thought otherwise. NSC chief Geoffery Sneed, in the process of assembling the police unit for Democracy City™, read Peter's application and saw between the lines the absolute deference to rigid authority that he wanted in a boosted commander. Here was a man in need of a strong mentor figure, who would do what he was told no matter what the consequences. The Santa Claws vendetta meant little to Sneed, because even Claws wouldn't be able to reach into the new, super secure floating capitol city.

Peter, of course, jumped at the opportunity, and is now firmly in command of the Special Response Squad, the D.C. Security Team's boosted adjunct. He has picked for the team other boosts like himself — uncompromising misfits who have had past trouble because they refused to back down when they thought they were right. The SRS therefore has a vastly different culture than the polite, off the rack regular D.C. cops. When they're called in, the situation calls for a quick suppression of the problem, niceties be damned. The other officers copy the icy cool of their grim, tough-as-nails leader, now redubbed Line Item Veto.

PERSONALITY

On the outside, Peter is everyone he ever wanted to be. He's a tough cop who takes no crap, who has the loyalty of those who serve under him and the respect of his commanders. When called on to enforce the law, he does so with a macho combination of integrity and brutality.

Inside, Peter is a swirl of regrets. His experiences in Slumberland and Kenya deeply scarred him, turning all of his assumptions about good guys and bad guys upside down. Again and again he replays that fateful night when he stupidly enlisted instead of looking for a job in a burger joint. He desperately wants to reconcile with his parents, who he hasn't spoken to since the L.A. airport ambush, but can't bring himself to show the required "weakness."

Peter's personal life is pretty lonely. His job is everything to him. He usually has a pretty, none too intellectual girlfriend on his massive shoulder. Whenever one of them gets too serious about the relationship, he dumps her and finds another.

QUOTES

"You don't think you can nail him without hitting the hostage? Dammit, I can do it with this frigging pistol!"

"Spread some jam on yourself and take a bite — 'cause you're toast, punk."

"That TWD decal is not SRS regulation, Achadov. Lose it."

ELLI MACOMBER

INT: 2

WIL: 2

AURA: 3

Administration: 7, Charm: 9, Leadership: 5, Politicking: 7, Psychology: 3

BACKGROUND

Is every elected official in Washington an unregenerate greedhead? Believe it or not, there are still some good apples who haven't been ruined by the rest. But they've learned to hide their lack of decay, to appear to be as cynical as everybody else.

There is no politician in Washington who exemplifies this pattern more than does Elli Macomber, the junior Senator from Minnesota. As unofficial head of an informal working group of liberal Republicratic representatives and Senators, she is quietly building support for a reform agenda. This group of recent electees is jokingly referred to by experienced Senate staffers as "Future Porkbarrellers of America." But, behind the scenes, it is positioning itself to do some real good. None of this would be happening if it weren't for the instinctive savvy and persuasiveness of Elli Macomber.

Macomber was born in 1980 in Northfield, Minnesota. The only child of successful professional parents — her father Bradley was an accountant, her mother Patricia a psychologist — she was brought up to think she was somebody special. She continues to believe this, and it is this fundamental self-confidence that has shielded her through the hard knocks of a D.C.TM political career.

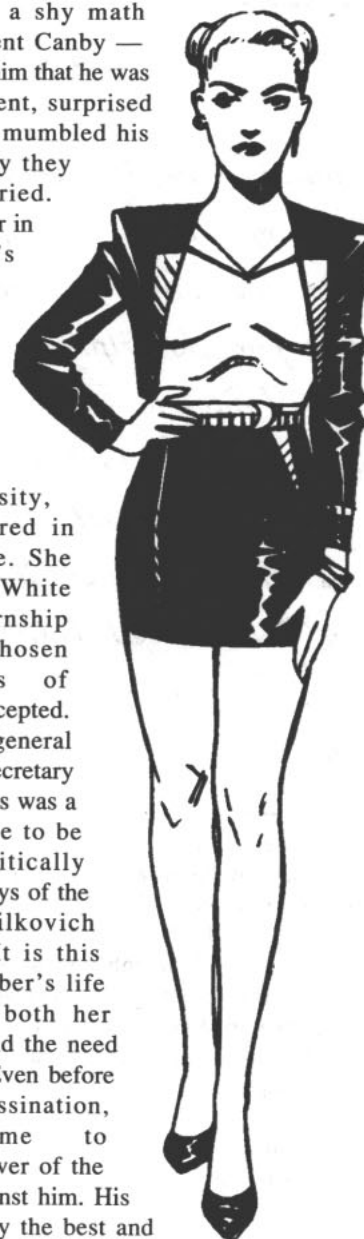
As an only child, Macomber matured quickly, relating better to adults than peers. Both parents were active in Democratic politics — they met and fell in love at the 1972 Democratic convention — and encouraged her to learn about the world around her from a very early age. She learned how to debate at the dinner table, both impressed and intimidated her teachers with her precocious grasp of current events and moral issues. Naturally, her classmates avoided her like the bubonic plague. While other children might have become embittered by this ostracism, Macomber took it in stride. She was special, and if they didn't want to hang around with her, it was their loss.

By the time high school rolled around, Macomber had blossomed into a very attractive young woman. The boys at her school were too intimidated by her to approach her, but that didn't bother her either. She set her sights on a fellow who

attracted her — a shy math wizard named Kent Canby — and announced to him that he was her boyfriend. Kent, surprised beyond measure, mumbled his agreement. Today they are happily married.

Kent is a researcher in the NSC's decryption department; they have two young daughters, Irina and Katherine.

At university, Macomber majored in Political Science. She applied for a White House internship program, and, chosen over thousands of applicants, was accepted. She worked as a general assistant to press secretary Merline James. This was a very exciting time to be young and politically active: the early days of the idealistic Milkovich administration. It is this period of Macomber's life that taught her both her political ideals, and the need to disguise them. Even before Milkovich's assassination, Macomber came to understand the power of the forces arrayed against him. His staffers, supposedly the best and



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August 2nd.

Everyone around here is shattered. Devastated. Sobbing. I kept waiting for my own tears to come. Then last night it came to me. Tears aren't going to help. Action is. No matter what I have to do, no matter how long it takes, I'm going to step into the President's shoes and finish what he started. Stevens isn't going to cut it, that's for sure. When I've succeeded, then I'll have time to cry. Now is no time to cry. It's time to plan.

brightest come to change America, were already climbing over each other for the chance to compromise themselves. She saw Milkovich as being constantly betrayed, even by his supposed allies. Because he wore his heart on his sleeve, others in Washington saw him as an easy mark. On Chuck D-Day 2011, when Milkovich was killed, in what was clearly an inside job, Macomber wept with the rest of her generation. But she refused to believe that hope was dead. She would carry that hope deep within her, nurture it, bring it back to Washington. And she would protect that hope by adding guile to optimism. To get things done, one had to learn the game. To compete with sharks, one had to develop teeth.

Macomber completed her degree and went on to work as an aide to political consultant J. Andrew Copeland, where she learned the art of political infighting. Copeland saw in her a political star in the making, and gave her every opportunity to

prove herself. He helped her get elected to the Minnesota legislature, and finally, in 2018, to the US Senate, on the Republicratic ticket.

Since that time Macomber has quietly been assembling allies and smudge. She wants to break the hold of corporate interests on the political system, to enact reforms that put the people back in the driver's seat. To get what she wants, she is willing to play ball. If others think of her as just another weasel, that's fine with her — for the time being. In short, she's assembling raw power, waiting until she's already well insulated before sticking her neck out. When she can strike a blow for the good, she'll do so. But her eyes are firmly on the long term agenda. She's currently working for the chairmanship of the Joint Ethics committee, from which she'll be able to start nailing the plumpest and most satisfied of Capitol Hill's corrupt fatcats.

PERSONALITY

Elli Macomber is a core of steely determination wrapped up in a warm and personable package. She is an expert at gauging the wishes of those she deals with, and altering her demeanor to suit. For example, when negotiating with a stuffy member of the old boy's club, she's all smiles and deference. When trying to convince a radical hotrod to proceed with necessary caution, she comes across as passionate and tough. She is always thinking four steps ahead, always looking at the long term. She doesn't believe that the ends justify the means; rather, she has a list of priorities and is willing to make small compromises if it gets her closer to the big goal.

QUOTES

"You can't change something until you know how it works."

"OK, we've kicked this around long enough. Let's decide what we're doing and do it."

"Never forget how you felt on August 1st, 2011. We're here to take this country away from the bastards who did that, and give it back to the people. Lose that feeling, and you've lost the game."

MOUNT RUSHMORE

STR: 8 DEX: 5 SPD: 3 RES: 9
INT: 0 WILL: 5 AURA: 4

Acrobatics (Dodge): 11, Artist (Performer): 10, Gun Combat: 11, Martial Arts: 9
Chitin: 6
Stress Tolerance: 8
Psychosis: Homicidal Mania
Equipment:
30mm Silver Bullet SSF 2/30, 30mm ZAG, Heavy Mondo & Heavykev, Average Pack in Reinforced Case (RES: 12) loaded with Pueblo Firefight!, Combat Goggles

BACKGROUND

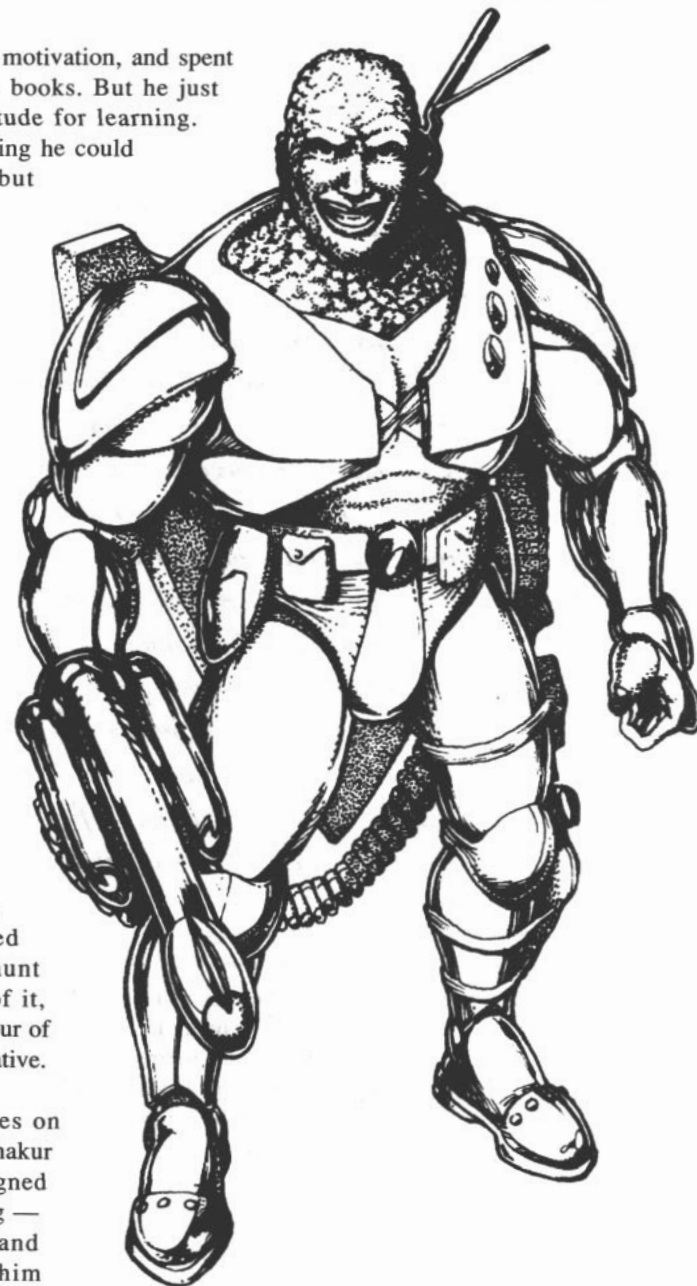
Mount Rushmore is the head of Edutainment's boosted security forces for its D.C.TM complex, as well as one of its most recognizable media representatives. His smiling, rocky face is a fixture on Democracy CityTM tourist brochures and infomercials. Rushmore has a sideline career as an actor and a product endorser. He appears from time to time on vidnet talk shows. Rushmore sticks to the entertainment-oriented programs, like the Marvin Needermeyer Show, avoiding head shows where he would be required to express political opinions. Edutainment wants to stay on the good side of all parties in Washington — it peddles fuzzy consumable patriotism rather than any given party line.

Rushmore was born Shakur Bailey in 1995. He grew up on the wrong side of the tracks in San Diego, California, jointly raised by his grandmother and great aunt. Bailey's mother, Leesha, was 15 when he was born. She was supposed to take over care of Shakur when she finished high school, she instead took off for parts unknown soon after her nineteenth birthday. Shakur's father, who was only casually involved with Leesha, refused to acknowledge him.

So his true parents were his grandmother Denice and great aunt Joycie, who looked after him as best they could. Both Denice and Joycie had been abandoned by the fathers of their children, and they were determined to raise Shakur to be more of a man than they had known. From a very early age, they made sure he knew that the hood was full of pitfalls for a young African American man. They urged him to make something of himself, even if that meant abandoning the neighborhood for greener pastures. The only escape was study — one day he'd thank them when he became a doctor or lawyer.

Shakur had plenty of motivation, and spent hours in front of the books. But he just didn't have the aptitude for learning. Athletics was something he could do instinctively, but words on paper simply eluded him. Unlike many young people in his position, however, he didn't lose all sense of ambition, despite his many hours of frustration spent in front of his schoolbooks. His acute awareness of his intellectual failings just made him more desperate to find a ticket out. He saw the ticket in the form of a DHI recruiting officer, who came to speak to his high school class on careers day. Before his horrified grandmother and aunt could talk him out of it, he'd signed on for a tour of duty as a boosted operative.

Due to his low scores on DHI aptitude tests, Shakur was genetically designed for basic grunt fighting — they made him big and strong, and gave him



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DHI Reconditioning Counselling Log

Subject: Shakur Bailey
Subject Code Number: 29877/024495/00350
Therapist: Dr. Susan Kuhn
Date: 160220

Subject shows considerable psychological resilience. Determination to succeed reduces all cognitive dissonance to minimum. High ability to assimilate anomalous experience. Somewhat too eager to please, to show improvements not yet proven. But all in all extremely positive subject. Bears shock of departure from Slumberland with unparalleled equanimity. Accepts fully unusual side-effect of new armor enhancement. Emblematic quote of today's session: "Lady, I'll eat anything to get somewhere I wanna be." Subject shows best prognosis for long-term adjustment of any I have heretofore counselled.

natural armor for that extra bit of damage resistance. He was given an experimental variation of the Chitin enhancement, splicing in DNA from coral polyps to cause his skin to secrete a hard rocky shell. The limitation of this enhancement is that the recipient has to ingest a large bucket of sand every couple of weeks to provide the raw material to keep the shell fresh and strong. Few boosts had the patience to eat that much sand, and the variant remains rare. Shakur, however, had the necessary determination to keep eating the stuff.

Under the codename "Coral Necklacer", Shakur performed admirably in DHI's Peruvian and New Zealand campaigns. Always willing to take point position and risk

his life to protect others, he won the allegiance of his fellow soldiers. He was quickly promoted to the rank of UnderLieutenant, and received multiple decorations, including the prestigious Tastee Ghoul Soldier-of-the-Month.

He surprised his superiors by deciding not to reenlist at the end of his tour. Shakur was determined to turn his skills as a boost into civilian success. Unlike many of his fellows, he didn't encounter the rude awakening that usually accompanies a boost's demobilization. A DHI executive affiliated with her company's Memorial in Democracy City™ discovered that Edutainment was looking for a stable, affable boost to head their security team, and immediately thought of Shakur. Impressing Edutainment types at a job interview, Shakur soon found himself in a well-paid, respected position that Denice and Joycie could be proud of. It didn't take the Edutainment PR folks long to look at his rocky exterior and pronounce him "Mount Rushmore."

Mount Rushmore considers his life story as proof that the American dream is alive and well. He doesn't allow himself to admit that he's the exception to the rule, that most of his war buddies are now stuck in miserable existences. He tries to help the less psychotic of them with employment opportunities at Edutainment security, and shrugs off any sense of guilt.

PERSONALITY

Mount Rushmore is that stunningly rare item in the media world of 2021 — a man whose PR represents his true self. Shakur really is as gregarious and kind as his TV appearances make him out to be. He is grateful for his good fortune, and thoroughly content with his lot in life. When trouble strikes, he moves bravely and decisively. He is incorruptible, taking his duties very seriously. He lives alone in a well-appointed D.C.™ apartment. His enhancement prevents him from ever having an intimate relationship with a woman, which makes him lonely at times. But he represses this, along with any other sense of regret. He wanted to succeed, and did. And that's all that matters.

QUOTES

"Don't worry, ma'am, we'll find your son. He's just wandered away, that's all. These things happen all the time."

"Yep, that's real rock, all right. Go ahead, squeeze my arm."

"Enough of that, Captain Slamhound. You don't get any luckier than having a job working for Edutainment."

THE SCAR-STRANGLED BLAMMER

STR:4 DEX: 8 SPD: 4 RES: 10
INT: 2 WILL:3 AURA: 3

Acrobatics (Dodge): 14, Administration 6, Detective: 6, Gun Combat (Pistol): 14, Intimidation/Interrogation: 5
Bomb: 13
Stress Tolerance: 4
Psychosis: Homicidal Mania
Equipment:
.50 cal Urban Nightmare EP450, Mondo Armor, Heavy-Kev, BRS 49.

BACKGROUND

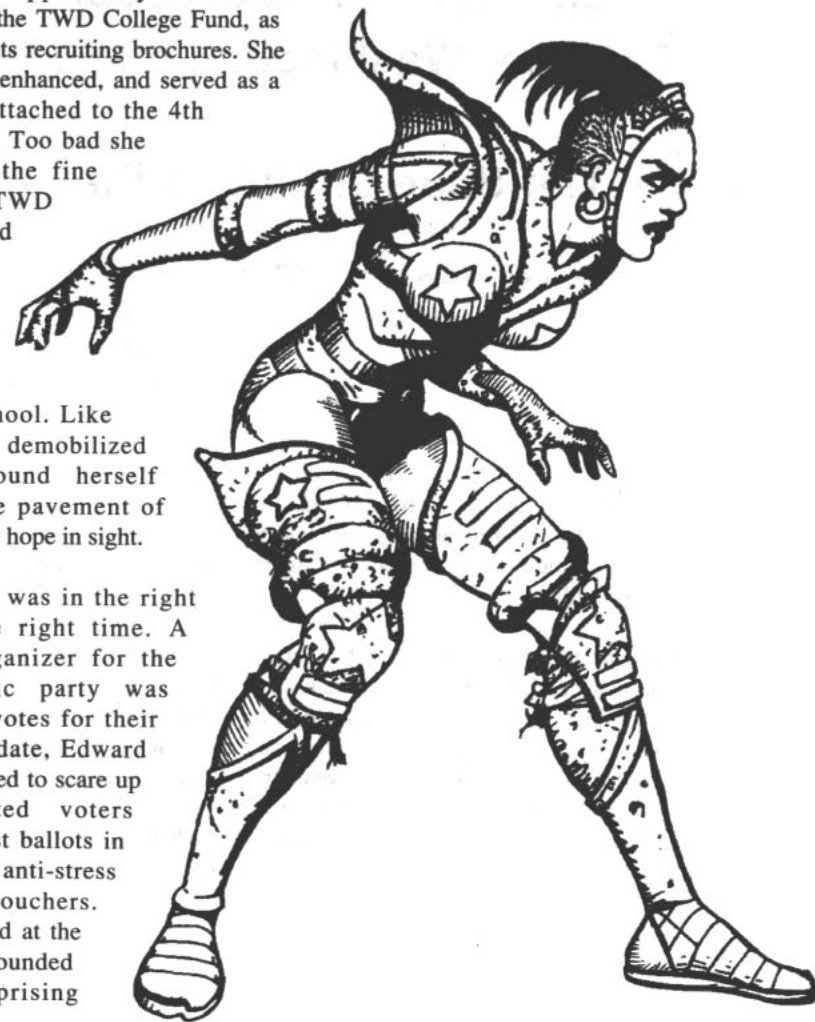
The person who made the most lasting impression on young Ayasha Mayfield was her eighth grade teacher, Mrs. Brim. (Ayasha never learned her first name.) Ayasha grew up in public housing in Chicago, the child of a hardworking single mother who she was able to spend little time with — Mom was always too busy putting food on the table. Ayasha soon learned to give up all hope, just like all of the other kids in the neighborhood. If she was lucky, she'd get to grow up to work as hard as her mother just to keep her head above water. If she was unlucky, she'd get shot to death in the crossfire of a drug deal or as the result of some stupid argument. There was no way out for Ayasha.

Until Mrs. Brim came along. An inspiring teacher — one of the few on staff who hadn't been worn down by the oppressive conditions of the crumbling public school — she taught her students of the hopes that the freedom fighters of 1776 put into the American Constitution. She taught them that there were still opportunities out there for them, that although it might not look like it, they lived in a land of freedom where the only limitation to success was the amount of hard work one was willing to do. Ayasha suddenly threw herself into her studies, and found an ambition in life. She learned about generations of civil rights leaders, and how people like Martin Luther King Jr. fought to make the Constitution really mean what it said. Ayasha Mayfield decided that she would be like Dr. King. She would learn how to make a difference in the world, to bring the kind of fairness the Founding Fathers had wanted for themselves to the projects of Chicago.

Ayasha worked hard through high school and got stunning grades, but failed to qualify for a college scholarship. Doing some research, she discovered that her school had been "red-lined" by scholarship committees. Like many other inner city schools, it had been deemed so hopeless that any marks given out by its teachers were obviously suspect. No one from these schools could go to university unless they could pay their way. And Ayasha, with no employment hopes in sight, certainly couldn't do that.

She had one opportunity left for an education — the TWD College Fund, as advertised in its recruiting brochures. She enlisted, was enhanced, and served as a commando attached to the 4th Infantry unit. Too bad she didn't read the fine print. The TWD College Fund was closed to her, because she had studied at a red-lined school. Like almost every demobilized vet, she found herself pounding the pavement of L.A. with little hope in sight.

One day she was in the right place at the right time. A political organizer for the Republicrat party was hustling up votes for their Senate candidate, Edward Tate. He wanted to scare up some boosted voters willing to cast ballots in exchange for anti-stress medication vouchers. Ayasha jumped at the chance, and rounded up a surprising



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This man fought against education for the people who need it most. He proved himself an enemy of the people. And he paid the price. Washington, mend thy ways!

The Scar-Strangled Blammer

number of fellow vets to vote for a candidate none of them had ever heard of. The political flack, impressed by Ayasha's drive, offered her a job as gofer in the local Replubocratic organization.

Channelling her ambition into his new role, Ayasha impressed the Senator. Tate arranged for her to join his staff in D.C. He also took care of her credentials, trading in a favor at the Census Bureau to get her boosted status erased from the public record. Tate likes to straddle the line on boosted rights issues and didn't want it known that he had a vet on staff.

When she got to Washington, everything clicked into place. All of the stinking breaks she'd been handed all her life were hatched in D.C. Ayasha decided to get into the revenge business, and use her commando skills on the people who deserved to suffer. Now, in the dead of night, she launches violent attacks on those she sees as the enemies of the beloved Constitution Mrs. Brim taught her to love. Her mission is to make the corrupt politicians of the mainstream parties and the hatemongers of the NAS think twice before they jam over people like her. When she kills, she leaves a letter signed by the "Scar-Strangled Blammer" on the corpse, threatening all politicians who fail to clean up their acts.

So far she's bagged mostly backroom dealers — two HUD officials involved in a kickback scheme, an NAS media strategist, an aide to a Republocratic Senator who

argued in favor of further curbs on welfare, and a carload of Plutocratic fundraisers. This has made the name Scar-Strangled Blammer among the most feared in Washington. Both the NSC and FBI have squads assigned to find out who the Blammer is, but so far she's eluded them. Their problem is that they think she's in the Underground, and are looking for fellow conspirators.

Ayasha also had to take out a Census Bureau investigator who got too close to her real past, which made her feel guilty for about a week and a half. She's now seriously considering an attack on an NAS congresswoman with particularly virulent anti-boost views, but knows she'll have to be really careful about that one. A killing of an elected official will really bring the heat down on her.

PERSONALITY

Ayasha Mayfield comes across as energetic, bright, and eager to please. Her superiors on Senator Tate's staff think of her as quiet and unassuming, and would never suspect that she's a trained commando, much less the Blammer. She pretends to be very shy, and claims to spend her evenings at home listening to music and reading. Underneath this pose, she's fanatically determined and driven by rage. She's convinced that what she's doing is absolutely right, and left doubt behind a long time ago. In a sense, there is no Ayasha any more — she vanished years ago, with her dreams of academic success. Now there's just the Blammer, and a fake Ayasha designed to throw suspicion off the Blammer's trail. Nothing matters to her but her mission to reform the system one corpse at a time.

QUOTES

[as Ayasha]

"I'll get on it right away, sir."

"I'm sorry, I'm not ready for a dating situation right now."

[as the Blammer]

"That's not just the sound of a round going into the chamber. It's the sound of the founding fathers you betrayed, inviting you to Hell."

TRIUMPH ARMBOLACK

STR: 2, INT: 4, AURA: 5

Acrobatics: 2, Artist (Performing): 11, Business: 8, Charm: 11.

BACKGROUND

The Triumph Armbolack Show, a half-hour vidnet program that appears every weeknight on the Hey, America! vidnet channel, is the primary propaganda arm of the NAS. It opens with a rousing trumpet fanfare mildly reminiscent of the national anthem, as its muscular host strides proudly into the middle of an arena of adoring fans. The studio audience is exclusively Caucasian and lower middle-class. They're predominantly middle-aged, with a sprinkling of young, hooting frat boys, who have worked out to emulate the physique of their hero, Triumph Armbolack.

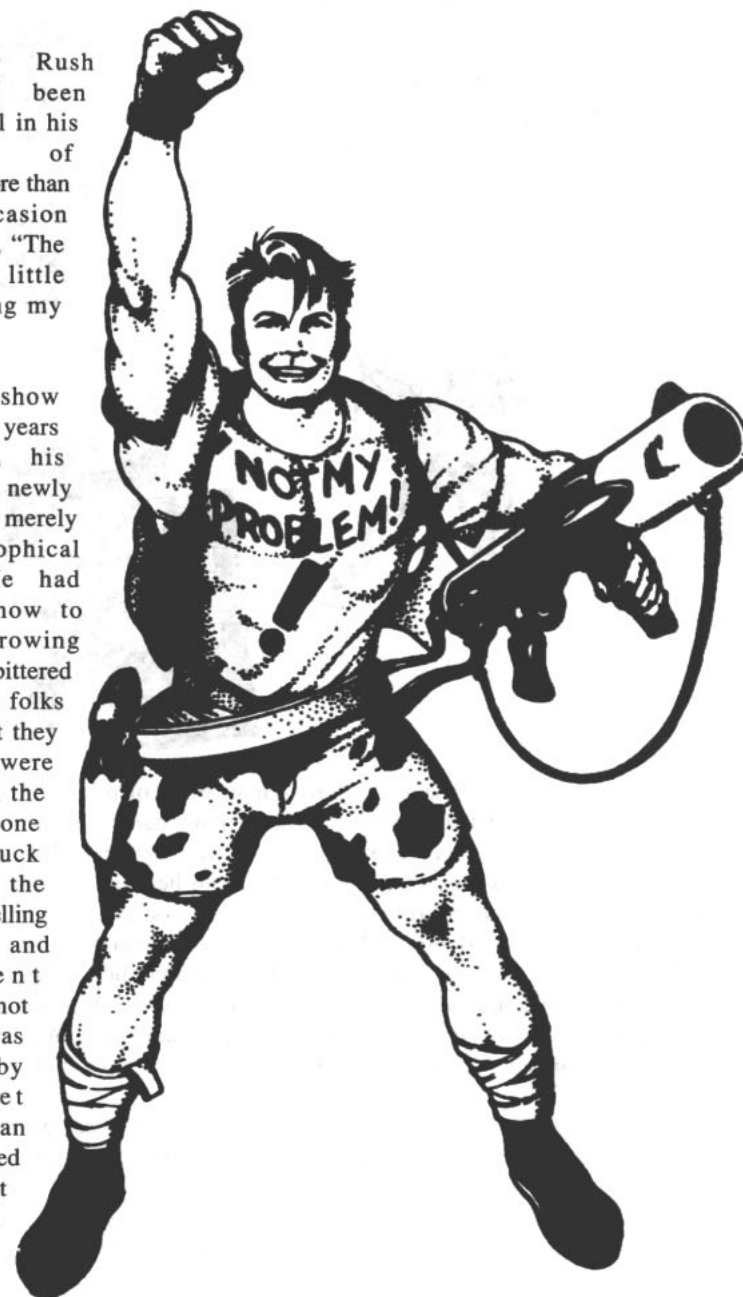
Triumph — or "Tri" as he is known to his devotees — then grabs a mike from a waiting stand and launches into his monologue. The monologue will continue for the entire 22 minutes plus commercials the program entails. As he speaks, in an autofire manner that combines the techniques of the street preacher and the carnival barker, he moves restlessly through the audience. When he reaches a crescendo in his speech, he stops to elicit the approval of the swarms of people seated around him. When he hits a particularly rib-tickling slam of women or minorities or boosts or pre-frontals, the frat boys leap up to high-five him. Triumph Armbolack makes the radical conservative agenda seem like naughty fun and old-fashioned common sense at the same time. It might not be as glitzy as Camelot: The Next Generation, but it's making inroads into the territory of the uniformed nonvoter. Armbolack may wear a mask of hate, but it's a mask bearing a broad, welcoming grin.

The typical Armbolack show begins with a selection of ethnic jokes to get the crowd going. Then Triumph shows a news clip relating to the topic he intends to discuss. Usually it's an attack on a Replubocratic or Plutocratic position, often in the form of a speech by a prominent politician. Then Armbolack runs the clip again, without sound, putting in the hapless politico's mouth a libellous parody of his actual position. This launches Armbolack through the rest of his monologue, carefully crafted to lift his studio audience into a frenzy of fist-pumping agreement.

Republocrats and Plutocrats hate Armbolack, and with justification — he's not only successfully recruiting legions of new bigots, he's arousing the nonvoters. Former

Vice-President Rush Limbaugh has been particularly vocal in his denunciation of Armbolack, on more than one occasion complaining that, "The steroid-pumped little weasel is stealing my old act!"

The Armbolack show went on air three years ago. At first, his connection to the newly formed NAS was merely one of philosophical coincidence. He had designed his show to appeal to a growing market share, embittered and fearful white folks who once thought they had it made but were now going down the tubes with everyone else. He struck paydirt, hitting the market with bestselling books and entertainment software. It was not long before he was approached by Mary-Margaret Vincent, and an alliance was formed to make sure that Armbolack's viewers became Vincent's voters.



PEOPLE

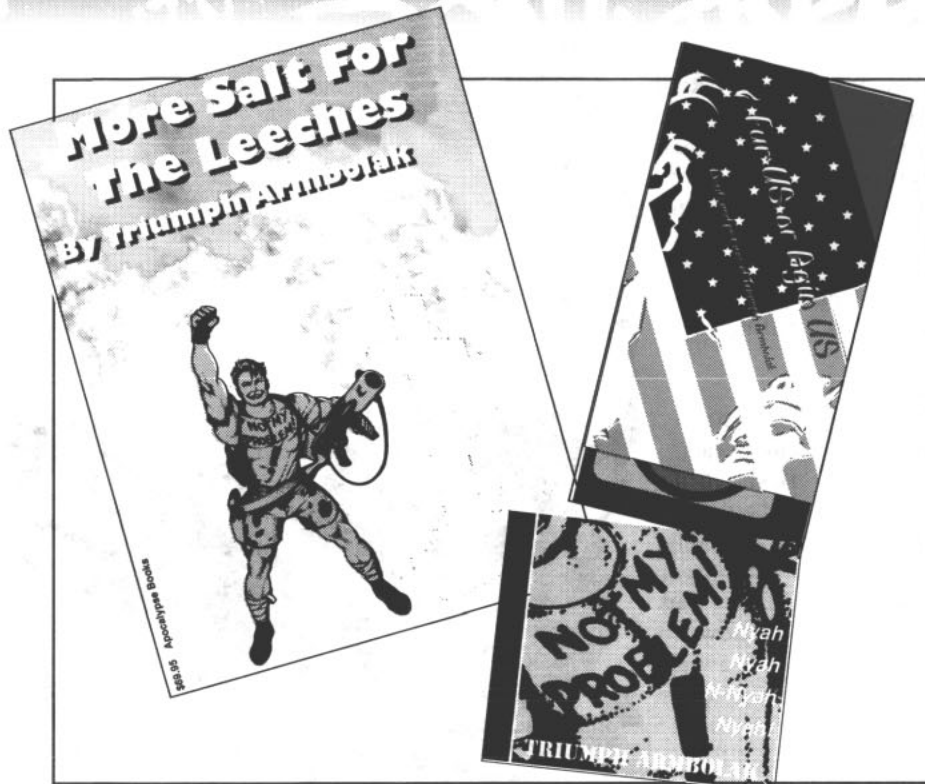
PLACES

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MISC.



In 2019, just as Armbolack was hitting new levels of popularity, scandal struck. An investigative reporter for the outlawed electronic journal The New Republic revealed that Triumph Armbolack, the smiling racist, was born in 1990 in a Delaware hospital as Sitanshu Mangeshkar, to parents of Indian heritage. Mangeshkar, raised in an affluent suburb, was a brilliant student with a passion for high finance. He turned money raised by working at a burger joint into an impressive stock portfolio. At age 18, he liquidated his small fortune, left home without notice, checked himself into an exclusive clinic, and had himself turned into a white man. His plastic surgeons were contracted to a vow of secrecy, which held for many years until one of them, a white liberal, became too disgusted with Armbolack's show to hold his tongue.

What looked like a catastrophe for Armbolack's career became a boost instead. As the media spotlight burned on him, Armbolack unveiled a new wrinkle in his philosophy — his beliefs aren't racist, because anyone can conform to "the true American ideal", just like he did. His book dealing with his transformation, Join the Crowd, became an instant best-seller. In it he proposes that any true patriot should go to the lengths he did to conform. Ridicule should be directed only towards those unwilling to leave

their minority status behind. Those who want to but can't afford it get no sympathy, because they're not willing to work hard enough to earn the money for the expensive surgery required.

The old hardline racist fringe were sickened by the truth about their hero. Armbolack books and tapes were burned at several KKK rallies. But Mary-Margaret Vincent, more interested in power than the subtleties of white supremacist ideology, was delighted by Armbolack's innovation. Here was a way to disarm accusations of racism — anyone can join the NAS demographic, if they try hard enough — while still ensuring blind devotion to a narrow ideal of identity. The old racists fear that an entire generation of so-called "mud people" will spring up to disguise themselves as white folks and marry their daughters. But this isn't going to happen, because the cost of the surgery is still high. Armbolack started a trend, but it's a small one — only a few thousand people a year opt for the surgery. And these, possessed of the fervor only converts can muster, are usually the most committed upholders of the NAS agenda of intolerance.

PERSONALITY

Triumph Armbolack is a man on the move, incapable of standing still. For a man who preaches hate, he's surprisingly cheerful. His staffers all love him, because he's unfailingly polite and never loses his temper. This is because he's completely happy. He's gotten exactly what he's wanted all his life — the adulation of millions, political influence, and more money than he could spend in four lifetimes. When still a young boy, he decided that white people got the advantages in America, and that an investment in surgery would pay off eventually. Even he underestimated the pot of gold that came from abandoning the rainbow. He's living his dream. Triumph has cultivated an ability to simply ignore things that get in the way of his happiness. For example, when confronted by a news report of innocent people being hurt or killed in a racist attack by Tri groupies on the rampage, he just shrugs it off, unable to process the information. Likewise, he's able to brush off any contact with his family without a twinge of guilt. Guilt, he feels, is not an emotion of the future.

QUOTES

"Why did the welfare queen cross the road? The juice house moved!"

"Maybe President Foster is the commie Q-beckers' idea of a conservative. He sure isn't ours, hey gang?"

"We don't sneer at people because of the skin color they were born with. We sneer at people 'cause of the skin color they stick with."

GRIDLOCK'S

FACTS AT A GLANCE

People

Permanent Employees: 4
Part-Time Employees: 36
Security Forces: 20 bodyguards (4 of them boosted), hired directly

Economy

Annual Gross Revenues: \$20,000,000 (excluding tips)
Annual Net Revenues: \$18,900,000

Facilities

Region: Democracy CityTM
Area: 10,000 sq. ft. (930 sq. m.)

LOCATION

Gridlock's occupies part of the seventh floor of a nondescript office tower at 218 Quayle Avenue, on the outer rim of Democracy CityTM. Gridlock's is hidden from the casual visitor to the building; from the outside it looks like just another suite of offices. A lobby plaque labels the suite as belonging to J. B. Richter and Associates, a fictitious name. Inside, Gridlock's is a sumptuously appointed restaurant with an air of unnatural quiet.

DESCRIPTION

Gridlock's is not just a restaurant; it's the most exclusive private club in town. So exclusive that members don't know who else belongs to it. Gridlock's operates perhaps ten days a year, on an irregular schedule. Members are notified a few days in advance that the place is once more about to open its doors. The warning comes in the form of a seemingly innocuous e-mail message. The message contains a date, which is when the restaurant will be open. Members know that a meal will be served at 8 pm sharp on that date.

They don't know who they'll be dining with. Members enter an antechamber before the main restaurant, where they are provided with full-head masks elegantly tailored from black silk. The dress code requires both male and female members to dress in men's formal wear — dinner jacket and bow tie. This is to make identification of



members by other members difficult. Members are also forbidden to speak to others while on the premises. They are permitted to speak to the serving staff, but only in a low whisper. The wearing of colognes and perfumes is forbidden. Smoking of large, foul-smelling cigars is encouraged, but only after dessert is served.

Members are, however, told who they're dining on. Gridlock's offers the finest in upscale cannibal cuisine. It offers its exclusive clientele a kick they can't get at their local Tastee Ghoul — intimate familiarity with the entree. All of the meals served at Gridlock's consist of recently assassinated D.C. players. In the place of a menu, the staff of Gridlock's places at each setting a folder containing the New York Times obituary of the victim. The person who ordered the spin job is usually among the diners; the members of Gridlock's are high up on the metaphorical Washington food chain as well as the literal one. In the words of one Gridlock's member, "There is nothing so satisfying as a closed circle — to go from putting out a contract on an enemy to devouring his corpse in a light cream sauce."

Members are allowed into the Gridlock's club by invitation only. Each is allowed to nominate only one other person for membership. Typical members will know for certain the identity of the person who invited them in, and the identity of the member

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From: abode.ny7man.tcup!albert.commbadge.chocrasp!3mjcl7 Sun Jan 3 15:41:14 2021
 Return-Path: <@chocrasp.commbadge.tcup!3mjcl7@chocrasp.commbadge.tcup>
 Received: from chocrasp.commbadge.tcup by senate.gov with smtp
 (Smail3.1.28.1 #1) id m0pGZbs-000j54C; Sun, 3 Jan 21 15:41 WET
 Message-Id: <m0pGZbs-000j54C@senate.gov>
 Received: from chocrasp.commbadge.tcup by chocrasp.commbadge.tcup (IBM VM SMTP V2R2)
 with BSMTTP id 2173; Sun, 03 Jan 21 15:39:54 EST
 Received: from chocrasp.commbadge.tcup (NJE origin 3mjcl7@chocrasp) by chocrasp.commbadge.tcup
 (LMail V1.1d/1.7f) with BSMTTP id 8700; Sun, 3 Jan 2021 15:39:54 -0500
 Date: Sun, 03 Jan 21 15:36:49 EST
 From: Juan Monteil <3mjcl7@chocrasp.commbadge.tcup>
 Subject: Re: Encyclopedia Listing
 To: Senator Janice Krogstad <krog.priv@senate.gov>
 In-Reply-To: Your message of Sun, 3 Jan 2021 01:02:54 -0500 (EST)

Dear Senator -

We regret that access to the materials you have requested will be delayed until January 11th, 2021. We look forward to seeing you at that time.

Sincerely, Juan Monteil
 Communications Officer
 The Information Project

they nominated, if any. All nominations are vetted by the owner and proprietor of Gridlock's, Francois-Renaud Hamelin.

Hamelin's identity is likewise a secret to almost all of the club members. He and his staff appear in masks also — theirs are of gold silk, to distinguish served from server. Hamelin, a Paris-trained chef who has at various times operated top dining establishments in New York, San Francisco, Toronto, and Upper Bel Aire, came up with the idea for Gridlock's while serving as guest chef at a D.C.TM hotel. He realized that Washington diners hadn't much in the way of gourmet discernment — they were more interested in places for their networking and status potentials than for the food. In a flash of insight, he realized where the real money would be — in providing the final illicit thrill for the power hungry.

Hamelin employs three permanent staffers, who monitor news reports for breaking stories of political assassinations and suspicious deaths. As most Washington players are hit outside of the city, where security is lower, Hamelin's team needs to be ready to jet to any spot in the US at a moment's notice. Rich and influential people rarely sign away the cannibalization rights to their bodies. This means that Hamelin's staff has to bribe morgue officials or funeral directors to get the goods. Hamelin's procurers are cautious, and nine out of ten assassination victims slip through their fingers. Arranging for the unauthorized consumption of a human body is a misdemeanor, not a felony, but Hamelin doesn't want his cover blown. This is an ideal operation — he works perhaps 20 days of the year, and makes the same amount of money he would if he sweated year-round at one of his old establishments.

His patrons appreciate his penchant for secrecy as well. Although nothing they're doing is technically illegal, it would be extremely damaging to most of them if their membership in the club was revealed in the news media. Members of Gridlock's include legislators, administration officials, top bureaucrats, corporate chairs, and state security officers. Only the truly powerful are admitted into the club. Hamelin carefully screens out NJs and heads, as well as anyone with a reputation for leaking to the press.

Dining at Gridlock's is an eerie experience — deliciously so for the patrons. The atmosphere of silence, broken only by the strains of Bach or Chopin and the clinking of cutlery against fine bone china, focuses all the more attention on the taboo-breaking ritual of the club. Outside security is not permitted on the premises; Hamelin's handpicked staff of machinegun-toting guards (in red silk masks) openly display their control of the situation. Members are patted down for weapons, cell phones and surveillance devices upon entry to the club. They are not permitted to reveal the location of the restaurant to assistants or others, nor are there facilities for members to receive calls while dining.

To date, Hamelin has not suffered a serious security breach. His employees are well-paid to keep their mouths shut. And perhaps a little afraid, too. It is rumored that one member of the club became a meal when she told a friend about it; whether this is true or not is impossible to verify. Another rumor is that Hamelin will use the club to dispose of prominent corpses that members might have in their possession; this one is more likely.

A meal at Gridlock's costs an even \$200,000 a plate. There are roughly 150 members of the club, 100 of which, on average, show up at any given soiree.

HI-SECURITY ENTERPRISES

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Organizational Profile

Headquarters Location: White Oak, MD

Director: Charles ("Chuck") Ettinger

Mission Statement: "Ultimate security for the discriminating client"

Annual Budget: \$150,000,000

Personnel

Total Employees: 2,000

BACKGROUND

Hi-Security Enterprises, among the most successful of a dozen similar private security firms operating in the Washington market, is a prime example of the blurring of the lines between the state security apparatus and private profit-driven enterprise. Hi-Security was originally established by as a CIA front company in 1998, under the name High Security Technologies, Ltd. Like any number of other front operations created when the CIA was still a governmental institution, it was designed to provide cover for covert operations. HST was meant to serve as a distribution point for foreign technologies stolen by CIA agents in the course of their spying activities. Through HST, favored American high-tech companies could be given access to these secrets, with no one the wiser. The CIA lavished lots of money on HST in order to give it the appearance of legitimacy. They hired genuine research scientists and engineers and invested heavily in equipment. The researchers they hired couldn't have been happier — the CIA was prepared to fund whatever projects they wanted, so long as they looked "scientific."

The researchers in turn delighted their CIA masters by actually creating and marketing successful technologies, particularly in the lucrative biotech area, which was booming in the wake of the alien pod discoveries. By 2002, HST was turning a profit, which the CIA was using to launder illegal arms sales to various third world nations.

When the CIA was privatized in 2011, many of its high level administrators bid for chunks of the operation that they thought could be turned into profitable enterprises. At the top of everyone's wish list was HST. A joint bid by the Director of Central Intelligence, Louise Dorn, and her second-in-command, Charles Ettinger, was



approved by the Stevens administration. Other competitors grumbled about a shady backroom deal, which is standard in such cases.

Dorn and Ettinger initially saw HST as a tech development firm, and it ran reasonably profitably as such for several years. When prominent officials started coming to them looking for technical solutions to problems with boosted bodyguards, Ettinger smelled serious opportunity. As veterans began to return to the US, many of them turned to terrorism, frightening the socks off the average politico. When the Secret Service moved to create a boosted division, many D.C. players ineligible for SS protection hired their own boosts. This resulted in several scares when boosts under fire went psycho and attacked the people they were supposed to be protecting. HST's response to this was the creation of the Paste™ Pacifier (q.v.) They marketed not only to VIPs with private bodyguards, but to the Secret Service itself.

This contact with the problems of boosted bodyguards led Ettinger — who took over as Director in 2019 — to change directions for the company. Hi-Security Enterprises, a wholly-owned division of HST, was born. Ettinger hired former recruiters from the

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COME IN FROM THE COLD



Your country still needs you, veteran. And this time you'll be paid for your troubles. If you have a service record you can be proud of, and have kept to the straight and narrow stateside, there's a chunky salary waiting for you at High-Security Enterprises. Stand tall in the honorable bodyguard business. Fax (703)555-8239 for details.

HSE is exempt from the provisions of Mental Disabilities Hiring Act according to article 711a (Security Industry Employment Standards).

major militant firms to oversee the hiring of vets for high-level bodyguard postings. Psychological profile is the most important criteria for hiring. Discretion, good manners, and a reasonably normal physical appearance are also vital. HSE pays well, snaring the cream of the crop of vets. They screen for criminal records or past histories of sedition. Ettinger's connections have snagged him full access to Census Bureau and ASS records. They also check service records for dishonorable conduct during the vet's military career. A bodyguard contract with HSE allows for immediate dismissal without notice. This clause will certainly be invoked if HSE learns of any past transgressions after hiring someone.

HSE pays its boosts handsomely, having learned that money is the best guarantor of loyalty. A beginning bodyguard makes \$35,000 a month; the pay rate tops out at \$45,000. (Of course, they pass this cost along to their clients, who are anxious to believe that they're getting the best the market has to offer.) Ettinger has announced that executive positions are available to boosted employees when they reach sufficient seniority. Whether he intends to stick to this unusual promise remains to be seen.

PCs seeking to be hired by HSE must submit to a pair of job interviews. At the first, they are expected to provide copies of their service records. An HSE researcher with a Detective (Investigation) skill of 10 then does a background check. PCs who haven't done anything shady pass the check. If they have questionable pasts, assign a Difficulty according to how well the information is hidden. Remember that HSE has access to Census Bureau and ASS records. Then roll a P/F Challenge on behalf of the researcher. If the result is a Pass, the characters are summarily rejected.

Those who get past this stage are then interviewed by a panel of recruiters. To get hired, they must make a P/F Challenge of their Charm skills against a Difficulty of 4. Their players must also roleplay the characters as seeming sane, in control, and deferential to authority.

Once hired, recruits go through a three-month training course, at half salary. At the end of the course, characters have the Administration (Federal) skill at +1, or an additional point in the skill if they had it already.

Boosted bodyguards may be assigned permanently to a single client, or rotated through short-term assignments. Members of the House and Senate, backroom operators, corporate poobahs, top bureaucrats, and diplomats of penny ante Third World countries all hire HSE bodyguards. Squads consisting entirely of non-boosts are available for the squeamish. NAS types rely on these exclusively.

Ettinger's operation is not the only one used by top D.C. players. Others include Gauntlet Security, The Ordnance Group, VIP Services, Command and Control Incorporated, State Farm Security, and The Proud and the Armored. A few of them employ the same stringent background checks as HSE, using similar connections. Others are less stringent, and accordingly have less impressive records. HSE boasts the lowest kill ratio of any of the firms, a very impressive 97% annual survival rate for clients. The highest kill ratio belongs to the unfortunate VIP Services, which has had a plague of messy incidents lately. So far no one has put evidence to the claim that VIP executives were paid to set up clients. Certainly no one has ever accused Chuck Ettinger of such a breach of trust.

SECRET SERVICE - BOOSTED DIVISION

FACTS AT A GLANCE

Organizational Profile

Headquarters Location: Washington, DC

Operations Chief: Nikki Cobb

Reports to: Curtis Meldgaard, Director of Secret Service

Primary Responsibility: Augmenting Secret Service duties with boosted capabilities

Annual Budget: \$100,000,000

BACKGROUND

The Secret Service's Boosted Division is a response to the essential paradox of providing security to high officials in an age of genetically enhanced veterans. According to most threat evaluation models, boosted vets as a group pose the greatest danger to those the Secret Service is assigned to protect. Demographically, they top the scale in all categories — they're motivated to take revenge against the US government, and they have the greatest capability to do so. They have been redesigned to kill, and a great many of them have been intensively trained in black operations, including assassinations. In short, they're the Secret Service's worst nightmare.

Even before the first boosted vets returned to civilian life, Secret Service policy analysts had determined that something would have to be done to adjust for the additional risk factors their very existence posed. They all came to the same conclusion — the Secret Service would need to draw on its own pool of boosted operatives.

The report that contained this conclusion became a political football within the Gates administration. It had already been making use of widespread fears about boosts for their own political ends. Polls showed that politicians who got too close to veterans lost points among the voting segment of the population. Boosted soldiers were well-liked enough, but the minute they became vets, they were political poison. To put boosts on the podium with the President at his every public appearance seemed like a terrible error to White House opinion experts. Deep down, there was another problem: the officials who were assigned Secret Service bodyguards were afraid of boosts and didn't want them around. Although they wouldn't admit to their fears, clearly one of the main obstacles to the formation of a boosted division was the concern that a



member of a security detail could freak out and spin the very person he was supposed to be protecting.

Administration officials changed their tune when former Vice-President Howard Sedgefield's Secret Service detail was taken out by a sole boosted vet known as the Scary Prankster. After killing all of the Secret Service operatives, the Prankster merely planted a coconut cream pie in Sedgefield's face. But the incident was enough to cause a radical rethink at the White House. When Hi-Security Enterprises presented the prototype for the PasteTM Pacifier (q.v.) to policymakers, a compromise was born. The Secret Service would hire boosts to pump up its anti-boost capabilities. But these boosts would all be equipped with a failsafe mechanism to stop them from harming anybody important.

PEOPLE

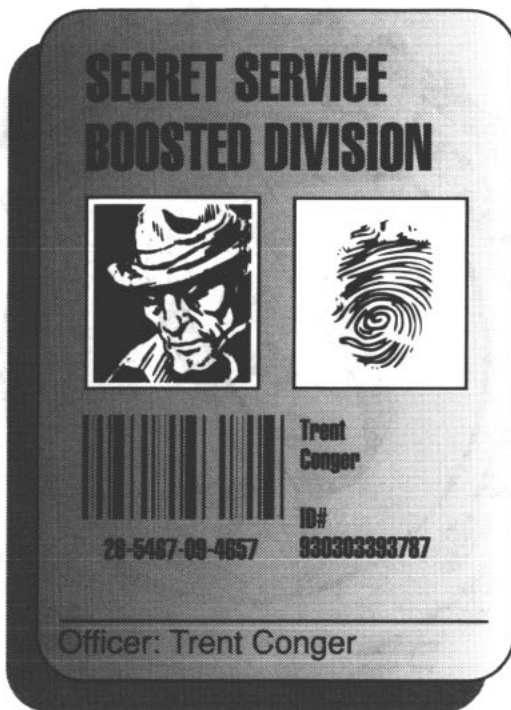
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The SS-BD was born, and one of the chief advocates of the move, one Nikki Cobb, was appointed to oversee the project. Although seemingly a promotion, Cobb soon realized that she'd been sidelined. Senior Secret Service personnel had constructed the SS-BD to make it a career dead end. She was given the Service's worst deadwood to work under her, as well as a few too-ambitious junior operatives. She did her best to work around the former types in recruiting a force of boosts tame enough to walk the corridors of power.

Working with secret files from the conflict firms, Cobb concentrated on hiring boosts who had comparatively good psychiatric files and relatively normal appearances. Since these were the boosts most in demand as corporate flacks, she had to offer them very attractive salaries to attract them. Especially when they found out that they'd be getting Paste™ implanted in their skulls.

LEADERSHIP

Nikki Cobb is a real go-getter who is working hard to create a positive public image for the SS-BD. This is tough, because her superior, Secret Service director Curtis Meldgaard, would like nothing more than for the very existence of the SS-BD to be forgotten by the American people. Every time Meldgaard sees a boosted Secret Service operative on the vidnet news, he winces. Cobb has decided that she'll never get ahead unless Meldgaard gets replaced, and is looking hard for some smudge to pin on him. This may work, because Meldgaard tries to put her and her whole division out of his mind — he views her more as a pest than a real threat to his position.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

SS-BD officers are given real luxury treatment, which serves to make the Service look attractive to other recruits, and to keep operatives on an even keel mentally. They tend to be unambitious sorts who just want to take it easy. Except for the odd moment of panic, life as a government bodyguard is mainly a matter of remaining alert and being thorough. It isn't nearly as dangerous as corporate espionage or organized crime activity. Some SS-BD operatives are jingoistic types who identify with the establishment and are proud of their new roles. Many more of them are simply earning a good living for themselves, figuring they've lucked into a good thing.

The off the rack Secret Service operatives given the role of supervising the boosts are a different breed. They realize that they've been sentenced to career purgatory. They resent their jobs, and resent the boosts. Thus there is a real division between the boosts and the "suits." The suits work hard to take credit for anything good done by their boosted underlings, and block any attempts by the boosts to rise in the hierarchy.

Several outside reports on this tendency have been squelched by the director of the Service, Curtis Meldgaard. They claim that the cultural divide between superiors and line operatives are responsible for too many communications screw-ups. One report even went so far as to paint the SS-BD as a mutiny waiting to happen. However, no one within the agency wants to take the flack, both from its own people and from the administration, that would result if they were to attempt to rectify the situation. That would mean integrating the boosts into the regular service, and that would be too unpopular a move. As those in charge tread water, the problems within the SS-BD continue to grow.

ISSUES OF THE DAY I

As GM of a D.C.-based campaign, you can expect to be asked for details on the issues currently before Congress. This Notebook page is intended to give you a number of such issues to use on the spur of the moment. This may remain background details, or could become the focus of a story objective or Campaign Goal.

For convenience of reference, each is divided into four sections. Issue describes the matter being discussed, Who's For It lists interests fighting for the move, Who's Against It lists the forces the characters will be opposing if they support the first group, and Chances Are predicts what the outcome of the debate will be if the vets don't get involved.

Issue: Producers of durum wheat — the kind used to make pasta — are fighting for the retention of an outdated subsidy program that forces the federal government to cover half of their costs.

Who's For It: The lobby fighting for the wheat producers is the DWB, or Durum Wheat Board. They have lots of money to spread around — their members spend a cut of those subsidies to hire lobbyists to keep 'em coming. Supporting the DWB are the National Anti-Socialists, who are well represented in the wheat belt. They have strange bedfellows on this issue; leftish consumer groups like the Anti-Poverty Coalition and the Shopper's Rights Organization want the subsidies retained as well. This is because the government subsidies keep food prices low and therefore represent indirect aid to the poor.

Who's Against It: The administration wants to cut the subsidy, since wheat producing states vote NAS anyway, and spend the money on Congressional pet projects to reward districts that voted Plutocrat. Special interest groups who like to see taxes kept low, like the Budgetary Balance Board and Cover Your Assets, support the move to slash the subsidies, but will howl in betrayal when they find out that the Plutocrats don't intend to apply the saved funds towards deficit reduction.

Chances Are: The DWB has the most money to throw at this problem, since BBB and CYA are philosophically opposed to lobbying. This will net enough Republocrats and defecting Plutocrats to keep the subsidy in place.

Issue: Growing controversy about the use of explicit sexual imagery in vidnet advertising has inspired a growing call for government regulation of ad agencies. The Gratuitous Commercial Sexual Imagery Control bill has been drafted to create yet

DURUM WHEAT PRODUCTS GETTING REAPED

another new bureaucracy — the Gratuitous Commercial Sexual Imagery Control Agency, naturally enough — to pre-screen vidnet ads and refuse approval to commercials that its officials don't approve of.

Who's For It: This is another unholy alliance between extreme right and left. The NAS objects to sexual imagery of any sort in any context. Consumer protection lobbyists want commercials to be more boring and informative, centering on the product being sold rather than the purchaser's hypothetically higher chances of making it with an attractive partner. And hardline feminist groups want the agency in place to ban what they feel are degrading and dehumanizing images of women.

Who's Against It: The heavily bankrolled advertising industry and the various conglomerates who make use of it are understandably quite perturbed by this movement. Their surveys still show that the promise of sexual gratification is one of the most successful sales techniques with vidnet watchers. They argue that as advertisers, they are forced to be even more responsive to the public than politicians are. If people didn't want to see these commercials, they wouldn't buy the products.

Chances Are: Most Plutocrats and Republocrats are with the ad agencies on this one. However, if the Plutocrats need to buy off the NAS on some more important issue, they might be willing to create GCSICA — and then hobble its effectiveness by

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Dear Congressperson

Fillbrick:

You are cordially invited to a reception sponsored by the Freedom in Commercial Expression Foundation, on August 31st, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. A full buffet supervised by famed Cajun chef Zuzu Fontaine will be served. Any Members of your staff who wish to acquaint themselves more fully with our organization are also most welcome to attend.

making sure that only ardent free-speechers and blatant pornographers get appointed to staff it.

Issue: A move is afoot to break the effective monopoly of telecommunications giant QVB has over fiber-optic communications. Weakened antitrust statutes have allowed QVB to buy out its competition over the years. Now that it's cornered the market, it's jacked up its prices, enraging consumers.

Who's For It: Rising telecommunications costs are a hot-button issue with voters. Congressmen and senators whose elections are coming up soon fear the wrath of the electorate on this pocketbook issue. And a number of small, struggling companies who have survived QVB's rollover of the industry are waging a media campaign to keep the public reminded of its anger.

Who's Against It: Senators with another four or six years left in their terms want to keep accepting QVB's generous donations. President Foster has relied on QVB's largesse over the years, and the state security apparatus appreciates their cooperation with electronic snooping on citizens.

Chances Are: The House passes legislation ordering QVB to divest itself of much of its holdings. The Senate passes an incompatible bill allowing QVB to keep its holdings but requiring it to reduce its rates slightly. President Foster promises to veto either bill as undue interference in the capitalistic process.

Issue: A bill is proposed to force major grocery chains to put stores in disadvantaged areas, included "crimson zones" like L.A. Currently most poor neighborhoods have a liquor store and gun store on every corner, but are only able to get high-priced, low quality food in small convenience stores and markets.

Who's For It: On the surface, this seems to be another move from the idealist fringe of the Republicrat party. But a newly formed special interest group, QSIAR (Quality Shopping is A Right), is putting a surprising amount of money into the campaigns of candidates who support it. Therefore, a significant number of Plutocratic lawmakers are crossing ideological lines to support the bill. QSIAR is actually a front operation for a cartel of second-rank food retailers and discount houses. They've written the bill so that it will affect only operations larger than their own, making their monolithic competitors take a hit through increased capital expenditures, insurance costs, and so on. As the big companies are forced to expand into low-income areas, the QSIAR companies will be expanding into upscale markets previously dominated by their competitors.

Who's Against It: The big retailers are against the bill. The administration takes big donations from both camps, and is letting the two well-financed groups slug it out. The highest bidder will take the prize.

Chances Are: The Plutocrats will try to drag this one out for years. They can keep taking money from both sides for as long as they can stall. When a decision finally has to be made, they'll inevitably tee off one group or the other. Meanwhile, the issue is a primo gravy train.

ISSUES OF THE DAY II

More spur of the moment matters of debate for a D.C. campaign. See Issues of the Day I (q.v.) for format explanation.

Issue: The Edutainment Consortium is seeking an amendment to the Biohazard Management Act to allow them to set up a chain of Really Big Game™ Parks. This is a plan to create large conservation areas in which hunters can pay for the privilege of hunting genetically altered animals of the type found in D.C.™'s Genetically Altered History Museum.

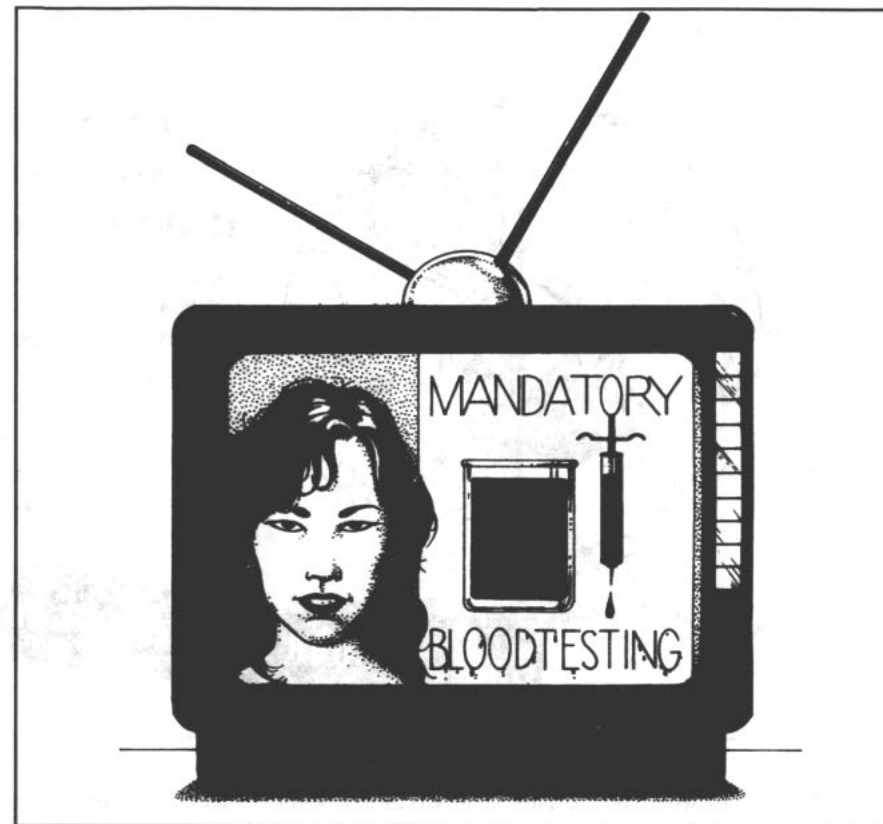
Who's For It: Obviously, the Edutainment Consortium is the main driver behind the bill. They see big profits in this operation. Also all for it are various hunter's rights organizations, such as Our Hunting Heritage and Endangered, Schmaendangered. The various pro-gun lobbies (the National Rifle Association, National Pistol Association and National Assault Rifle Association) have shown rare unanimity in getting behind this one as well. They like the idea because now finally there will be animals tough enough to justify their claims that pretty well any piece of firepower known to mankind has a legitimate hunting use.

Who's Against It: A number of special interest groups are vehemently opposed to the plan. The anti-enhancement lobby, Out of Our Genes, is opposed to any use of genetic enhancement technology. Environmental groups like the Sierra Club and Greenviolence fear further damage to an already-damaged ecosystem if some of these things escape the parks and start to breed, as surely they will. And animal rights lobbies, like AAPT (Animals Are People Too) are against this, as they are against all forms of hunting.

Chances Are: This issue is comparatively small potatoes. Edutainment and the gun fans have enough money to ensure the passage of the amendment. However, once the parks are up and running, local residents groups are going to freak out at the idea of electrified wolves in the woods next door, forcing a reopening of the fight at the state and local levels.

Issue: The Supreme Court recently ruled that police and state security officers are not permitted to demand blood samples from suspects; to do so is to violate Fifth Amendment rights to avoid self-incrimination. Talk is now afoot in Congress of another constitutional amendment, one that will specifically exempt tissue sample requests from the Fifth Amendment.

Who's For It: The NAS and hard-right lawmakers from the other two parties are behind this drive. The reason police have taken to demanding blood samples is to



determine whether suspects are boosted or not. The recent development of a portable blood tester for genetic enhancements spurred the original court case.

Who's Against It: Boosted rights activists are strongly opposed to the measure. Many police agencies, particularly in small towns, made a practise of subjecting all newcomers to the test, and then harrassed those proven to be boosts until they left town. Although they present a united front to the outside world, various boost groups are really divided on the issue. Some of them are opposed to the extra invasion of their civil rights; others argue that they shouldn't be fighting to hide their boost status, but should be proudly out of the closet about it, as it were.

Chances Are: This is the sort of law and order move that appeals greatly to a public whipped into hysteria on the whole boost question. Unless the vets spend some serious Reward Points, the Constitutional Amendment passes the required number of state legislatures by 2023.

PEOPLE

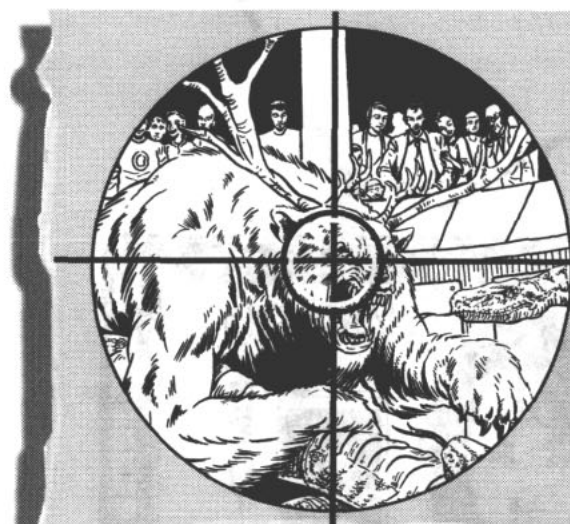
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UNTIL YOU'VE HUNTED THE GENETICALLY ALTERED, YOU HAVEN'T REALLY HUNTED

You may have a whacking big gun and all the hunting softwar in the world, but when you're going up against one of these babies, you need one more thing -- serious cojones. Look deep inside yourself and see if you got what it takes.

Really Big Game™ Parks

Coming soon from the Edutainment Consortium

Issue: Companies who have declared themselves independent states are lobbying for a law that would decertify unions who contribute financially to licensed terrorist groups. Unions were hard hit by the move for companies to declare nation status; many went independent specifically to bust their unions. Big unions like the Teamsters and United Auto Workers responded by setting up terrorist groups, using violent means to replace their lost legal clout. Now the independent conglomerates are arguing that the unions can't have it both ways — if they want to mount terrorist activities, they have to give up their regular union status when dealing with companies who still operate under US law.

Who's For It: Independent companies, who have lavished a great deal of money on the State Department and administration to get them to argue their case. Foster, no friend of unions anyhow, considers them a pillar of Republicratic support and wants to damage them further.

Who's Against It: The Republicrats and their union allies are, predictably, against this. So are, surprisingly enough, the normally anti-union companies who still have to

operations. The front corps claim that the privilege to make their own laws extends to the right to import controlled substances illegal in the United States. Smuggling the stuff remains illegal, but that doesn't stop them from doing it. President Foster wants to be able to pull a "Noriega" and send in AMI or TWD troops to toast corps misusing their independence in this manner.

Who's For It: This is an administration initiative, with heavy backing from the security apparatus and the NAS.

Who's Against It: Many Plutocratic lawmakers are against their President on this one, because all of the independent corps, not just the drug-running front operations, are opposed to it as a dangerous precedent. They want the advantages of being independent without the downside, and are heaving bales of dough at Republicratic and Plutocratic members of Congress to keep things that way.

Chances Are: President Foster is willing to expend some political capital and twist some arms on this one. He'll win a narrow and costly victory and get his legislation unless the vets care to spend some Reward Points to prevent it.

deal with the Teamsters and UAW. The more resources the unions spend on attacking independent corps, the more compliant they'll have to be otherwise. Also, if the terrorist divisions of the unions jam up the competition, so much the better.

Chances Are: The NAS holds the balance of power in this one, which has divided Plutocrats and Republicrats strictly along party lines. Though anti-union and anti-boost (and the union terrorists are usually hired boosts), the NAS is holding out for a support tradeoff on an issue that means more to them.

Issue: The administration is pushing for legislation which would authorize it to call for US-sponsored military raids on independent corporations, just like it makes on other small states. Normally the administration manipulates licensed terrorists to strike at rogue corporations, but several of them have now been revealed to be fronts for drug smuggling

THE PASTE™ PACIFIER

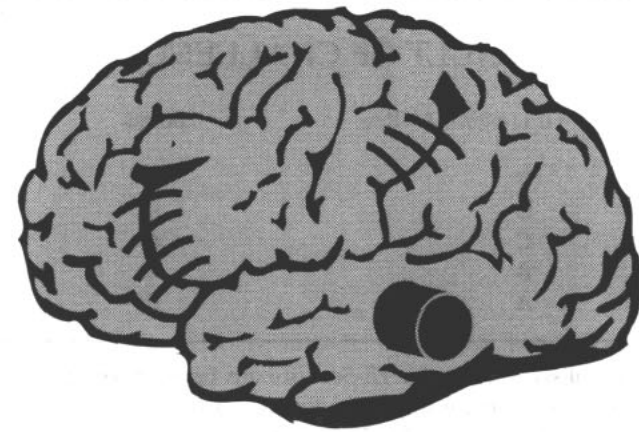
The Paste™ Pacifier is produced by Hi-Security Enterprises under license from Complete Suppression, the holding company that owns the rights to Paste™. As any survivor of a Third World War battlefield knows, Paste™ is the soldier's worst nightmare — an adhesive jelly that dissolves the cellular bindings of any living thing it comes into contact with. Many a veteran's flashbacks center around a buddy who melted before their eyes after being Pasted.

The Paste™ Pacifier was designed to cope with the results of this sort of post-battlefield stress — at a rather high cost to the veteran suffering the stress attack. It is a device surgically installed in the brains of boosted bodyguards who will be assigned to individuals whose safety is considered a matter of national security. All members of the SS-BD (q.v.) undergo this procedure. The idea is to prevent boosts who suffer metagenic feedback trauma from turning on the people they're supposed to guard. It does this by melting the brain of the boost as the stress attack begins.

The Pacifier is a metal tube, one inch long and a quarter of an inch in diameter, made of the same alloy used to contain Paste in military ordinance. Attached to it are a pair of neural cords.

Neural cords are items of biotechnology dependent on the alien pod discoveries. Grown in vats, these thin strands of tissue mimic the functions of human nerves. Like any other part of the nervous system, they chemically communicate signals from the brain to other parts of the body, and vice versa. In this case, the leads connect to the parts of the brain that trigger particular stress reactions. These locations have been pinpointed using the same alien-inspired genetic research that permits enhancement surgery. They differ for each of the psychoses that veterans manifest. When impulses from the psychotic trigger area are generated, the neural cords pick up the neurotransmitter message and pass it on to a microchip in the Pacifier. The microchip triggers a sliding mechanism in the tube that releases the Paste™ into the boost's brain.

There is supposed to be enough Paste™ in the implant to ensure immediate brain death, but not enough to get out through the bodyguard's skull. After all, security officials don't want to run even a slight risk of the Paste™ leaking out onto the VIP being guarded. However, there have been examples of errors in both directions. During a failed terrorist assault on a fundraising dinner hosted by AMI chief Frederick Furrier in 2019, one of his bodyguards underwent feedback trauma and triggered her Pacifier. A pressurized stream of Paste™ erupted out of her left ear and melted off the right shoulder of one of Furrier's assistants.



In 2020, an SS-BD officer assigned to the Republicratic Vice-Presidential candidate suffered a triggering of his Pacifier due to a flashback. Although the Velvet Fruitbat's Pacifier went off, he recovered from the Paste™ release. It destroyed portions of his brain, but enough of it was left to allow the Fruitbat to continue to function. Researchers have since concluded that the Fruitbat's Boosted Intelligence saved his life — the remaining portions of his genetically enhanced brain were able to "rewire" themselves to keep basic brain functions going. Although the Fruitbat lost much of his brain capacity and many of his memories, he is still conscious and self-aware. He was last seen in a Primitivist collective outside Toledo, Ohio.

Pacifiers go off when boosts who have them manifest their psychoses. No To Hit Challenge is required. The Penetration of a Pacifier is 20, the damage IN/KL/KL/KL. Instead of RES, the victim uses INT as the Difficulty of the Penetration Challenge. Those surviving the Paste™ release still suffer brain damage, even if the Penetration Challenge failed. They make a Standard Challenge, using INT, against the result of the Penetration Challenge. The following chart shows how much brain damage is suffered. Brain damage can be expressed as a loss of INT, WILL, or AURA. If the character is a PC, the player may distribute the lost points between these three mental attributes. For NPCs, the GM distributes the loss. If the resulting INT or WILL goes into negative numbers, the character is brain dead; the body lives but consciousness is forever obliterated.

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RESULT OF CHALLENGE

Lost INT, WILL and/or AURA	points
F	10
D	8
C	6
B	4
A	2

Only a few specialists working for Hi-Security are familiar with the neurosurgical techniques needed to properly implant a Pacifier. Installing a Pacifier requires a Standard Challenge of the surgeon's Medicine (Surgery) skill against a Difficulty of 9. In the case of an F result, the patient suffers rejection and takes a LW immediately, and another LW every six hours while the Pacifier is still inside the brain case. A D result means that the Pacifier hookup is too sensitive; there is a chance that it will go off and release the Paste™ even when the character makes a WILL roll and staves off an attack of metagenic feedback trauma — see below. Results of C and higher mean that the surgery is complete success.

Characters with sensitive pacifiers need to make two WILL rolls. The first, as usual, determines whether a stress attack comes on. If this roll fails, the Pacifier, again as usual, releases the Paste™. If it succeeds, a second WILL roll against the same Difficulty is required to prevent the Paste™ from being released anyway. If either of the two Difficulty rolls is a natural die total of 24 or greater, some of the Paste™ also leaks through the victim's skull. It's up to the GM whether this actually lands on anyone else and does any damage, or simply provides an additional gruesome visual.

Some wonder why — if Pacifiers are so hazardous, and their installation is a requirement for all recruits to the SS-BD and other elite bodyguards — any boosts ever join any of these groups. The answer to this question is the luxury lifestyle and high pay that high-level bodyguards get. Many would rather have comfort, security, and a Pacifier than a tamper-free brain and a typical life of squalor in an L.A. housing project. Also, government recruiters tend to downplay the dangers of the Pacifier, sometimes even outright lying to boosts as to what it does. By the time more experienced colleagues on the bodyguard detail tell them what's up, it's too late. Many think that Pacifiers can also be triggered by particular radio signals, and are reluctant to quit for fear that their ex-employers will beam just such a signal at them.

hi-security enterprises

Post Surgery Report Form

...in-house use only...

Attending Physician: *Dr. Leopold Stankev*

Procedure: *Pacifier install*

Date: *210318*

Client: *SS-BD Ellen Lorenc*

Patient: *Jorge Macias*

Patient Code Name: *Demonfiddle*

Physician's Comments: *Brain pathology did not match specs provided by client. Psychosis may be HM rather than Cat. Added extra neural cords to compensate. May reduce transmit rate to unacceptable levels. Chance of accidental firing significantly increased. Recommend removal, protracted psych testing, re-installation.*

Pacifiers aren't really necessary for many boosts — someone who suffers from Catatonia is no threat to anyone once the psychosis kicks in. But the powers that be continue to install them in all top boosted bodyguards, either out of paranoia, or a desire to keep all of their guards in the same boat.

U B DA JUDGE

U B Da Judge is a vidnet phenomenon, one of the most popular shows on the CVC network. In fact, it's so popular that it has recently been spun into its own channel, UBDJ, and is now a program that runs 24 hours a day — including repeats, that is.

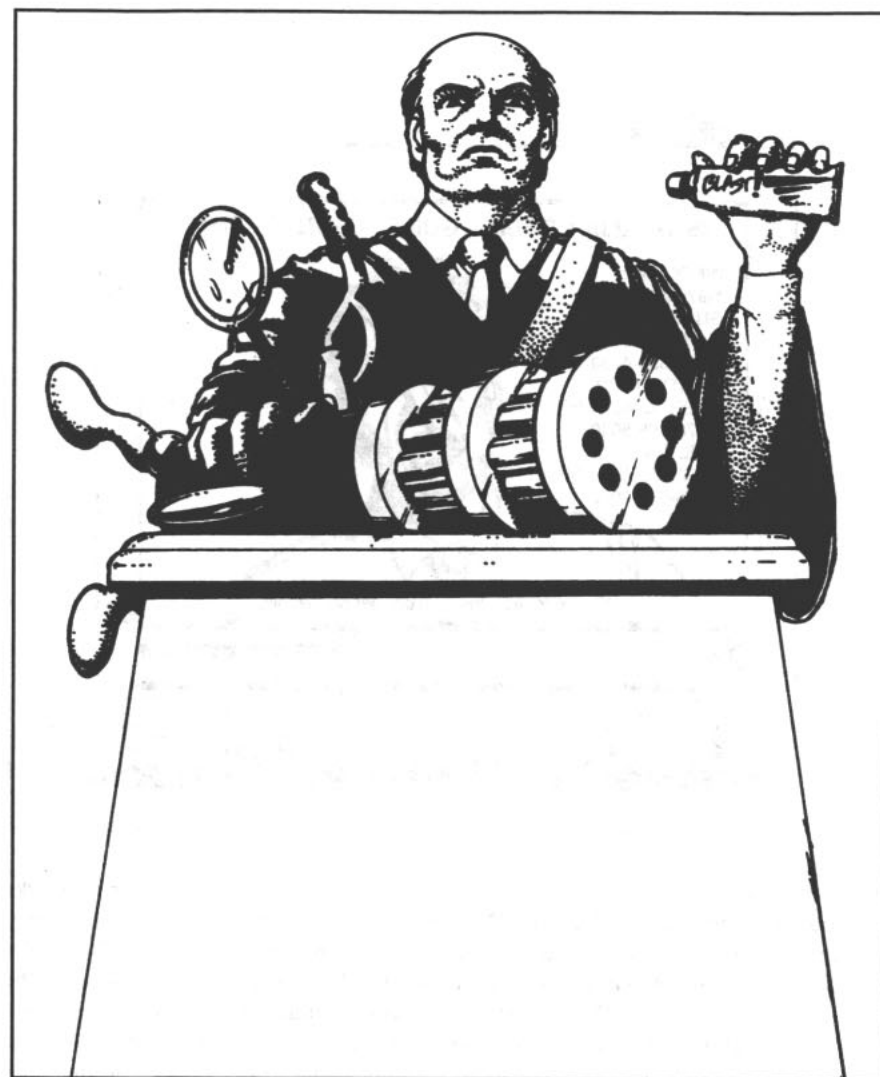
U B Da Judge is a combination of the trend towards gavel-to-gavel coverage of high-profile criminal trials with the largely discredited principles of interactive TV. Before the turn of the century, media analysts were predicting big inroads for vidnet programming that involved viewers, using computerized communication devices to instantly allow them to influence what they saw on their screens. However, plans to implement these ideas almost invariably failed. What the pundits didn't take into account was the fact that if vidnet viewers actually wanted to be anything other than passive, they wouldn't be sitting there watching TV in the first place.

It wasn't until the CVC show Court of Last Resort, an hour long weekly series presenting highlights from trials for capital crimes, that the true potential of interactive TV was realized. Court of Last Resort first aired in 2017, and proved reasonably popular. The well-rated segments in which the executions of death row convicts were broadcast became especially coveted by advertisers. When ratings began to sag, an enterprising producer named Michelle Sintzel decided to add viewer interest by installing a phone poll, in which audience members were encouraged to vote on their preferred outcome for a trial.

Calls began to flood in, overwhelming the low-capacity computer switchboard installed for the procedure. Sintzel expanded her plans...

She contracted with the criminal court of California to take criminal trials off their hands in exchange for a cut of projected profits. Both the state attorney general and the defendant in a case had to agree to move the trial to the jurisdiction of Sintzel's production company, and both had to agree that the results of the trial would be considered binding. If the defendant was judged guilty and sentenced to death or imprisonment, the state would then step in again to administer the verdict.

The first episode of U B Da Judge aired in January of 2019, and involved the trial of a psychopath who trained german shepherds to attack and kill a string of victims in a sleepy high-security suburb. Viewers were told to stay tuned to the entire trial, as



they would at its end get the opportunity to decide his fate by phone poll. The results were astonishing. The program not only raked in big advertising dollars, but made a killing on the deluge of incoming calls, for which viewers were charged on their phone bills. The defendant was, by an overwhelming margin, judged guilty and sentenced to death.

PEOPLE

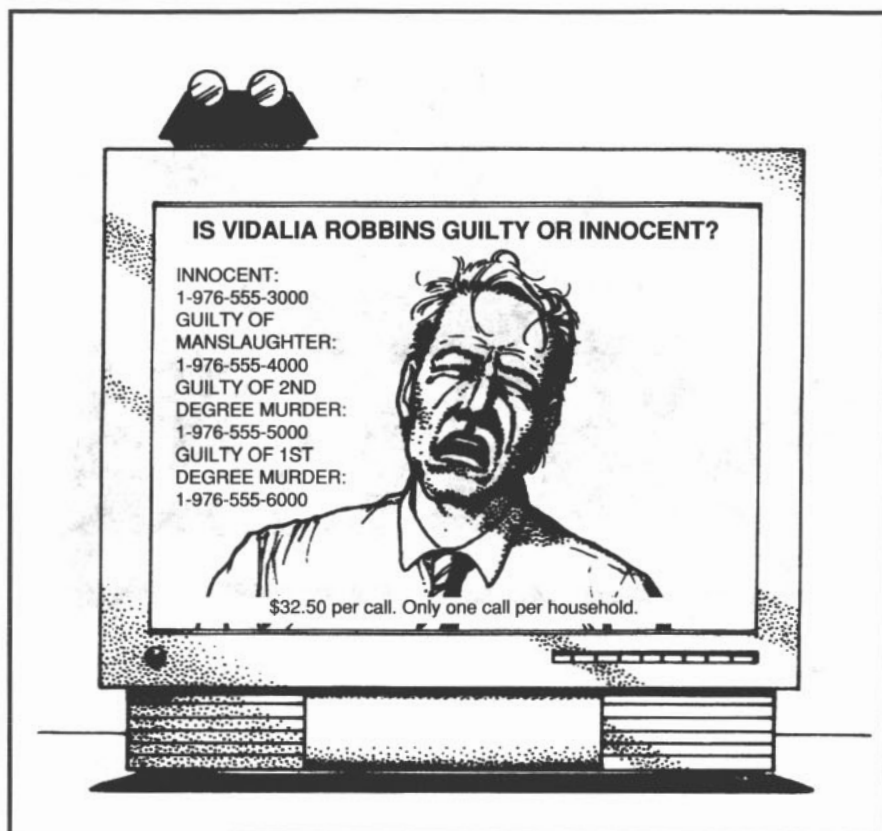
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Jurisdictions other than California jumped onto the bandwagon. Other networks offered competing shows. But U Be Da Judge, as presided over by the lovably crusty instant celebrity and retired judge Sarah Newey, retains top spot in the public imagination. Now defendants and state attorneys alike fight to get exposure on the show. Defendants often think they can get off by blatantly appealing to public sympathy. Defense and prosecution attorneys know that a shot on the show can dramatically up their fees or chances of winning public office. Everyone involved knows that it boosts the value of subsequent book deals.

The results of U Be Da Judge trials are unpredictable. Sometimes flagrant sociopaths go free by cranking up the charm and claiming past histories of deprivation or abuse. Other times comparatively minor offenses result in lengthy prison sentences for

strident or unlikeable defendants. Wealthy, white "off the rack" defendants tend to do better for themselves than the poor, minorities, or boosts. This is somewhat puzzling, as surveys have shown that the average U Be Da Judge caller is more likely to resemble the person that usually gets convicted than the type who usually go free. Sociologists differ as to why this is. One interesting statement claims that the more the defendant resembles a perpetrator who might directly victimize the average viewer, the harsher the phone vote will be. A well-groomed fraud artist who pulls in billions on an insider trading deal is a distant and exotic figure, like the roguish star of a vidnet soap opera. Viewers like to forgive, and don't feel at risk by forgiving someone of this sort. But a boost who blows up a precinct house is considered more threatening — he might, after all, come to live in their neighborhood if he gets off.

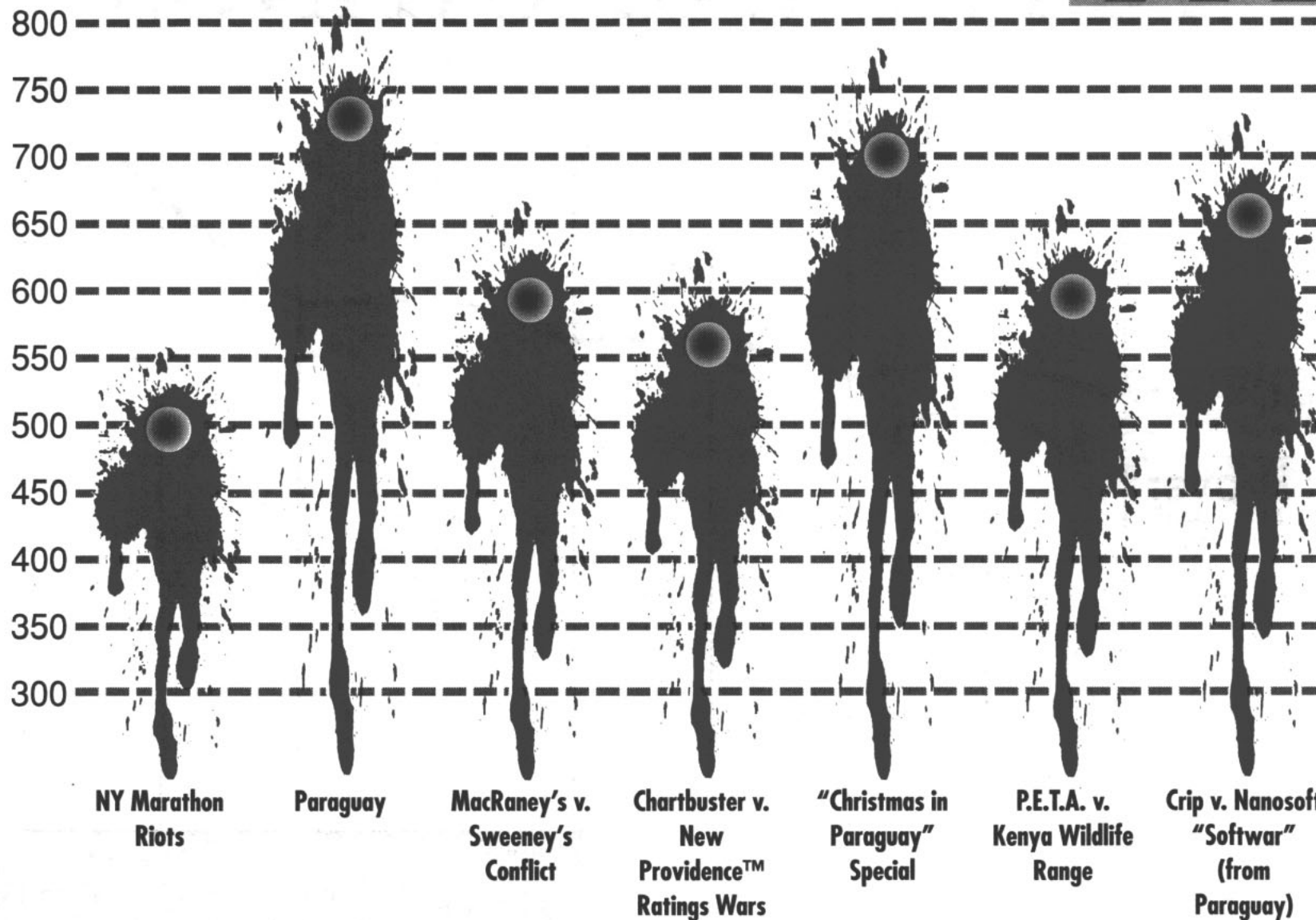
The show has successfully weathered a number of scandals. New software was installed to accept only one vote per phone number when the Cypherpunks got a not guilty verdict for a noted terrorist through the use of a repeat-dialing computer program. One boosted defendant freed on murder charges promptly went on a killing spree immediately upon release from the show's holding pens; she was convicted and sentenced to the gas chamber at the end of a second U Be Da Judge trial.

Originally taped in California, the show is now broadcast from the security of D.C.TM; this change took place in the wake of an attack on the show by paid agents of China during an espionage trial. Political trials have been featured on the show on several occasions since then. Most recently the trial of a beloved but thoroughly corrupt Republicratic Senator on racketeering charges resulted in her complete exoneration. Her political enemies have grumbled that she would never have survived a conventional trial. Player characters may find the program a haven from prosecution when they're caught with their hands in the till, provided that their own Charm skills are cranked high enough.

The Washington establishment is very happy to have U Be Da Judge in operation. It is not only a more lenient forum when their own peccadilloes get them in trouble with the law, but a welcome distraction for the populace. A recent poll revealed that more Americans had recently voted on a U Be Da Judge or similar program than had ever voted in a federal, state, or local election. The exotic and lurid crimes documented here also help bolster support for the law and order agendas of the Plutocrats and NAS. It used to be that people wanted politicians to get criminals off the streets. Now they want them off the streets — and in their living rooms, live via vidnet.

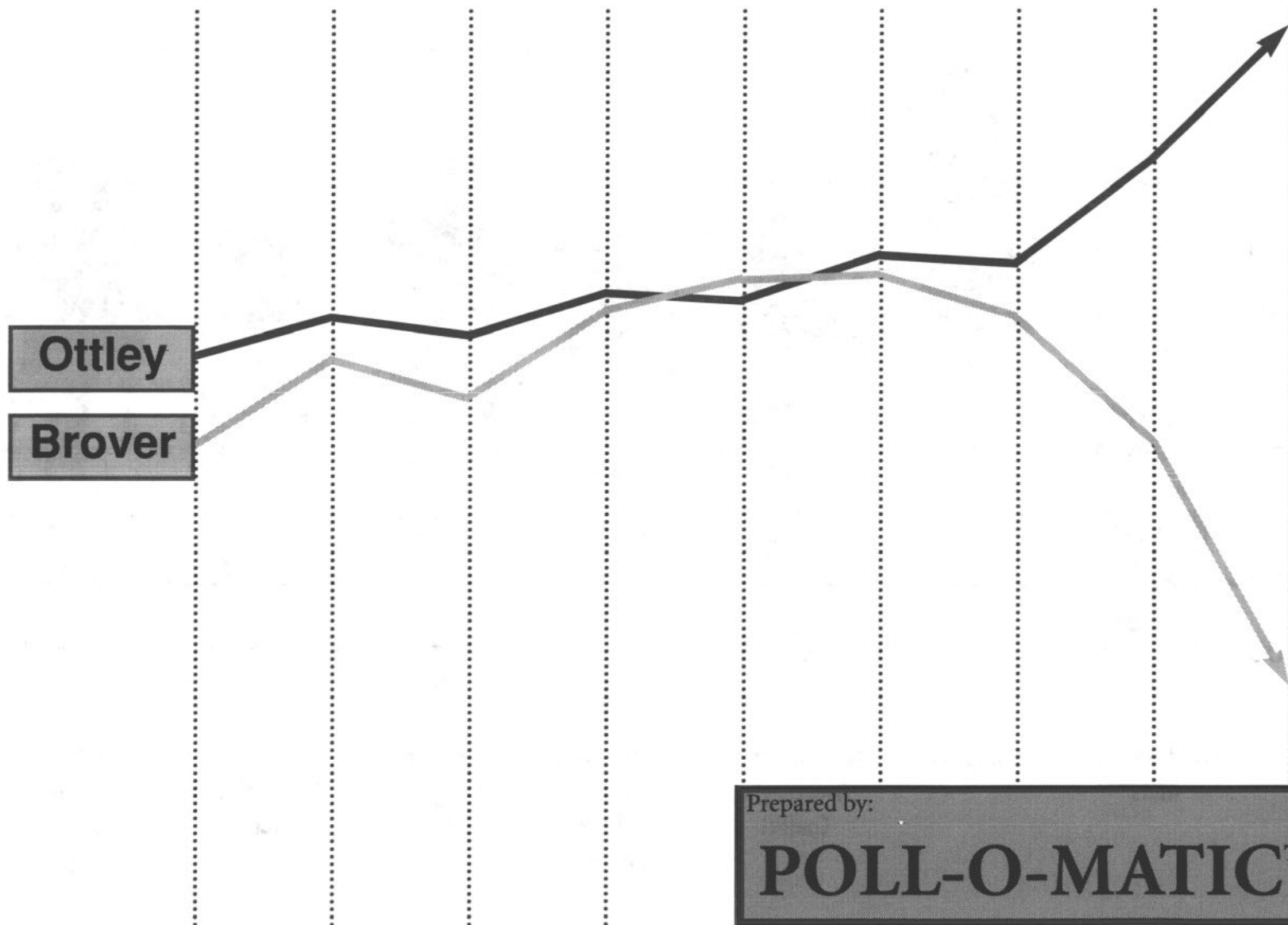
POPULARITY
(In millions of
attentive viewers)

Top Rated Episodes



For use with Paraguay II, page 134.

APPROVAL RATINGS





666 or
B



...and justice for all.

So, Undergrounder, you finally made it. You've reached the place all roads lead to. The belly of the beast. The ninth layer of Hell. The top floor of Babel. The diseased liver of the nation. Washington D.C.: Democracy City™. Yeah, you've finally found the HQ of the real bad guys. They're not like the villains we fought in the Slumberland VR program. They don't jam around with capes and masks and wigged-out codenames. They don't stick you in death traps and gloatingly spill their whole plot to you as you wriggle free of your bonds. They don't even bother with Punkbusters or EP450s. Their weapon is the stroke of the pen, the subclause in the amendment to the omnibus bill. The sound of death here is not the metallic patang of a round being ratcheted into the chamber. It's the whispering sound a briefcase full of money makes when it gets slid across a mahogany desk.

Ways and Means comes packed with:

- Complete information on the Nation's Capitol.
- Tons of dirt on the movers and shakers of Democracy City™ for your vet to dig up.
- Scenarios to get your punks primed for action in the big city.
- Pull-out pages on the people, places, and things of D.C.™ for you to slip into your Underground Notebook.



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