

WHY THE POOR PAY MORE JENNIFER CROSS

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SCIENTOLOGY: TOTAL FREEDOM & BEYOND

DONOVAN BESS

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TOTAL FREEDOM AND BEYOND

DONOVAN BESS

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San Francisco

This is the year of Apollo 11. It is also the year in which that psychological sophisticate, Richard Alpert, came back from his guru in India to reap a big following of inner-space explorers with his story of spiritual conversion. It is a time of burgeoning meditation societies on the college campuses, and of passionate rebellion against the amorality of our technology.

Thus it is a year promising much to any man who can blend the psychological allurements of these two movements into one product, and such a product is indeed being ardently pushed. It is called Scientology. Serious work on the blend began in 1950 when L. Ron Hubbard, a science-fiction writer with exuberant red hair, set millions of Americans to playing a psychotherapeutic game called dianetics. His book on the subject became a best seller—helped, probably, by the almost panicky chorus of disdain expressed by respectable intellectual luminaries.

The Church of Scientology is a recent extension of dianetics into bizarre spiritual levels, where practitioners report the kinds of ESP experience abundant in the literature of psychedelic drugs. They commonly and casually assert that they *know* they have lived in past human bodies; some even remember how much they weighed. Creation of this church gave Hubbard a lot of new levels to offer his devotees, and at the same time stymied defenders of the public treasury, like the Internal Revenue Service, which so far has not persuaded the courts that Scientology is more of a commercial enterprise than a church.

Scientology offers its novitiates a system of psychological "processing" as specific as any program for learning shorthand or engineering. Each grade has been firmly fixed, in writing, by Hubbard. You go through all of the lower grades face to face with an "auditor," who does his best to keep his face stony and his mind bland so as not to ruffle any of Hubbard's precepts. You and your guide use an "E-Meter," a device that measures electrical resistance in your body; it is supposed to tell the auditor when you have an emotional "withhold" from him. He keeps asking you questions or giving you rote commands until you sweat your way through your memory and expose some traumatic deposit ("engram") which supposedly has blighted your life.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Scientology strongly attracts men and women trained in the tidier scientific disciplines, engineers and computer programmers. One of the top officials in American Scientology is John Michael Smith, a young chemist who resigned as an assistant professor at the California Institute of Technology after getting processed to the highest level so far invented

by Hubbard. "I've looked at the physical sciences and I know what knowledge is there," he said. "Scientology deals with the spiritual aspect of the main source of the world we live in. The answers don't come from the physical aspect of man."

The theatricality of Scientology has also brought many entertainment personalities into the movement, including all of several leading rock bands and actor Stephen Boyd—who, like Smith, reached the Scientological peak and observed from there: "I guess that is about six steps above Nirvana." The church has established a Celebrities Center in Los Angeles, to make maximum use of the Hollywood talent among its members.

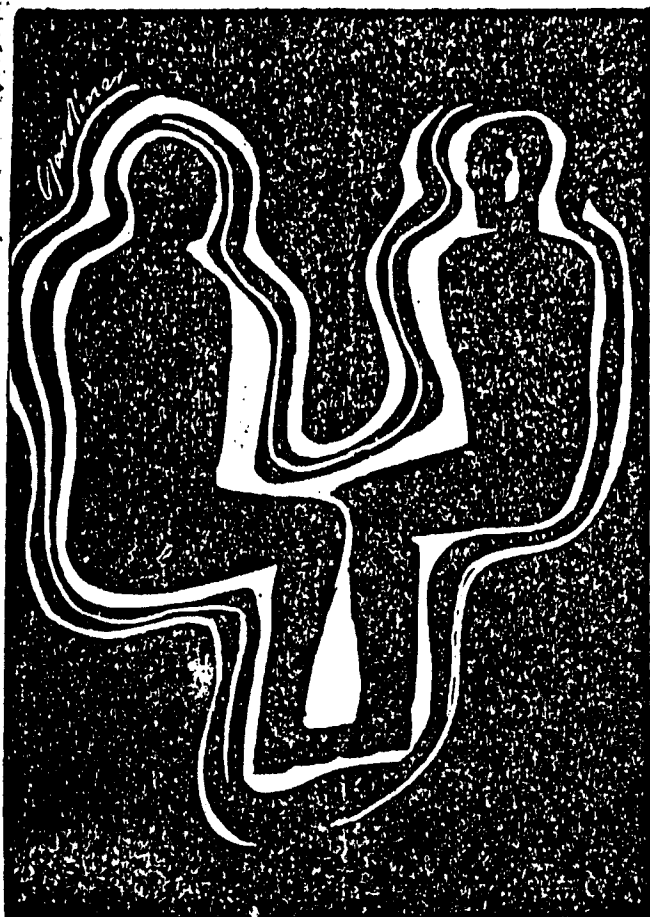
According to Bob Thomas, top administrator for the church in the United States, the E-Meter is as useful to Scientology auditors as the thermometer is to doctors. The person who is getting processed is called the "pre-clear," and regarded as a patient who wants to get well. His objective is to become a "Clear"—a man "who has got control over his thoughts, and has gone to the source of his aberrations."

During processing, the preclear hangs on to two tin cans wired to a Wheatstone Bridge in the E-Meter box. The auditor watches the device's circuit board. He pounds away with the Hubbard prefabricated commands or questions, commands like "tell me something you wouldn't mind forgetting." After repeated pokes into the memory with this command, a preclear will produce something painful. John McMaster of South Africa, Hubbard's world-roving spokesman, said an example of an engram is: "A man thinks of the time he wanted to show his penis to somebody but his mother said 'naughty.'"

Until the preclear fights his way back to the engram, the E-Meter needle does all kinds of fancy jiggling. When the auditor sees the needle float free, he feels the preclear has gotten a release from the grade. The preclear, himself, is felt to proclaim his emancipation by the blissful look of freedom on his face.

By hard work, sometimes as much as twelve hours a day, a preclear climbs through the first six grades of release and is entitled then to come to grips with the level in which he may try for Clear.

What interests the Internal Revenue Service about this spiritual escalation is that there is a stiff charge for every grade. Scientologists estimate the cost of getting Clear at \$4,000 to \$5,000. You can get through the first four grades of processing for a package price of \$617.50, if you pay in advance, but the cost rises with the ascent. At the bottom are free lectures and a free "personality test." Then comes a basic communications course for only \$15. For many an alienated person hungry for companionship and structure, this course may be worth the money if only because it puts him for hours opposite another person who has agreed to look him straight in



the eye and to give or take commands rapturously. Some neurotic inhabitants of big cities have never had even this much interchange with other human beings (even in sexual intercourse you can keep your eyes closed).

Many novitiates emerge with high enthusiasm from this preliminary orientation track. Dozens of Scientologists who went on into processing have told me with evident sincerity that they are getting rid of long-standing personal problems. Many report extraordinary healing of ailments ranging from headaches to diabetes. A typical testimonial came from Myron Ruderman, a 32-year-old graduate in physics from Reed College. "I think," he said, "that very shortly psychiatrists will have to learn Scientology and dianetics. There is a way the mind works. The truth is the truth." Pat Price, an ex-mayor of Burbank, Calif., said he came to this church with a 70 per cent hearing loss, but "while undergoing a [Scientology] process my hearing came back to me entirely."

"Clear" used to be the top level of Scientological striving, but Hubbard, employing the creative gifts that made him succeed in science fiction, has invented *six levels above Clear*. Spiritually ambitious folks now have that much more to work for, and that much more time and money to contribute to the church. A dry comment on this expanding theology came from H. Charles Berner, who was a close associate of Hubbard and spent fifteen years in the movement before rebelling at the rigidity of the founder's policies. "Every six months," said Berner, "he comes out with a new something or other."

At the moment, Hubbard is doing "advanced research" on two additional levels he will offer a constituency which, church spokesmen claim, now includes 15 million persons on four continents, 250,000 of them Americans. Jane Kember, Guardian Worldwide (chief administrator) of the church, said last month in a statement issued at the organization's headquarters in England: "Mr. Hubbard is currently engaged in a treatise on the decline and fall of Western civilizations in order to discover the future of Western civilizations in the context of what has gone before. There is possibly no end to a research which seeks to find the ultimate spiritual capability of Mankind."

John McMaster—"the world's first Clear"—recently told reporters that income sent to the church headquarters had stood at only \$10,000 a week in January 1968, but rose to \$140,000 in the succeeding six months. Scientology's churches and franchises (now called "missions") give 10 per cent of their income to the world headquarters in a thirty-room, baronial mansion near East Grinstead, Sussex. So the weekly gross income of the church presumably now stands at well above \$1.4 million. (The church has expanded even faster in the past fourteen months.) The magnitude of the financial flow is reflected in Hubbard's statement a year ago to his top officers that the Scientology organizations owed him \$13 million but that he had forgiven the debt. His administrator for the United States, Bob Thomas, said Hubbard had a salary of about \$22,000 from 1957 to 1959, but has drawn no salary since then. Thomas said: "The average (Christian) minister's salary is \$9,000 to \$30,000."

Mrs. Kember's suggestion that there may be "no end" to Hubbard's research leaves the door wide open for the kind of out-of-this-world inventions dear to a science-fiction writer's heart. Already, Hubbard and his associates speak of "the galaxy" as though they have traveled to, or at least know about, the other planets. One disenchanted ex-Scientologist, Woody McPheeters, said that during his years in the movement he got the impression that the church leaders' expansion program includes "the entire galaxy."

Most Scientologists are too busy heading up toward Clear to worry about postgraduate striving. The people who make Clear demonstrate in their lives that they are better than lower-level parishioners at influencing people, winning friends and making money. They apparently are virtually assured of getting a lifelong position in the church hierarchy. Even knowledgeable precloars can claim advantages beyond spiritual growth. Alan Albert, training director for the Palo Alto mission, said that after only a few hours of training to become an auditor he quit a \$17,500-a-year job with Philco-Ford—and makes "about the same" salary now. Training is a career opportunity in which you get processed as well as learn how to process others. Currently it costs \$1,300 to become a Hubbard Advanced Auditor, but this year Hubbard & Associates are offering newcomers a \$500 quickie training course by which you can get on the staff as an auditor in two months. With this training, church spokesmen in San Francisco said, you are eligible to process *anybody*. Your

income while doing this will run to about \$200 a week.

About three years ago Hubbard moved out of the English manor house headquarters, occupied previously by the Maharajah of Jaipur. "He is trying to retire from public life," Mrs. Kember reports. At the moment he is cruising on the *Apollo*, a 5,000-ton ship that once ferried passengers between Scotland and Ireland. This is the flagship of a fleet operated by the church's exclusive Sea Organization. There are at least five other vessels in the fleet, two of them tied up near Los Angeles. Scientology's national headquarters and the site of buildings where you can get processing at the top levels, including the mysterious OTs.

"OT" stands for "Operating Thetan." There are six OT levels above Clear. Clear, according to Arthur Maren, Scientology administrator for the Western states, is "one who has cause over all mental matter, energy, space and time." So what else can a man do?

Soar on to the OTs, of course. An OT, says the Scientology dictionary, is "not in a body." Indeed, every OT I've talked to speaks of himself as a spirit ("Thetan") who not only wafts himself in and out of his contemporary body but gets his mind back into vivid remembrances of bodies past. Maren, who is OT-4, said Hubbard created the new levels "because there's more to life than your own time—I want to be cause over what's happening out there, too."

The style of the OT is exemplified by McMaster who, according to headquarters, "has achieved one of the highest States of Existence in this Universe." One day during processing, he said, "I was looking at the floor through the bottom of my feet." Advanced Scientologists do not question such reports, for they have their own experiences of extrasensory perception. McMaster said he had done so well at Scientological remembering that he picked up details of his experiences in the last womb he was conceived in. "In the womb," he said, "I recall fights between my mother and father." How did he pick that up? "I used to come out and look at them fighting," he recalled. He said he didn't want to "be born in a family of squabbles" but unfortunately got lost somehow, "became a helpless little baby" and got born from that South African womb. "If I hadn't become Clear," he said, "it's very likely I'd have gone into the dwindling spiral of not-knowing."

The spiral he did get into certainly has produced a happy personality. This pink-faced, white-haired, self-styled "pope of Scientology" good-naturedly parries television interviewers who doubt his faith or accuse him of psychosis. On one TV show a Roman Catholic priest complained that Scientologists "don't describe a deity." (Hubbard's name is sacrosanct, but the word God seldom shows up.) McMaster told the priest: "You must admit that for 2,000 years Christianity has failed." He is almost cavalier about his past lives. Here is an exchange on the subject:

Q. Who were you in previous lives?

A. I have been mostly male. In most of the lives I died early.

Q. Which body were you in last?

A. My last body died in New York in 1926.

Q. Who were you?

A. I won't say it, because it's a very well-known name (Hesitating, smiling.) I was an actor.

Q. When did you die the last time?

A. The last time I was about 30.

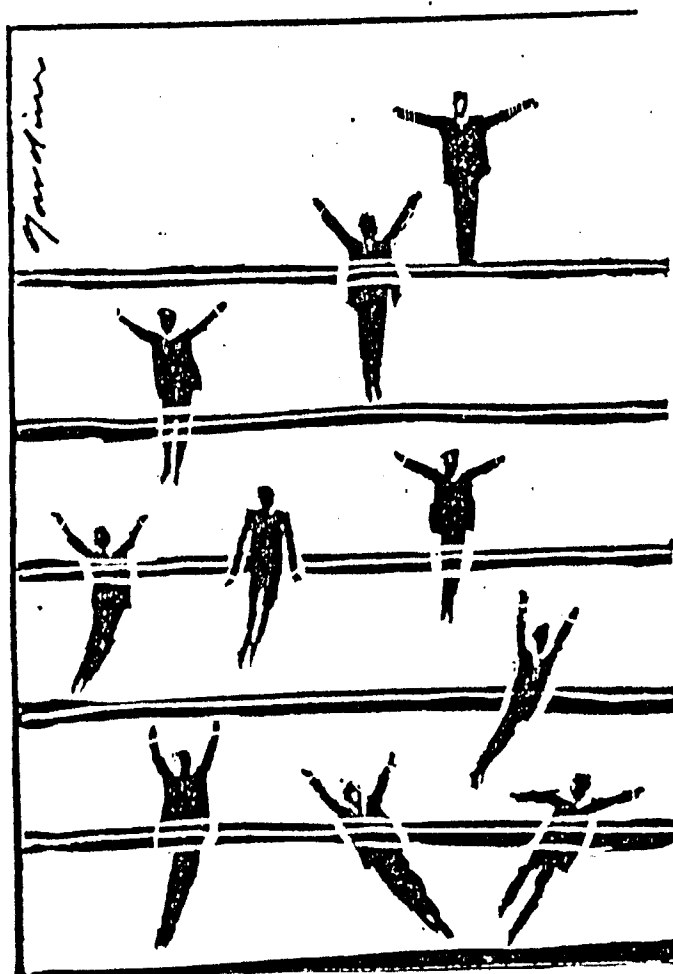
Q. Ah, so you perhaps were Rudolph Valentino? [Valentino died at age 31 on August 23, 1926.]

A. (Smiling enigmatically.) Rudolph Valentino knew he had lived many times, and announced it.

You don't have to be a blue-ribbon Scientologist to detect such memories in your psyche. Tony Shelton, a 17-year-old beginner reported: "The last time I was in a coal miner's body in Iowa. I was about 6 feet 4 and weighed 240 pounds." This time he's 6 feet tall and weighs only 190.

The atmosphere in Scientology churches is not what you would expect of a religious institution, except for the huge portraits of Hubbard. He gazes out into the room, not looking at you in the least but seeming to be concentrating fiercely on some profound and momentous idea.

The people you meet are very bright-eyed. They tend to say "Hi!" They peer brightly into your face, as though to find out just where you may be on the "road to total freedom." Public relations officials jealously defend top



officials from making gaffes. At the San Francisco church, no media cameraman may take pictures "within the organization," that is, on the premises. At the Los Angeles church, the receptionist will not let you by until you sign in. I got the feeling I had wandered into a building operated by the Defense Department. The Scientologists talk about their philosophy with the same humorless dedication I became familiar with when covering a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Their certainty that they have The Truth may be rooted in the processing, which, defector Scientologists complain, tends to produce automatons. The church leaders take an opposite viewpoint: they think we are the automatons, puppets operated by the engrams in our "reactive bank." Ex-scientologists claim the church people operate under an authoritarian structure; Hubbard says the opposite—he says we are not democratic, and to get democratic we'll have to get rid of our reactive banks and become Scientologists.

Hubbard, wearing his commodore's uniform as commander of the Sea Organization, sometimes conceives odd concepts as he paces the deck of the *Apollo*, fingering the solid-gold bracelet that carries on it the words, "Operating Thetan."

Early this year, this 58-year-old native of Nebraska sat down at an electric typewriter especially built to keep up with his fast-moving mind, and wrote for his devotees an urgent essay on the need to expand. "Hitler, like Caesar," he wrote, "did not 'consolidate his conquered territory.' It was not possible to do so, not because he did not have troops but because he didn't have a real demand for German technology and social philosophy before conquering. Thus Hitler lost his war and fascist Germany died." Hubbard then added: "Only a Scientology organization has an unlimited horizon. But any organization must expand to survive."

In another essay, on "politics," he concedes that he has spoken "derisively of governments and ideologies—including democracy." He wrote: "Watching the U.S. and Australia fight Scientology with blind fury while supporting oppressive mental and religious practices proves that democracy, applied to and used by aberrated people, is far from an ideal activity and is only aberrated democracy."

Why did England, that bastion of tolerance, last year ban visits to the island by foreigners planning to study at the Sussex headquarters of this church? Kenneth Robinson, then the British health minister, said Scientology's "authoritarian principles and practices are a potential menace to the personality and well-being of those so deluded as to become its followers." An investigation is now under way in London under the direction of Richard Crossman, director of the Department of Health and Social Security.

It is possible that only psychologists could adequately investigate aspects of Scientology that seem to parallel those of totalitarian movements from the medieval Catholic Church to fanatical leftist and rightist organizations of this century. From the beginning, the would-be Scien-

tologist is trained—or perhaps conditioned—to command and be commanded. I have never heard one well-advanced Scientologist utter a word of criticism or implied criticism of the founder.

"Scientology," Hubbard has written, "gives us our first chance to have a real democracy." Does this mean that his church is to make the future definition of what democracy is? And does he feel that people who don't at least try to be Clears can't be good citizens?

There's a clue to his feelings in one imperative of the Scientology Code of Honor: "Never fear to hurt another in a just cause." To explore this, I asked a question of David Ziff, a Columbia anthropology graduate who supervises the top level of auditing at the Advanced Organization of the American Church in Los Angeles. A "just cause," he said, "is expressed in any patriotic statement made by any country." The implication conveyed by such statements is that Scientology's ambitions extend beyond giving people spiritual help. Ziff also was told about criticism of his church by an ex-Scientologist who has set up a rival group. "If he's an ex-Scientologist," Ziff said, "he's an ex-human."

Hubbard's claims for the Sea Organization have a Wagnerian flavor to them. "The Sea Org," he has proclaimed, "is the most valuable and dedicated group of beings on this planet and is the spearhead of a new and greater civilization." Does this not suggest the concept of a Chosen People? Why is Scientology so popular in South Africa?

In recent years, the church has followed a policy of getting members to "disconnect" from those who failed to live up to the standard of the Ethics Department. Such persons were declared "Suppressive Persons" and for months and for years they received letters from former associates and others in the church who informed them coldly: "I hereby disconnect from you." This cold-blooded practice has now been dropped, says Bob Thomas. "We found this was not a very popular solution to the problem."

Worse than leaving the church is "plotting to misuse" the Hubbard manuals employed in upper-level processing. "Any Sea Org member" who becomes aware of such alleged plotters, he proclaimed, "is to use Auditing Process R2-45." In a Scientology handbook he has described this as "an enormously effective process for exteriorization but its use is frowned upon by this society at this time." Exteriorization is defined as the separating of the spirit from the body. So what's this all about? Jane Kemmer explained: "Process R2-45 was coined as a joke—is not authorized, and I am afraid occasionally 'misfires' as a joke when taken literally."

Hubbard used to tag a Ph.D. to his name. When reporters pressed him on his acquisition of the degree, he said he got it from the Sequoia University of California. This institution, now defunct, was headed by Dr. Joseph Hough, a chiropractor who refused to testify before a California assembly subcommittee looking into reports that some colleges in the state sold graduate degrees for profit. Hubbard had some schooling as an engineer. He certainly does not have respect for psychiatrists and

clinical psychologists. He conducts a holy war on them, but nevertheless wants to win them over. This summer California's psychiatrists and psychologists got letters from the church notifying them it has "a near but unwanted monopoly on results in mental healing." It offered the M.D.s and Ph.D.s a 50 per cent discount on Scientology services, but appended a condition that they must "not mix Scientology with older practices. We have no wish," the letter concluded, "that you should suffer." "I had the feeling," said one psychotherapist, "that I was being threatened."

In a leaflet distributed last spring, Hubbard wrote: "The psychiatrist and his front groups operate straight out of the terrorist text books. The Mafia looks like a convention of Sunday School teachers compared to these terrorist groups." His roving ambassador, John McMaster, wrote that "the idea of mental institutions such as they are now is generated by Communism, but Russia will not allow any of these so-called therapies to be practiced

on its own people, only on its supposed enemies." The leaflet attacking psychiatry contained a cartoon depicting that medical specialty as death holding its scythe and walking toward us out of a map of Russia.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration sticks to its accusation against Scientology that it is "peddling auditing services" on the basis of "pseudoscientific representations." The United States Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia reversed a lower court decision against the church. But in response to an FDA brief for a rehearing, two of the three appeals judges, on April 18, said the government had "improperly framed" its case. The court virtually invited the FDA to seek a new trial and to challenge Scientology's claim to tax-exempt status as a religion.

If the organization should lose its religious status, it would lose the protection of the First Amendment and might be found guilty of "false labeling" under the Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act.

MEAT AND POTATOES

WHY THE POOR PAY MORE

JENNIFER CROSS

Miss Cross has written a consumer book on the food industry, The Jolly Green Giant, which will be published shortly by Indiana University Press. It developed from earlier articles published in The Nation.

At a time when shoppers are barely controlling their fury over food prices, up nearly 5 per cent since January, it is disquieting to come upon new evidence that the poor are, directly or indirectly, forced to pay even more for their groceries than the rest of us. The Federal Trade Commission economic report on food chain selling practices in the District of Columbia and San Francisco Bay Area, released in July, is the latest document in an impressive body of evidence. Its findings are ruffling an industry which constantly brags of its efficiency and faith in free competition. They are also an eye opener for shoppers who often do not study prices as carefully as they should, or let their gaze wander as the check-out clerk rings up the purchases.

The report finds that the 25.4 million people with annual incomes of under \$3,553 for a family of four spend 40 per cent of their take-home pay on food; the national average is 17 per cent. The poorer you are, of course, the more you must pay proportionately to eat, but adding to the burden is the fact that supermarkets are scarce in low-income districts. Unable to commute to the cheaper, better stocked suburban emporia, the poor are forced to rely on "mom and pop" stores, where prices are 2 to 3 per cent higher, and convenience stores, which may be 8 per cent or more above chain supermarket prices.

Supermarkets that do operate in the ghetto compete less vigorously than elsewhere. Services tend to be more mea-

ger, facilities smaller and shabbier, meat and other produce inferior to general chain standards. There are fewer price wars and promotions. (When the \$1,000 jackpot prizes for supermarket games are handed out, they are planted among prosperous suburban matrons rather than with their counterparts in the ghetto.)

The degree of sloppiness in pricing and stocking exhibited by all food chain outlets is unpardonable, but it is particularly glaring in the low-income outlets. The FTC found that 23 per cent of advertised specials were unavailable in Washington, D.C., and 7 per cent in San Francisco, compared to 11 and 5 per cent in their respective suburbs. On the shelves, 8 to 9 per cent of all advertised items were mispriced (the errors ran as high as 35 per cent), and three times out of four the customer paid more than was necessary. Two large chains in the Bay Area (Safeway and Purity) did not change the stamped prices on their specials, leaving the door open for checker error. Also, 5 to 10 per cent of all regular shelf prices failed to tally with the official "book" prices.

This rate of error—far higher than the 0.5 to 3 per cent the industry admits—adds small but annoyingly cumulative sums to anyone's food expenditures. It prevents shoppers from taking full advantage of advertised specials, which can save 10 to 20 per cent on the grocery bill. And the poor, who can afford it least, are victimized the most.

It is unlikely that the chains are deliberately gouging their customers. The FTC report denies the accusation made two years ago to the House Government Operations Committee that Safeway and other firms raised prices on the days when welfare checks were cashed, and charged more than elsewhere for certain items in their low-