

# Letters to The Times

## 'A New Wrinkle in a Colossal Rip-Off'

Dr. Leonard Kurland's article (Editorial Pages, Sept. 5, "A New Wrinkle in a Colossal Rip-Off," is disturbing if it is taken seriously by anyone.

Kurland has exaggerated the case so grossly that even acknowledged critics of the system, such as myself, have to recoil. It appears that Kurland is one of those doctors, psychiatrist or not, who has allowed a deep prejudice to fog his professional competence.

I am chairman of the Committee on Reforms for the California Society of Industrial Medicine and Surgery, and a member of the Los Angeles County Medical Assn. Committee on Industrial Practice. I have appeared before the Legislature during this past session to attempt workers' compensation reforms. I was one of the first physicians to criticize workers' compensation practices.

For the first 12 years of my practice, as a general practitioner in industrial medicine, I saw injured patients almost exclusively for the industrial complex (the defense). When I completed my training as a consultant in musculoskeletal pathology, I was asked to see injured patients (applicants) by their attorneys, as well. I was chagrined to learn that some of the patients referred to me by applicant's attorneys had, in fact, been improperly treated from the onset of their injury.

Although there are, unquestionably, malingerers, I have found very few patients who did not want to get well, be gainfully employed and desirous of being in charge of their lives once again. Kurland states in his article that "psychiatric disability is almost always a fraud" and "that true psychiatric disability from industrial causes is rare." I have found in my practice that any person in constant, unremitting and relentless pain, whether from industrial injury or any other cause, is certainly likely to exhibit some degree of emotional symptoms, occasionally to the point of being suicidal. When the patient is confronted with what he perceives to be a hostile "closed mind" attitude, such as Kurland portrays, the symptoms can compound as the patient feels helpless, with no place else to turn for believability and relief.

The Times welcomes expressions of all views from readers. Letters should be kept as brief as possible and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number, if any. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Send to: LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, LOS ANGELES TIMES, TIMES MIRROR SQUARE, LOS ANGELES, CA 90028

Kurland apparently wants "observable physical injury" as evidence of pain. I agree, but it is my contention that Kurland's criteria for acceptable physical findings appear grossly inaccurate. As a ludicrous example, there are some accepted painful conditions, such as headache, that we all agree occur, which have no *observable* signs at this stage of medicine. There is obviously a vast middle ground of signs related to pain that he does not understand or choose to accept.

Kurland states adversary medicine is the worst kind of medical practice that the patient can be subjected to. As we all know, industry is well represented by lawyers. What does he choose for the patient—that he be unrepresented altogether?

From my vantage, Kurland has revealed such an overbearing attitude of suspicion that he has made himself useless in the treatment of the industrially injured.

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## China's Move to Curb Population

This is in regard to Linda Mathews' article (Sept. 8), "Each Couple to Be Limited to One Child, China Announces," on China's attempt to stabilize its population by the end of this century. I'm relieved to know that a major world power has finally decided to do something to stop its population explosion.

Communist Party Chairman Hua Guofeng said that "We must rely chiefly on publicity and persuasion . . . not on compulsion or arbitrary orders." This, too, is a big step, when you consider the fact that formerly some birth control officials there "had resorted to compulsion an even forced abortions to meet the one-child goal."

Let's look at a few facts. One-fourth of the people of the world (1 billion) are starving. Most of these people are in Third-World nations. Forty-thousand people die every day from starvation. Again, most are in the Third-World nations. By the end of this century the world's population will have doubled to more than 8 billion people. China accounts for another one-fourth of the population. China's policy is a positive sign that we can solve the population crisis if we really want to.