trendwatch

RESIST 187

Resisting 187

In the early 1990s rap musicians started using the number "187" (borrowed from the California penal code) as slang for "murder." It's ironic — and fitting — that the California ballot proposition that cuts off vital health care and education services for undocumented aliens was given that number on the ballot. Draconian, anti-immigrant and clearly racist, 187 was approved by California voters by a 3-2 margin.

Though the courts have temporarily blocked enforcement of the measure, Latino community and student organizers are not waiting for the Supreme Court to save the day. Instead, they are working to derail the law through massive, statewide civil disobedience. The idea is that the law will work only if regular people are willing to turn away (or turn in) needy people seeking services. If service providers refuse to do this, the law will be a dead letter.

It's a simple idea, and it's already working.

Organizers have convinced thousands of teachers, doctors, nurses and other service providers to sign "pledges of resistance" that vow to provide services to all who need them and refuse to comply with the immigration police.

The activists who mobilized to fight Prop. 187 have raised a new cry: "Resist 187/Don't Enforce, Don't Comply!"

— Van Jones
San Francisco, California

The Contract on America

When Newt the Grinch and 300 of his buddies got together to set down their vision for a new America they called it the Contract with America. Most people of color are going to experience it as a contract *on* America's poor and colored.

With its calls for hacking away what remains of the safety net and granting even more tax breaks to the rich, the Contract could more accurately be described as "Voodoo Economics Part II," in the words of that great fighter for economic justice, George Bush. The plan might be part hocus-pocus, but the results will look more like the all-too-real world of Charles Dickens.

Poor people will be taken care of, according to the Grinch who stole the Great Society, by orphanages and private charities. OK kids, stick out that bowl and let's practice: "More porridge, please!"

When someone takes a contract out on your life, the "Godfather" is supposed to call the troops and get ready to "go to the mattresses." Don't hold your breath waiting for Clinton. He's already shown that he'd rather switch than fight, blowing away like a twig in a light gust at the first hint of attack. Like always, we are on our own.

— Steve Moore
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ANGRY WHITE MEN is the new buzzphrase in Republocratic political circles. "We're seen as the party that cares about African Americans, that cares about Latinos, that cares about gays, that cares about women — and doesn't give a damn about white males," says Bill Press, chairman of the California Democratic Party.

"Angry white men" were the key to our victory, said GOP pollster Neil Newhouse.

What are these pale males so mad about?

Well, says Bill Press, it's like this. White men are, by and large, the "haves." They have much more of the good things in life than any other group. But they still feel left out and excluded, because they don't get the benefits of government social programs, which go to the poor and people of color.

"They feel they are the last minority in America that is being discriminated against," says South Carolina Republican Gov. Carroll Campbell.

Our heart bleeds. See below.

Grassroots Holds the Key to Health Care Reform

If national health care reform was Clinton's Afghanistan, as right-wing theorist William Kristol likes to say, it didn't fare very well on the state level either.

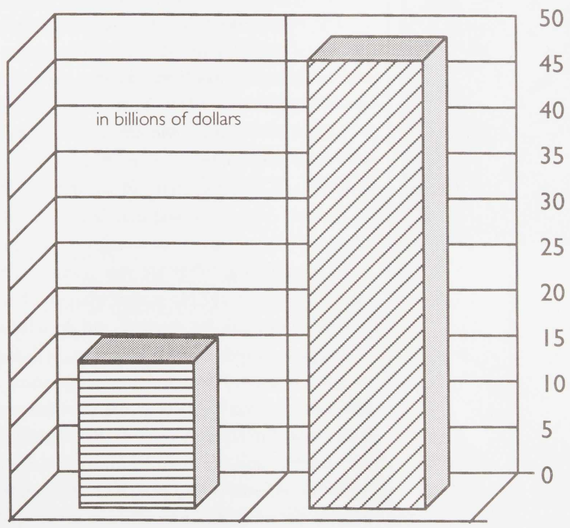
Only 27 percent of voters went for the single payer initiative on the California ballot. Proposition 186 would have abolished insurance companies and created a state-run health care system similar to the ones that serve the rest of the industrialized world. "We got creamed," says Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) organizer Joselito Laudencia, who has worked for years on building a grassroots movement for health care reform. "But we also learned a few lessons."

Laudencia says that, the next time around, N2N is going to push for a lot more money to be spent on grassroots organizing instead of advertising, and that more "outreach" will be done to communities of color. N2N did run a spot with Jesse Jackson aimed at the African American community and made several "media buys" on Spanish-language TV, but some observers say it was too little and too late to change many people's minds. "The only places where the initiative did well was in cities where we had grassroots organizing going on," says Laudencia.

Welfare for the Rich

Handouts ruin the poor, say the right-wing elite. But when tax time comes around, the rich have their hands stuck out farther than anyone.

Welfare and family support, available only to the poor, costs the nation $16 billion a year. The Mortgage Interest Deduction, a social program that supposedly encourages home ownership, goes almost entirely to affluent Americans, all $49 billion of it.

According to *Shelterforce* magazine, almost 90 percent of this deduction is taken by people with incomes in excess of $40,000 a year. Over $30 billion a year is paid to individuals or couples with annual incomes in excess of $100,000.

Who Gets the Most from "Welfare"?