

# The free press, the truth, and making a difference.

As a blogger and journalist, I've been appalled by recent attacks on the free press by the current administration.

This is not to say that I haven't been a critic of the press myself: soon after college, I became a journalist by founding a weekly alternative newspaper called the *Harrisburg Independent Press* (yes, aka "HIP")—partly in response to the traditional media's failure to address many social, economic, and political issues of the day. (I'll be writing more about *HIP* in the months to come; I'm now working on a book about my experience, there) .

# Harrisburg Independent Press

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## Editorial

### Volume 1, Number 1

Welcome to the first issue of the Harrisburg Independent Press, a bi-weekly, truly independent newspaper, dedicated to:

—Serving the Lehigh-Juniata area with a responsible alternative journalistic voice.

—Providing the most complete coverage available anywhere of the trial of the Harrisburg 8.

One of our staff members will be in the courtroom daily and will report, and explain, every aspect of the legal proceedings, as well as the human touches—the courage, comradery, and reactions of the men and women who make up the trial's complex cast of characters.

In addition, participants in the trial—the defendants and the attorneys—will be writing for us on a regular basis.

Beyond the trial, the area of Harrisburg is important as to become we lay here. And we know that all our lives are influenced by powerful currents that make us only a ripple in the local daily newspapers.

The Village Voice showed last evening that the local dailies represent as a fine source to obtain contemporary news of the news.

We will seek commentary for its own sake, but we will welcome it for the sake of return and reciprocity.

Among the articles we will present soon are:

—Eight Killed on Pakistan.

—The most powerful man in Harrisburg.

—Paul O'Dwyer on the Democrats.

—How and why to fight utility rate increases.

We can do nothing, however, without your help. We need your subscriptions to survive. We have no grant advertising accounts, no outside subsidies.

There's a subscription blank right here. Send it in now. And we'll report on what you have said.

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## Trial of Harrisburg 8 Awaits Rulings on Legal Motions

By Edward Zecher

What J. Edgar Hoover started nearly a year ago shows no signs of coming to a speedy conclusion. No trial date has yet been set for the Harrisburg 8, alleged conspirators in a grandiose bombing kidnaping plot, pending the ruling of the trial judge on several important defense motions.

Motions to dismiss the charges because evidence was obtained through illegal wiretaps and because the alleged conspiracy does not properly qualify as an illegal conspiracy are among motions still before U.S. District Judge R. Dixon Herman.

Herman has previously ruled against a defense motion for dismissal on grounds that the prosecution improperly released crucial evidence to the public in order to obtain prejudicial pre-trial publicity.

Meanwhile, defense attorney Paul O'Dwyer has charged "The behavior of the prosecution has been little more than a conspiracy to bolster the public image and render to the injured ego of the director of the FBI."

And it is with FBI Director Hoover that the origins of this complex case lie.

What has been billed by some as "the most important political case of the century" began last November

when, in a private meeting with Congressmen, Hoover charged that members of the Catholic militant community of resistance were plotting to sabotage government installations and kidnap a high official.

Hoover repeated his charges several weeks later at a Senate committee meeting where he was testifying in favor of a supplemental \$14.5 million appropriation for the FBI to hire an additional 1,000 agents and 702 clerks.

The committee meeting was closed to the public, but Hoover made sure his testimony would receive wide distribution by political case of the century" began last November

## Mullen Bill Caper—Sad Example Of America's 'Schoolbook Myths'

By Neil Thomas

Didn't you find those high school courses in civics, government, and "Americanism" extremely boring? It sure sure they were as wrong as they were dull.

As far as the state legislative process goes, it points example of how practice differs from theory in the recent caper over the Mullen bill. Governor Shapp signed this bill sponsored by Rep. Martin Mullen of Philadelphia on August 25. Its constitution-

Neil Thomas is executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania.

ality is under attack in Federal court in a suit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations on September 14.

The Mullen Bill provides aid to parents who elect to send their children to Catholic and other non-public schools. The bill provides that at the end of the school year the parents apply to an authority funded by cigarette tax money to reimburse their tuition costs.

The limits are \$75 for children in elementary school and \$150 for secondary school children.

The obvious legal difficulty with the bill, according to Rep. Theodore Mann of

Ohio, who is challenging it, is that the state ends up aiding religion, in violation of the First Amendment principle separating church and state.

The substance of the bill and the ensuing legal fight is not as interesting as the story of how it passed and the difference between high school civics and political reality in Harrisburg.

**Schoolbook Myths**  
In school, we were taught that the people elect the best qualified of their number to represent them. These "wise men" were they ever referred to as being of the other world—could the best ideas for representation

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## County Packs Juries With Housewives, Retired

By Anita Martin

If you're planning to murder your wife, you'd better do it outside Dauphin County. Standing trial here, you'd face a jury consisting largely of housewives—hardly an impartial panel of your peers. And you'd better lay off your membership, too. As a result of Dauphin County's jury selection system, jurors who aren't housewives will likely be the odd woman's cousin.

Although the Supreme Court has ruled against discrimination in jury selection on the basis of age, political affiliation, or economic, occupational or social status, area lawyers agree, and a study has shown, that Dauphin County juries are chosen politically by a limited, self-selected portion of the community. As a result, certain age groups, mainly the young, as well as certain economic, occupational and social statuses are grossly underrepresented.

One local attorney, J. Thomas Menaker, has challenged the Dauphin County jury selection as part of his

defense of a city pharmacist accused of drug violations. To Menaker, the fact that the jury panel, a list of names drawn at random from a wheel, contains an overabundance of housewives and retired persons means that the initial wheel of names cannot have

been selected in a random or representative manner. Of the 150 names on a typical jury panel list (June 1970), 50 were identified as "housewives." Of the same 150 names 44 were "retired."

That is to say, in an area with less than 6% unemployment,

most judgments are made by a jury 60% non-union with the "weekend world." Harrisburg area citizens over 65 make up only 10% of the total population, as of the latest census. Yet 60% of county jurors are over 65.

County Jury Commissioners

Robert Daxson and C. Raymond Mackenzie, who are elected by party every four years, both said in interviews that they are concerned with the "overabundance" of older people and housewives on Dauphin County juries. "Yes, it is they who, along with County Court President Judge Homer Kessler, collect names of potential jurors and place them on the jury wheel."

Their methods of selection are not random. Instead, they rely on party officials for recommendations, personal preferences and volunteers.

Mackenzie says he knows of no written guidelines for the selection of names for the jury wheel.

"No one tells me anything. It's my job to provide 400 names and that's what I do," said Mackenzie.

Still, the Democratic jury commissioners, said that, as commissioners he can "not say" he won't on the list for the jury wheel. Names are ob-

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Volume 1 #1 Harrisburg Independent Press

After a year in Harrisburg, I wrote for two alternative newspapers: the Boston Phoenix and the Real Paper, in Cambridge.

For various reasons (mainly that neither paper would hire me full time or even put my name on the masthead—well, the RP already had a woman reporter—she covered "women's stuff" ) I decided that in order to get anywhere, I needed some establishment credentials so went to New York, for journalism school at Columbia.

Upon graduation, I stayed in New York—working first for a fellow who was a bit of a maniac (he drooled when he yelled at

me), then for the city's major Muzak station. ( I won awards for documentaries including one from a radical feminism perspective on prostitution and pornography in New York—more to come on that, as well) a. After that, for five years, I covered health, science, technology, law and justice —and other topics!—for MacNeil/Lehrer (now the Newshour), of PBS.

Eventually, I returned to Boston to teach and write; subsequently became a communications consultant, author, blogger, etc. etc., which I've now been for more than 20 years.



*...in July 1973, an alternative weekly newspaper in Boston called The Real Paper offered this for a lead headline: "Women Derelicts: To Be Old, Homeless and Drunk."*

This was the story that inspired the start of Rosie's Place

July 25, 1973 25 cents Boston's Weekly Newspaper

# the Real Paper

## Women Deviants: To Be Old, Homeless and Drunk



By Anita Harris

A 60-year-old homeless alcoholic woman spent a couple of days last month passed out cold by the side of Route 128. She was half-dead by the time the police happened to find her, but after a week of detoxification and treatment for exposure and malnutrition, she told me how she ended up out there.

I met her at one of Boston's two halfway houses for alcoholic women. She's an emaciated brown-haired woman with a hoarse voice (hoarse from too much carousing one New Year's Eve, she explained with a deep laugh). I'll call her Mary Elkins.

Her first weekend out after three months sober in the halfway house, Mary (she goes by her first name) tied one on with some old friends. Drunk, she knew she would be barred from the halfway house, and she knew of no other place to go. Not seeing herself as "one of those bums that'll sleep on a park bench or with a man just for a drink and a piece to stay," she and a "girlfriend" climbed into a car to sleep for the night.

"If I'd a known we were going to sleep in a used car lot I'd of gotten a motel room or something... I thought I was going to freeze to death, it was so cold out there."

Next morning at daybreak ("and believe me, it was a short



night") they were desperate for a drink. So they finished off the quart they had left from the night before and

## An American in Bihar: I Remember Mantrah

By Jon Lipsky

For five days I lay around the Salvation Army Hotel room in Calcutta, the cheapest clean place to crash. I felt like I was crashing. My liver was enlarged (by two or three fingers, the doctors said) and I was crapping soup. I kept taking hot baths in the hope that they would relax me. I kept looking at the soles of my feet, and at the palm of my hands. Though my lips never moved I was mumbling to myself. It freaked me. For the first time in my life I was convinced that I could die.

The German disciple of the Swami of Monghyr had developed an incredibly intricate astrologic chart for the history of the world. He had made an extraordinary discovery. Contrary to the usual astrological view, he could prove that the New Age was not a thing of the future but had already begun in 1962. He called this: The Age of Aquarius, and was preparing



The story said there were as many as 1,000 poor women living on the streets of Boston. The tales were disturbing. Ordinary women with names like Mary, Ann, and Masha, living in squalor in abandoned buildings; too sick from drinking to work;

*selling sexual favors for \$1 in bars and alleys. And always looking for a place to sleep.*

*One doctor quoted by reporter Anita Harris was skeptical there was a problem at all. "You must have been talking to the women's libbers," he told Harris. Yet it turned out the city's welfare department had quietly started a homeless women's division.*

*This story gripped [Kip] Tiernan and wouldn't let go. It shined a light on a strange truth in the upheaval of the early 1970s: Women were unequal to men even in poverty.*

Ultimately, Tiernan founded the shelter, which became a model for many others, nationwide.

Because I had lived in New York for so many years, I had no idea, until last month, that my article had had such an important impact.

This past weekend, the [Globe published "Making a Difference," a letter](#) to the editor in which I thanked Healy "for her remarkably well-researched piece on Rosie's Place and for tracing its founding back 47 years to an article I wrote, which until now, I had no idea had profoundly impacted the lives of so many women.

"These days, with the free press under assault, Healy's article provides yet more evidence of the power of the press to make the world a better place – simply by telling the truth. Thanks, Beth Healy, for paying it forward."

I hope to continue pay it forward...That is, to make a difference through this blog, my books, and other writing. I also hope that the free press will survive...flourish, even...to give the truth a voice in these difficult times.

*Anita Harris is an author, blogger and communications consultant based in Cambridge, MA. (She is not the British*

*rock star, the Somerville School Committee member, or the Australian feminist writer).*

*New Cambridge Observer* is a publication of the [Harris Communications Group](#), an award-winning PR and digital marketing firm also based in Cambridge.