

history professor at a small "Christian liberal arts" college in North Carolina.

Consider this from the view of Magic's critics: Gingrich's literary partner is promoting and profiting from an endeavor that is, as Di Bari says, "bringing children into [Satan's] netherworld." Or, when Gingrich wasn't busy engineering the Republican takeover of the House, he was discussing drafts with a fellow who was also busy—collaborating with a satanic scheme.

So far the anti-Magic band has concentrated on the trading cards and not the peripherals—the Magic comic books, the Magic computer game, the Magic novels. They have yet to uncover the Gingrich connection. But it's clear what they'd think. "People making money off this know what they're doing," Di Nozzi growls. "They know it's not an innocent game. . . . It's part of a larger design." She and Di Bari promise to research all aspects of the Magic enterprise. If their prayers are answered and the full force of the religious right is summoned for the battle, a day of judgment may come—Gingrich's Satan-symp co-author called to account by Gingrich's political allies. Perhaps Gingrich should start shopping for another co-author for the sequel to *1945*. DAVID CORN

## Militia Forum

If Senator Arlen Specter had been half as hard on the militia movement as he was on Anita Hill, his recent Judiciary subcommittee hearing on the militias might have truly discredited the radical right. Instead, the inquiry became a soapbox for the "patriots" rather than the critical forum that was so badly needed. Aired live on CNN and C-SPAN, the session—like past Congressional hearings on right-wing groups—will only bring the militias new recruits.

True, Senators Max Baucus and Carl Levin opened the hearing with strongly worded denunciations of the militias. And federal and state law-enforcement officials unanimously concluded that the militias were "disturbing and dangerous." But the militia leaders who testified succeeded in portraying themselves as down-home patriots and beleaguered defenders of the Constitution.

Specter erred by failing to invite civil rights groups and outside experts to testify about the racist and anti-Semitic agenda of many militia activists. He preferred to take center stage himself, was poorly prepared and greatly underestimated the rhetorical skills of the militia leaders.

John Trochmann, founder of the Militia of Montana, claimed that the militias were nothing more than "a giant neighborhood watch," while his well-established links to hate groups like Aryan Nations—an outfit that teaches that Jews are satanic and blacks are subhuman—went unexposed. (Specter has a letter issued by Aryan Nations staff documenting Trochmann's close ties to the group, yet failed to question him about it.) And the presence of James Johnson, a utility company lineman from Columbus, Ohio, who is one of a handful of blacks in the movement, undermined charges of white supremacy that have hobbled the militias.

The question the hearing failed to raise is this: Given the freedoms of the First Amendment and the embrace of the

Second Amendment by militia proponents, what measure, if any, can be employed to prevent the creation of private armies of thousands of heavily armed right-wing fanatic intent on creating a white Christian republic?

A good place to start the inquiry might have been the patchwork quilt of anti-paramilitary training laws in forty-on states. Specter dropped the ball by failing to invite state attorneys general and other experts to testify about why these laws are rarely, if ever, enforced.

In the absence of a critical review, militia leaders like Norman Olson of Alanson, Michigan, were able to turn the table on the panel by accusing the senators of representing "corruption in government." After bristling at the charges, Specter settled in to examine various conspiracy theories advocated by the militias and offered to go "one on one, here before Congress, on the record" with Olson to debate the single-bullet theory of the J.F.K. assassination. Senator Dianne Feinstein solicitously gave the militias ample opportunity to clear themselves of any connection to the Oklahoma City bombing when she asked, "Are there any circumstances in which an individual would be justified in bombing a building?" "No," came the unanimous answer.

The task of holding truly comprehensive hearings into the militia movement now rests with Representative Charles Schumer and fifty-seven other House members who are calling on Newt Gingrich and the Judiciary Committee to pick up where the Senate left off. If Gingrich & Co. refuse to hold hearings—they prefer to focus on Waco instead—Schumer has pledged to hold his own "public forum" to investigate the militia: Such a forum is badly needed. DANIEL LEVITAS

*Daniel Levitas, the author of numerous articles on the radical right, is a director of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, Inc., in Kansas City.*

### NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

After 150 years, the Southern Baptists have repudiated slavery and racism. That's progress. At this rate we can expect the church to renounce its sexism on abortion and its bigotry on homosexuality by the year 2145.

### ★ CORRUPTION BY LYRIC

*This dirty rap is what corrupts our kids.  
It's filth society cannot condone.  
Explain, though, all the mean and shiftless guys  
Who grew up listening to Vic Damone.*

*Calvin Trillin*