Hoerr howls at book review of
And the Wolf Finally Came

Dear Editor,

David Houston presents what he labels “a different perspective” on steel labor history in his review of my book, *And the Wolf Finally Came: the Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Winter 1989 issue). I would simply point out that his perception derives from an analysis based on economic determinism: Since things have always happened thusly in the past in a capitalist society, they will always happen thusly in the future. Therefore, labor should not even try to win a strong voice in decision-making because whatever it gains will be illusory in any case. I gather that we may chisel this in stone.

Whilst we chisel, let us inscribe another iron law laid down by Professor Houston: Anyone who thinks that anything good ever happened in the Mon Valley, a fool be he or she. Houston says that I “romanticize” the history of the valley by giving “affectionate detail about its history, people, industry, terrain, towns, football, etc.” And so, my descriptions of miserable living conditions, rampant discrimination against blacks and Eastern Europeans, unsafe conditions in the mills, pollution of rivers and skies, the corrosive influence of the numbers racket, company domination of politics and education, suppression of unions, and the divisions between communities — all of these descriptions go for naught because I did not present them in an appropriately disaffectionate way.

Houston apparently would have preferred that I depict life in the Mon Valley as a bleak, miserable, unreforinall calamity imposed on us by evil capitalists. We who lived there should perform like Marxist cardboard cutouts, ritually condemning every minute of every day of our lives. What a simplistic, professorial view of life!

John Hoerr
Teaneck, New Jersey

Correlation
In the Summer 1989 issue, the late H.J. Heinz II was identified incorrectly in a photograph caption as Senator Heinz. His son, H.J. Heinz III, is the senator.