J.F. Hladky, Jr., Chairman of the Board of Directors Joe Hladky, President and Publisher John Donnelly, Executive Vice President and Treasurer

NEW YORK - The verdict had been John Robertson, Executive Editor rendered. Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom, the sports agents, were found guilty of Jerry Elsea, Editor of Editorial Pages Editorial Board Chairman racketeering and mail fraud by a Chicago Dave Morris, Managing Editor

By IRA BERKOW

federal jury last week. Walters said he would appeal. Bloom broke

down in tears. The jury forewoman, Marjorie Benson, an administrator at the University of Chicago, said after answering reporters' questions: "We've told you what we think. What do you think?"

At this, one reporter said, "It was a colossal waste of the government's time and money to go after Walters and Bloom when there wasn't even a victim to the crime they supposedly committed."

Is that true? Were there no victims? Was there no crime?

Indeed, there were victims and indeed there was a crime, and more victims and a greater crime than was determined by the conviction of those two men. Walters and Bloom, who paid college athletes before their eligibility expired in order to represent them as pros, played only a small, though significant, role in the overall picture.

The larger crime, indictable or not, is a corruption of values. It is a crime that tears at the fabric of this country. It involves the overemphasis of sports, and the criminal elements, hanging offenses or not, are these:

Too often, the schools bring in athletes who aren't students and who have no interest in being students, and often the schools have no profound interest in their being students.

So-called student-athletes from Iowa to Seton Hall take courses from billiards and bowling to creative movement, and too few make progress toward a degree of substance.

But the athlete is kept by the university because he makes money for the university, much of which is recycled into the athletic department. Sometimes he helps the university earn millions directly, as when he is instrumental in its going to the Final Four in basketball where the huge television money turns the heads of college coaches and regents and presidents, not to mention players.

The players see all this champagne-and-

steak money going to the school while it's little more than black coffee and a bowl of rice for their labors. The stuff about just being on campus and gaining knowledge by osmosis is a gross sham. You don't apply for a job after the games are over by saying that you can read and write and do sums by osmosis.

Was this a crime? Who was victim?

Some school officials and others say, well, scholarships are given to those who might not

otherwise be able to afford to go to college. But there are other students perhaps better qualified for a chance at a legitimate college education than unstudious athletes.

When, for example, Lew Alcindor was graduating from Power Memorial High School in 1965, he received 150 scholarship offers. Not because he was a budding physicist, but because he stood 7 feet 2 inches. The boy who ranked first academically in that class received one scholarship

What about the one who was second, or 10th, or

This is not to demean Alcindor, later Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who was a bright lad and a reasonably serious student. But it does point up a strange phenomenon in America, and one that hasn't changed, indeed may have gotten worse, in the quarter of a century since Abdul-Jabbar went off to UCLA

Norby Walters

More circuses, less bread

What about those other athletes, like Ronnie Harmon of Iowa and Mark Ingram of Michigan State, bogus students as revealed in the agents' trial? Were they taking up scholarship space from some kid who, as the argument goes, might have one day discovered the cure for cancer?

The overemphasis on sports and the lesser emphasis on education in our institutions of higher learning send a message across the country. In poor areas, for example, the way

Walters and Bloom play only a small role in overall picture out is not through chemistry, but basketball. Or so many are led to believe. But it's distorted. Few become pros, and those who do too often lose everything because they know nothing, and are back hustling on the streets.

It has been said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. With the glorification of sports, it turns out, the

edification of students is diminished. And if education becomes our weakest link, and entertainment our strongest, then there is trouble festering.

> The whole idea of bigtime sports in our universities has become increasingly repugnant, and dangerous, too. Sure, there is great diversion in watching a thrilling championship basketball game, but don't we have enough with the pros?

Now there will be weekly national television coverage of high school games. Perfect. More circuses, less

And thus we are left with the Walters-Bloom problem, which will not end: Agents

will continue to vie with colleges to corrupt athletes who are working both sides of the street themselves.

Benson, the forewoman, noted something else when talking to reporters after the verdict. Speaking for the jury, she said, "We felt there were no innocent bystanders."

It is conceivable that none of us — from those 12 jurors to their 245 million fellow citizens - are innocent bystanders, either, and as we continue to cheer our so-called student gladiators, we all, sooner or later, may be victims in a softer, and not necessarily gentler, nation.

Ira Berkow is a sports columnist for the New York Times.



PECULATION ABOUNDS in the Jim Wright case. Why has the house speaker been formally accused of violating the congressional ethical code? Some say Wright is a victim of bad timing. Ethical standards are changing; people today are increasingly aware of potential conflicts of interest and Wright's only mistake was to get caught using yesterday's ethics.

Others say Wright erred back at the beginning of his career. He was a member of the Texas legislature at

age 23, mayor of his home city at 26, a member of Congress at 31 — achieving political power before he ever secured a financial base for his family and himself. The poverty-stricken speaker (in relative terms) had to cheat a little to make both ends meet.

No doubt there's some truth to both theories. But the real reasons Jim Wright is in such hot water today are financial disclosure laws, which make it easier to detect scoff-



Jim Wright

Disclosed too much Campaign costs are rising dramatically and members of Congress are preoccupied with fund raising. This has led to an increased concern about fund-raising regulations and that has led Congress to adopt tough financial reporting requirements. Whenever a candidate raises or spends money on the campaign, the transaction must be reported. Other laws require elected officials to disclose more and more of their personal finances.

"As disclosure devices get better and tighter, there are more opportunities for a researcher to discover wrongdoing," says Suzanne Garment, an ethics specialist for the American Enterprise Institute.

That's what happened to Wright. Enough of his personal finances had been exposed to send up the red flag. Rep. Newt Gingrich made some political noise about it, instigating the investigation. And Monday the House Ethics Committee said it discovered 69 instances in which it appears the speaker inappropriately accepted money in the form of gifts, his wife's salary and unusually high book royalties.

Whether or not these arrangements broke House rules, they form a picture of a man who shrewdly manipulated those rules, always with one foot on the boundary and one eye on the bottom line. Wright deserves to be judged by his peers. But no one would ever have suspected Wright's loose play with the rules had not his finances been disclosed. The Wright case is a triumph of financial reporting laws.

Open up the parks

OWANS WHO DEPLORE the state park user fee can thank Senate Majority Leader C.W. Hutchins for a good idea. Hutchins says it's time for Iowa to stop charging for use of its parks. He says the revenue now provided by sale of vehicle stickers can just as well be provided by lottery proceeds or general funds.

He is right. Iowa has had a miserable time with the state park use fee. Imposed at \$10 a vehicle per season in 1986, the fee dropped the park visitors total to 9.4



C.W. Hutchins

million, compared with 12.9 million the year before. Subsequent lowering of the fee to \$5.50 per vehicle — pushed park use back to 10.7 million by 1988.

Irony abounds. Though proud of its parks, Iowa contrarily uses a fee system that discourages their use. The arrangement in turn has sent park visitors to county facilities, where the overloads inspired this year's proposal to impose fees there, too. Where would it end? Imagine

Scrap the park fees the crowding state and county park fees would cause in free city parks such as Ellis and Manhattan in Cedar Rapids.

A more equitable solution is Hutchins' proposal to get rid of park user fees altogether. A democratic society has several tax-supported services or conveniences that ought to remain free to the user. One is a public library. Another is a park. Trustees of such facilities should charge fees for special use — reserved reading list in the library, camping space in the park. But basic service should be free, with tax dollars paying the costs. It helps citizens' peace of mind to know that after they have shelled out for practically everything, there are still services that require no outlay. To alter that arrangement is to establish a caste system that discriminates against the poor.

Thousands of individuals and numerous institutions (including this newspaper) regretted the state park use fee when it was initiated. Only after several years of shrinking state revenue would we sit still for the proposal. How refreshing to see Iowa in a position to return the park system to the good old days. The Legislature should waste no time in approving Sen. Hutchins' proposal.

LETTERS TO THE GAZETTE

Abortion is ugly, but some alternatives are worse

Recently letters have appeared on the Opinion page comparing abortion in the United States to the genocide of Jews in Nazi Germany. This comparison is an emotional red herring that obscures the already muddy waters of debate over abortion rights. Fifty years ago in Germany, a government illegally carried out a coldblooded extermination of a whole category of human beings. Nazi genocide was premeditated and involved the building of elaborate camps and the destruction of millions of people.

Today in the United States, individual women have the legal right to react to pregnancies that are unplanned and that cause conflict in their own families and futures. Women do not act in any united way to destroy human beings whose lives are already active and independent. Rather, individual women abort their fetuses because they make the agonizing personal decision that such an action is in the best interests of those who will be directly affected by the birth of that fetus.

No woman wants to destroy a potential human being inside her body. Nor does she want to presume to make decisions that



Sperm roulette

affect the whole human race. But women must have the freedom of choice to make the decisions that affect themselves and the families that depend on them for survival.

Like every woman I know, shudder at the choice of abortion. But I also want the right to consider that choice and to take responsibility. Further, I want my daughter to have that right.

The only similarity between Nazi Germany and the world we live in today is the climate of intolerance that again exists and that may ultimately lead to repression of human freedoms.

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Don't misunderstand. I'm not a person who favors abortion. I do

not feel, however, that any woman would decide to abort a child without giving it a lot of serious thought.

But those who are anti-abortion had better be ready to dig deep in their pockets, because it will take a lot of money if a law stopping it is passed.

We will need more homes for unwed mothers, more orphanages, plus counselors in all areas unwed mothers, welfare, child abuse, schools, unemployment. We'll need more prison space for the children from poverty families and medical aid for the ones who try to abort on themselves and fail. Sad to say that's only the beginning. . . .

Abortion is a fact that no one wants, although these days it may be a necessary evil. It is not an easy subject for anyone to deal with. But some of the alternatives in the long run could be far worse.

Those protesting against abortion might find their time, money and energy better spent on providing help for those who want to keep their babies but feel they

B. Wullner 1309 A Ave. NE

WRITE RIGHT/ CARL KANE Abused, reused

Old chestnuts often undergo changes in meaning over the years. Example: "Lion's share" now is used to mean "largest share." But in Aesop's fable, the lion got it all. "I could care less" actually is the opposite of the original "I could NOT care less."

Sometimes modern usage simply abuses the spelling. In agreeing with a statement from a reader, a columnist wrote, "Amen! Here Here! and Right On! It should have been "Hear Hear!"

A feature story said a man was "one of six children born to a fiercely loyal, Irish Catholic family." Dr. Duane Schmidt points out a couple of intriguing questions about the oft-used phrase "fiercely loyal Catholic." First, he wonders why there never seem to be any fiercely loyal Jews or Protestants.

Second, he writes, "When the press describes a Muslim as 'fiercely loyal,' the intent is exactly as my dictionary describes the word fierce." He cited the synonyms ferocious, barbarous, savage and cruel. Hence, "fiercely loyal" seems to be used both as a compliment and an insult.

A Big Ten basketball coach was quoted as saying, "The pressure of coaching big-time basketball, the substance abuse by athletes and the criminal activities by many lead to a vicious cycle." F.E. Breckner of Iowa City asked, "Vicious cycle or vicious circle?"

Dictionaries don't deal with vicious cycle but describe vicious circle as "a situation in which the solution of one problem gives rise to another."

Learn about AIDS

As a student at a local college, I am concerned with college students' lack of education and information about AIDS. I hear my peers telling jokes and spreading misinformation about AIDS all the time.

My biggest concern is that I don't see this population changing its sexual behavior or other at-risk conduct. Since we live in an area where the incidence of AIDS is not that great, many feel AIDS is not a threat.

As of March 31, Iowa had 132 AIDS cases. However, the number who have AIDS-related complex and who are HIV-positive is much greater. They, too, can transmit the disease.

Another important reality is that the Minneapolis, Chicago and St. Louis areas have a greater population of people with AIDS than Iowa. These are areas where college students often go for enjoyment, summer jobs and careers. College students are the group Diligent reviewer commonly missed by AIDS education efforts. Right now the only cure for AIDS is education For further informaton on AIDS. anyone can contact R.A.P. (Rapids AIDS Project) at 393-9579.

> Lorie McCormick 2026 First Ave. NE

Has love fled?

Where did all the hate come from? These "hate Bush" letters and the "hate all Republicans." Now they even hate people of their own party. Then radio calls hate Lute Olson and hate Hunter Rawlings. How many others? My goodness! Is there no love in this world anymore? Before we vent our wrath, I believe it would be a good idea to stop and think.

> Verla Lakose Springville

Corral the EPA

Did you hear this one on the radio the other day? While America has deployed its near hysteric campaign to rid our society of smokers and, presumably, the associated health risks, the EPA finally published or otherwise aired some startling statistics on the pollutants our nation's factories are emptying into our water and air.

Uncharacteristically, the EPA admitted that it was startled by the millions of tons of toxic garbage being released . . . legally, the EPA further said.

Personally, I'm beyond the shocked stage on what's happening to our environment for the sake of progress. I'm mad as hell and will remain so until someone places C. Edwin Koop in charge of EPA.

> Tom Preston 3593 Scott Rd., Marion

I had the pleasure of attending the Bon Jovi concert with Dee Ann Rexroat. found her to be a sincere and caring person, not to mention diligent in her work. The wide range of musical information she must obtain and retain is impressive.

It's amazing how fans are so protective of their favorite bands. They are so quick to criticize and even condemn someone whose pinions differ from theirs.

Dee Ann's personal musical tastes have nothing to do with her reviews. I can attest to that, as we both share a love of good rock h' roll. So, if Dee Ann's critics have nothing better to do than complain about how someone else views a concert performance, they should send all of their hate mail to me — and let Dee Ann do her job.

Cyd Peterson Center Point