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## Satan will get you if you don't watch out

(Moral Panics and a struggle for control of the means of cultural reproduction among a sample of college students)

by **Lonnie Roy, Raymond A. Eve, Anson Shupe**

*(This is Part 1 of a two-part article.)*

Recent episodes of collective behavior indicate a widespread and apparently rapidly growing fear of activities by alleged covens of violent Satanic cultists. The authors, using data collected from students at The University of Texas at Arlington in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex area, present the argument that while conservative Christianity is correlated with the fear of Satanism, a far more influential source of these “moral panics” lies in diffuse anxieties associated with a status politics based struggle to control the means of cultural reproduction. Among this sample of students we found high levels of the fear of Satanism, conservative Christian beliefs, and concern for the protection of conservative Christian values and world view in society. Conventional measures of conservative Christianity were correlated to fear of Satanism, but not as strongly as were the status politics measures.

### **An Exaggerated Fear?**

There is much evidence recently in the mass media of increasing public fear that the United States has been overrun by covens of violent Satanists, which routinely engage in kidnapping, sexual molestation, and even human sacrifice (particularly of young children). It can be argued that this fear is fueled in part by mass media ever ready for sensationalist material, and in part by moral entrepreneurs (e.g., Hahaner, 1988; Johnson, 1989) both of whom find a ready audience, especially among conservative Christians (Melton, 1986: 76). One symptomatic expression of this phenomenon is a periodic resurfacing of a rumor that “blue-eyed, blond-haired virgins” will be sacrificed by local cults of Devil-worshippers during the Halloween season. In recent years some sociologists (e.g., Roy, 1991; Shupe 1991b; Victor, 1990) have reported identical rumors of this sort in dozens of sites across the United States. They occurred in areas as diverse as New Mexico, Montana, Indiana, Kentucky, New York, and Texas. The following case study, witnessed by one of the authors, will acquaint the reader with more details of the general pattern.

The month of October 1989 was particularly dramatic in one North-Central Texas community. Not content with seeing the onset of Halloween as merely symbolic of a festive day of ghosts and goblins, many of the inhabitants of

“Texasville” became convinced that they were about to be overwhelmed by a wave of Satanic cult activities. The local media (newspaper and radio) devoted considerable coverage to allegation that such activities were indeed underway in the area. Potential Satanic skullduggery was front-page news for several weeks in Texasville (even the large city papers began following the story). Satanists, it was rumored, were planning the abduction, or even the sacrifice, of blond-haired, blue-eyed children in Texasville several days prior to Halloween. At one junior high school, some children were rumored to have received black roses from cult members as a sign that they had been chosen for abduction. Anyone who wore black clothes was inviting the label of potential or actual Satanist.

There were reports of “Satanic” adolescents recruiting new members at various local high schools. Several teachers claimed to have been harassed by an ever increasing number of adolescent cult members who were allegedly involved in Satanic crimes.<sup>1</sup> It was rumored that many mothers were going to keep their children home from school on the day the alleged abductions were to occur. Rumors of animal sacrifices and graveyard atrocities circulated freely.

In response to this tense situation, a public forum was held on October 12 at the Civic Center of the county seat in this North Texas county. Approximately 400 people (including one of us) turned out to attend this forum, which was “standing-room only.” (The population of the county seat is about 22,100 persons).

Four guest speakers appeared at the forum: the county sheriff, the sheriff of an adjoining county, a psychologist from the Ft. Worth Care Unit Hospital, and a representative of Lyndon LaRouche's organization. (LaRouche, it will be remembered, is a conservative politician and ex-presidential candidate who is currently languishing in Federal prison on charges of fraud.)

The only speaker who tried to calm those in attendance was the local county sheriff. He reported that all investigations of Satanic occult activities had turned up no evidence of such activities. Furthermore, he added, no one had been arrested or even charged with being involved in such activities. The other speakers at this forum, however, proclaimed the danger of Satanism to be imminent.

At one point during the forum, the one of us in attendance overheard several terrified teenage girls telephoning their parents and requesting that they pick them up because they were afraid to leave the building unaccompanied by an adult. The girls were in attendance (as were many other adolescents) because many teachers in the city had suggested to their students that they should attend the forum. Some schools even distributed handbills announcing the forum to students (including elementary schools — a third grade child provided us with such a handbill).

If all the allegations by the “anti-Satanists” could be substantiated, North Americans would have a grievous problem indeed. There is, however, a growing body of research by social scientists (see Richardson, Best, and Bromley, 1991, for one of the largest and best compilations of such research; also see Shupe, 1991a; Victor, 1991, 1990; Damphousse and Crouch 1992), which casts grievous doubt on most of these claims. In addition, law enforcement officials (Hicks, 1991, 1990, 1989; Lanning, 1989), and journalists (Lyons, 1988) have strongly indicated that such fears about widespread, pernicious, organized Satanic activities are largely unfounded. Carlson and Larue (1989: 5-6) have concluded that, “When the evidence is considered in total, the conclusion is obvious: Neither Satanism nor Devil-worship is a threat to our society.” While no one can prove conclusively that Satanic crimes have *not* occurred, and we would certainly not condone even a single instance, the Satanic crime threat appears grossly exaggerated and empirically unsupported.

### **The Etiology of a Moral Panic**

Inasmuch as there is little scientific evidence supporting the existence of extensive Satanic cult activities, why then do so many people think otherwise? More specifically, are there certain social characteristics that make some individuals fertile ground for the acceptance of the “factuality” of the Satanism rumors? Theologically, conservative Christianity, with its preoccupation with Beelzebub, has been suggested as a bearer of much of the responsibility for the continued existence of fears about Satanism in North America (Melton, 1986: 76). Indeed, Balch and Gilliam (1991) in an in-depth study of rumor distribution and contagion in one Montana city, found that fundamentalists were the most likely to believe, and to pass on, rumors about alleged Satanic activity. However, in another study (of North American teenagers) religion was not consistently related to “having friends” involved in Satanic activities (Swatos, 1992: 165).

## The Struggle to Control the Means of Cultural Reproduction

Much of the fear of organized Satanism can be explained by existing concepts of collective behavior. Particularly relevant is the notion of “moral panics.” Cohen (1972: 9) suggested that moral panics occur when:

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests: Its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians, and other right-thinking people; [and] socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions . . .

It has also been noted that moral panics often have their flames fanned vigorously by what Becker (1973) has termed “moral entrepreneurs.” Moral entrepreneurs are often persons engaged in labeling what they perceive as various forms of wrongdoing. These entrepreneurs seek to promulgate their ideas among members of the society most likely to sympathize with their cause in order to get a norm or belief instituted in that society.

It is a truism that groups and subcultures often form their own moral values, personal interests, and/or world views. These groups often end by competing with one another for the implementation and enforcement of their own particular norms by the social control agencies (i.e., police agencies, religious institutions, and schools). This competition results in power conflicts regarding just whose set of norms or whose world view will ultimately prevail (Vold 1958: 279-80). Moral crusaders have not always resisted the temptation to instigate moral panics in an effort to draw public attention to specific behaviors that they view as deviant. By stigmatizing the actors, they hope to reshape moral boundaries more to their own liking, and in some cases to profit financially from such a redefinition. Through moral panics, such entrepreneurs seek legislation and other social control measures to further define the moral boundaries and ensure the dominance of their own particular world view (BenYehuda 1990, Goode 1989, Schur 1980, Shupe and Bromley 1980, Cohen 1972, and Gusfield 1963).

Carlson and Larue (1989: 143-154) provide a long list of contemporary “moral entrepreneurs” operating in the area of the Satanism issue. They range from media and political interest groups (e.g., the LaRouche organization and Geraldo Rivera), to multitudes of conservative Christians, and even to police officials and consultants. A number of these individuals travel about giving seminars to community organizations, local churches, and law enforcement agencies in an attempt to convince their audiences of an imminent Satanic threat (Carlson and Larue 1989; Hicks 1989, 1990; Lanning 1989; Alexander 1990; Shupe 1990; Victor 1991).

At the Civic Center forum described earlier we found representatives of the Republican Women's Association, an adjoining county's sheriff's office, and a representative of the LaRouche organization. LaRouche's organization is intimately connected to the Federalist Press, which has produced a series of anti-Satanist materials. One of these publications, “Is Satan in Your Schoolyard?” (1989), was distributed freely at the meeting. The magazine claimed that the First Episcopal Church of New York was the home of the Satanist conspiracy in the United States, their Bishop was their leader and Dungeons & Dragons, rock music, and Wagner's operas were some of their “tools” used to corrupt the youth of America. All these individuals expounded the position that the only way to deal with the alleged Satanic threat was to turn back to conservative Christianity and to create more church involvement among young people. Their intent seemed to be to create a generalized belief in the county, which asserts the existence of widespread moral deterioration in American society, resulting in the pervasiveness of Satanic occult activities.

Moreover, the moral panic over Satanism is an example of what Page and Clelland (1978: 347) define as “the politics of lifestyle concern,” that is, the “attempt to defend a way of life.” In such an effort, individuals (whether part of a mass public or an organized social movement) are locked in a struggle to control the means of socialization of their offspring (and hence the cultural reproduction of their group's values and world view). In order to propagate a certain lifestyle and world view, one must have at least some control over the institutions of socialization and social control. Thus, the “struggle” occurs in classrooms, courtrooms, and the legislatures — precisely the same institutions that “sanctify” which norms and values are “correct.” The loss of this control reduces any group's ability to transmit the values and moral codes that govern member's sense of normative human existence. Thus, encroachments on these morals or values — or even perceived encroachments — become attacks on their lifestyle. And certain issues, like Satanism, become symbolic strains sensed to be undermining valued, traditional society.

The Satanism scare appears to have a fundamental similarity with other episodes of collective behavior and lifestyle defense, such as antipornography campaigns (Zurcher, *et al.*, 1972), textbook content controversies (Page and Clelland, 1978), and the creation/evolution debate (Eve and Harrold, 1991). It can be hypothesized here that the explanatory importance of the politics of lifestyle concern is as influential as is religious conservatism in the generation of moral panics over Satanism. At the heart of the Satanist moral panic may be the desire among many conservative Christians to preserve or promote conservative Christianity in public life; thus, defending or revitalizing a lifestyle based on conservative Christian values, which is perceived to be under attack or decaying in society today.

**Specifically, then we hypothesize:**

1. The more religiously conservative individuals' attitudes, the greater the probability that those individuals will feel threatened by Satanism.
2. Respondent's fears of Satanism will be positively associated with religious conservatism but even more strongly associated with their respective levels of concern for the protection of conservative Christian values and world view.

**END NOTES**

1. A recent study by Damphousse and Crouch (1992) of youths incarcerated by the Texas Youth Commission during a six month period in 1989 found that less than 10% of all delinquents admitted to the state reception center had been involved in Satanic rituals. Moreover, they report that there was no statistically significant difference in the level of delinquency between "Satanists" and "non-Satanists."

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## The Ape-Man Within

L. Sprague de Camp. Prometheus Books, Buffalo, 1995. 266 pages (bibliography). \$25.95.

**Reviewed by John Blanton**

Where we came from has made us what we are. This is the theme of Sprague de Camp's latest non-fiction work. Our ancestors were wild animals who somehow domesticated themselves and ratcheted their way up in steps to what we know as civilized society. We dress ourselves in fine silk and go to the opera and to the ballet, and we probe the depths of the atom and visit nearby planets, but our daily actions belie all this pretense and show us to be the product of our forefathers after all.

The "theratics" were the hunter-gatherers, little removed from roving packs of ground-dwelling apes. Next came the "georgics," who improved their lot over the theratic existence by staying in one place and obtaining reliable sources of food from the land and from captive animals. Then came the "astics," builders and inhabitants of cities. The development of crafts is prominent in this stage. Finally, we have become the "dynatics," exerting our power over our environment. This progression has come as a consequence of, and often in spite of, the psyche we inherited from our unwashed predecessors.

Critics of social Darwinism stand clear, for your nemesis runs free in this book. Darwinism explains all: love, jealousy, rage, hatred, racism, and even self-sacrifice. Whether the connections be cause and effect or just post hoc rationalization, the reader cannot deny the compelling arguments. Why do people kill without profit? Why do we divide ourselves by erecting artificial boundaries of race and culture? Why does belief in religion persist in the face of overwhelming counter evidence?

In this book we are pointedly reminded of much that we already know (or should know). There is less genetic difference between humans and chimpanzees than there is between chimpanzees and gorillas, and in the social and sexual antics of chimps and other apes we see reflections of our own society. Despite all this, the author emphasizes that heredity does not excuse antisocial activity; morality, after all, being a human invention. There are also some surprises for those of us who haven't checked out the sections on archeology and anthropology in the library. For example, the tales of Moses and the exodus from Egypt seem contrary to evidence that the people involved really migrated down from the North. (Furthermore, if the Jews did migrate from Egypt, they forgot to tell the Egyptians they were leaving, or else the Egyptians forgot to write it down.) And finally we are told more about a certain female gorilla named Congo than we really wanted to know.

Do not look here for hope and reaffirmation. On this matter the writer is gloomy and more pessimistic than I can allow myself to be. Sprague de Camp's views on religion are no secret, and one would expect to find in him a general condemnation of it. However, with surprising cynicism he acknowledges its necessity. Never having inherited real altruism, we require an imaginary, authoritarian presence to continually threaten us with punishment and to cajole us with the promise of reward in order to keep us from seeking short term gain through socially destructive conduct.

This book is not based on objective science, though there are research citations aplenty to establish its modern knowledge base. Prominent Darwinists, Stephen Jay Gould included, will disagree with many of its conclusions. Instead, this is a statement of the philosophy, the observations, of a modern man. It is told, not in narrative form, but more as a diary, as though the author is gathering a lifetime of experience and revealing it in a conversation with the reader. Several points are restated frequently throughout the book whenever discussion of a new subject recalls them. Read this as the wisdom of one who has trod the length and breadth of the Twentieth-Century. You will hardly find a better perspective.

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# The Third Eye

## NEWS AND COMMENTARY FROM THE WEIRD WORLD OF THE MEDIA

By Pat Reeder

We are between Christmas and New Years as I write this, and I am filled with the joy of the season! Happiness abounds, and my soul o'erflows with good cheer! Why? Because the Attorney General recently announced the arrests of 422 fraudulent telemarketers in 15 states, who, if I get my cherished holiday wish, will soon be spending many Happy New Years to come in dark, dank, cold, slimy stone prison cells with concrete slabs for bedding and a hole in the ground for a toilet! God bless us, every one!

Perhaps you think I am being, to use the most fatuous and overworked cliché of the 1990s, "mean-spirited"? Then let me tell you how I define "mean." "Mean" is someone who calls up senior citizens, tells them they've won a fabulous prize but must give a credit card number to collect, then maxes out his victim's credit line before he even hangs up the phone. "Mean" is someone who steals a widow's life savings . . . and not just one widow, but widows all over America, to the tune of \$40 billion a year. "Mean" is someone who, when the hard sell tactics aren't working, begins verbally abusing his elderly victim, reducing her to tears as he snarls that if she doesn't give him her credit card number, then (and I quote verbatim from an FBI wiretap), "You're going into your grave a loser! A big loser!"

It is lowlife scum of this sort, the type who prey on the fears and gullibility of the elderly, who led me into skeptics groups in the first place, and who keep me fired up on this subject. Every so often, I start to tire of this uphill battle: I see so many people willing and eager to support con men, spending all their disposable income on psychic hotlines or alien autopsy videos or foolproof lottery systems, that I start to say to myself, "Oh, why bother?! If they're THAT stupid, then let 'em die penniless!" And then, along comes a story like this one, which reminds me anew of why it's important to keep fighting: because anyone who would use cruel lies and scare tactics to take advantage of our most

vulnerable citizens in order to increase his or her own wealth and power — be it a fraudulent telemarketer, a phony roofing contractor, a televangelist faith healer, a gypsy curse lifter, or a political demagogue — should be hunted down, exposed, and punished to the full extent of the law. And then some.

My Christmas message to all the stung telephone scammers is that I hope you enjoy a nice, long life sentence without possibility of parole in that smelly, horrendous hellhole of a prison I was just describing. Every night, may visions of group showers with hulking, tattooed serial killers dance in your rotten little heads. And may you go into your graves losers. Big losers.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

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Unfortunately, my happy holiday mood was temporarily undermined by the news that the CIA had spent 20 years and \$20 million on a program called "Stargate," which gathered self-proclaimed psychics together at Fort Meade, Maryland, to chant, squint at maps they can't read, and attempt to locate kidnapped diplomats and secret nuclear missile sites. Among their assignments: pinpointing the location of Libyan tyrant Moammar Gadhafi for the 1986 bombing (we bombed his BEDROOM, a really good guess, but he turned out not to be home) and locating Brig. Gen. James L. Dozier, who was kidnapped by Red Brigades terrorists in Italy in 1981 (he was eventually freed by Italian police, apparently with no help from the CIA's psychic circle jerks). They were also asked to beam brain waves at Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War to scramble his thought processes, as if he needed any help in that regard. Prof. Ray Hyman, who was asked to evaluate the program, concluded that "there's no evidence these people have done anything helpful for the government" (but then, you could say the same thing about the Commerce Department).

Once this news broke, I braced myself for the worst: dozens of "genuine, certified psychics" swarming over the airwaves, declaring this to be validation of their sorry profession and confirmation of what they had always said about the government knowing that psychic powers were real. And to some extent, that happened. (From my point of view, all it did was confirm what I've always said: that Washington is filled with utter nincompoops who spend at least 50% of their work day dreaming up new and ever more ridiculous ways to flush my tax dollars down the sewer.) But to my astonishment and relief, the reaction from the media was almost universally skeptical.

Jay Leno, David Letterman and Conan O'Brian had a field day with the story (one recurring joke theme was the way the \$20 million for psychics added up fast, at \$3.99 a minute). *Nightline* took a more serious approach, with Ted Koppel grilling former CIA Director Robert Gates, who claimed that most of the Intelligence community was very skeptical of psychic research, and only got into it because they knew the Soviets were doing it, and because some individual members of Congress pushed it (let this be a lesson: NEVER confuse Congress with Intelligence!). Gates said he might listen to a psychic as a last ditch effort to corroborate information on finding a missing person, but would never act on a psychic's info alone. But another *Nightline* panelist, who had helped supervise the program, combined ESP with C-Y-A by insisting that "there was too much there to deny it." As evidence, he described the type of remote viewing mentalism tricks which can be purchased at Magicland, and he declared with pride that the psychics were right about 15% of the time. Only among government bureaucrats and psychics is being right 15% of the time considered to be a sign of supernatural ability.

Koppel did a good job, but I'm still waiting for someone to ask these people the ultimate question about project Stargate: "If the CIA had six of the best psychics in America all concentrating around the clock for 20 years, how come they never picked up on the fact that Aldrich Ames was a double agent, and most of the information the CIA gathered during the '80s was coming straight from the Kremlin?" Maybe Gorbachev was jamming their brain waves with half a dozen psychics of his own.

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ABC let viewers down considerably with a special that was promoted for two weeks as a "scientific test" of paranormal

claims. This misnamed special, *Ghosts, Mediums, Psychics: Put To The Test*, turned out to be a silly hack job straight out of the Rupert Murdoch/Fox Network pseudoscience sausage factory. All the hallmarks were there: Generic Twinkie hosts and hostesses, some with British or Australian accents; spooky music behind the "documentary" footage, in this case, the type of "Swingle Singers Do Gregorian Chants" stuff made famous in all those godawful *Omen* movies; a psychic who claims that he, too, is a "SKEPTIC, BUT . . ."; credits listing an independent production company, with no input from the ABC News division; no skeptical investigators or professional magicians present to spot trickery during the filming of the alleged events (a magician was allowed to inspect a "haunted house" for wires and other devices hours beforehand, but was not present for actual filming of the "ghostly manifestations"). Only the reporters, whose names and qualifications were unknown to me (or to anyone else, I'd wager), were present to pass judgment on the remote viewings or psychic readings.

The only good thing about this show was the fact that it was opposite *Friends*, so I was probably the only person in America who actually sat through the stupid thing. Next time ABC wants to test psychics, I would suggest they begin the process by picking up the phone and dialing James Randi. Then, it would not only be done right, it might actually stand a chance of being entertaining.

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The Orange County, California, Treasurer who managed to lose billions of dollars and bankrupt one of the richest county governments in America has admitted that he was getting financial advice from a mail order astrologer. Apparently, in Orange County, wishing on a star is considered a sound investment strategy.

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A fundamentalist Christian minister in south Ft. Worth decided that he could no longer sit idly by and watch parents encourage children to believe in a mythical superbeing (yes, you read that right), so he ignited a furor by putting up a sign in front of his church which read, "Why not tell your children the truth? There is no Santa Claus. Jesus is the reason for the season."

I'm torn on this one: while I'm not crazy about the idea of promulgating belief in mythical beings, I'd certainly prefer that kids believe in Santa Claus than in the Loch Ness Monster, autopsied space aliens, or Robert Tilton. And if you really told them the truth about Christmas, then you'd have to tell them that nobody really knows when Jesus was born, so Christianity usurped a perfectly good pagan festival. I also wonder if this minister would be quite as keen a booster of the First Amendment if a group of atheists put up a sign on the highway across from his church, reading, "Why not tell your kids the truth? There is no God." Just a thought.

In a related story, a vicar in a Church of England parish was forced to apologize after he declared during a Christmas sermon that Jesus was real, but Santa and the Easter Bunny were "just your parents." He was suddenly faced with a church full of shocked, crying children and furious parishioners. However, he did assure himself a place in history as the only Church of England vicar whose congregation was ever awake enough to hear his sermon.

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Finally, an update on Fox's *Alien Autopsy* video. Despite what the producers might like you to believe, there has still been no testing to prove that the film stock was made in 1947, much less that the image on it was filmed in 1947. The much-ballyhooed 1947 stock code submitted to Kodak was in fact just a frame from the leader, or the blank film at the beginning of the reel. It could have come from any reel of film, not even necessarily from the autopsy film. Offers by Kodak to examine the actual alien footage for free have been rebuffed: the producer of the TV special, Ray Santilli, claims the owner of the film will not release it for testing. Otherwise, I'm sure he would be jumping at the chance to test it, now that all those syndication checks have cleared.

Phil Klass has also noted that there is a wall phone with a curly cord in the autopsy room. The curly cord was not introduced by AT&T until 1949, and it wasn't put on wall phones until 1956. As they say on the planet Antares, "Oops!" This nugget of info was picked up by syndicated columnist Joel Achenbach, who wrote an excellent history of the whole dubious Roswell story for his "Why Things Are" column, which runs in the Today section of the Dallas *Morning News*. He wrapped up by noting that all the outrageous claims, contradictions, and factual lapses in the story don't mean it DIDN'T happen, "But if we have to pick something unprovable in which to invest our faith, we might pick something like 'Love conquers all' rather than 'Government has E.T. on ice.'"

This column appeared on Christmas Day. So yes, Virginia, there IS a Santa Claus!

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## Healthy skepticism

By **Tim Gorski, M.D.**

*You might not want to read this month's column if you're eating or just ate. I'm afraid it might spoil your appetite or cause indigestion. So consider yourself warned.— T.G.*

Some current quackery is literal sewage. We're talking poop and pee, folks. Just consider . . .

### **Algal Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>**

Blue-green algae continues to be promoted as “nature's perfect food” and the like by a growing army of distributors currently numbering as many 185,000 nationwide. Strict vegetarians, especially, are often urged to ingest this “dietary supplement” because of its supposedly being a rich source of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, a substance which is absent from plants and their products.

Yet blue-green algae is a photosynthetic microorganism — a plant — though with some bacterial features as well. So where does it get all that vitamin B<sub>12</sub>? According to Varro Tyler, Ph.D., a recognized authority on pharmacognosy (the science of plant medicinals) and a member of the faculty of Purdue University: “Probably most of . . . [the vitamin B<sub>12</sub> content of blue-green algae] is due to the fact that the stuff is grown in . . . lakes . . . in Mexico that are contaminated with fecal matter; and the feces, of course, animals feces, have considerable B<sub>12</sub> in them. . . . I suspect that's where most of it comes from, the stuff being not thoroughly washed before it's dried. . . . Spirulina is the biggie, of course. . . . Spirulina is a blue-green [alga], but not all blue-green algae are spirulina.” In his book, *The New Honest Herbal*, Tyler also states that “selective assay procedures suggest that more than 80% of the `vitamin' in spirulina is, in fact, analogues of the vitamin which have no vitamin B<sub>12</sub> activity in humans.” Some of these analogues may actually interfere with the normal metabolism of the vitamin.

### **Urine-Drinking By Gandhi Denied**

Some promoters of “Ayurvedic” medicine, a form of quackery associated with the Maharishi's “Transcendental Meditation” and the books of New Age guru Deepak Chopra, have been pushing the idea of drinking one's own urine as a health measure. Sometimes called “urotherapy” or “uropathy,” its supporters, in an effort to make it seem less unnatural and revolting, sometimes claim that the Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi was a follower of the practice. But in a letter published in *Newsweek* last September, [9/18/95 page 25], Gandhi's grandson, who is founder and director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, states unequivocally that “it was not a therapy he believed in or advocated.”

### **Cancer Quack Indicted by Federal Grand Jury**

Dr. Stanislaw Burzynski, a Houston-based Polish immigrant, has made a career out of his unproven and peculiar “anti-neoplaston” cancer cure, which he originally isolated from human urine. Although it seems at one time that he obtained

an investigational new drug permit from the FDA, Burzynski never conducted any controlled clinical trials of his cure. Despite some overtures, Burzynski also failed to cooperate with anyone else in doing his research.

Now he is a defendant in a criminal case filed by federal prosecutors last November 11th. Already defending himself in a civil suit brought by state authorities, the 75 counts in this new action include one of criminal contempt stemming from Burzynski's continued interstate distribution of his quack remedies in the face of 1983 and 1984 restraining orders issued as a result of actions in previous federal civil cases. The charges also include 40 counts of Burzynski's willfully violating FDA requirements, and another 34 counts of mail fraud relating to his interstate promotion and distribution of "anti-neoplaston." The indictment states that Burzynski's operation engaged in fraudulent billing practices, including the submission of false and misleading HCFA forms in order "to trick insurers into paying for antineoplaston treatment so that Burzynski could financially enrich himself and others."

Burzynski's scheme, if not his "antineoplastons," was a spectacular success. As of April of 1995, according to the indictment, the 52-year-old doctor had treated more than 2,500 patients for a variety of disorders including cancer, AIDS, lupus and other autoimmune conditions, and even baldness. His operations took in some \$40 million in gross income from 1988 through 1994, with the doctor and his wife pocketing over \$5 million during the same period, which also accounts for how well Burzynski has been able to stay at least one step ahead of the law.

As might be expected, the main thrust of Burzynski's defense has always been, and is likely to continue to be, one of trotting out the true believers that he has collected over the years. Those who have died of their disease after receiving his worthless treatments, of course, will not be heard from. As of this writing [December 22, 1995], federal judge Sim Lake has been assigned to the case and a jury trial is set for January 22nd. But it seems more likely that "antineoplastons" will be shown to cure cancer than that Burzynski will finally be brought to justice by the end of the month.

*This information is provided by the Dallas/Fort Worth Council Against Health Fraud. For further information, or to report instances of suspected quackery and health fraud, please contact the Council's President, Tim Gorski, M.D., at (817) 792-2000 or write P.O.B. 202577, Arlington, TX 76006.*

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