Opinion

Taxes, teeth marks

Whatever else history says of the United States of America, it must record that our country, in the latter years of the 20th century, was generous in selling rope to our hangmen, arming our enemies and feeding the mouths that bite us.

One biter is a 35-year-old Marxist Jesuit Peter Marchetti, who heads a U.S.-financed land reform project in Nicaragua.

U.S. taxpayers fund 80 percent of an outfit in Nicaragua known as the Wisconsin Land Tenure Center. Marchetti is director, with the approval of the Agency for International Development.

AID gave a $1.3 million grant and the State Department a $2.8 million grant to the center.

Heritage Foundation analyst David Asman, who investigated this case, said of the center: "Practically without exception, it is to this group that the State Department turns for information about land reform in developing nations." That may help explain why they are still dragging along on the seat of their pants.

A sample of Marchetti's world view appeared when he wrote: "Capitalism will not cease to exist or even begin to wither away until the working class replaces the bourgeoisie or any of its substitutes as the leading force in society."

In Chile, under the Allende regime, Marchetti mixed "research" and activism, joining militants in political tasks. The head of the militants carried out armed kidnapping, Marchetti said.

In Nicaragua, living on his $43,000-a-year U.S. tax-financed salary, according to an AID associate, Marchetti "began preaching in Managua, attacking U.S. policy in El Salvador," "participated in the anti-American chants and songs" at Sandinista gatherings and helped to spend more than $900,000 in U.S. funds for seminars and projects supporting the Sandinista regime.

Major surgery for the Senate?

Sweeping changes in the manner in which the U.S. Senate goes about its business are being recommended.

There is room for plenty of improvement on Capitol Hill. The question is whether the Senate will look favorably upon proposals for reforming its present practices.

The Senate Committee on Rules and Regulations is scheduled to begin hearings on the matter this month. Recommendations in a study conducted by two former senators, James B. Pearson, R-Kan., 1962-78, and Abraham Ribicoff, D-Conn., 1963-81, include:

Rules to ensure attendance; election of a permanent presiding officer; elimination of several committees and all staffed subcommittees; changes in the budget process; and limits on debate, including a cloture rule that could halt a filibuster by a vote of at least 60 senators.

The report came in a period when the Senate found itself beset in filibusters and all sorts of maneuvering that is exasperating to the leadership and to individual members. Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives resort to such delaying tactics when it suits their purposes. Convincing senators to abandon such practices won't be easy.

Reducing committees from the present 20 to about a dozen and eliminating all of the subcommittees is a consideration. It will be difficult to unseat entrenched chairmen who covet their turf as private territory. At present a senator can serve on up to five committees but the report recommends a limit of serving on only three panels.

The proposal for electing a permanent presiding officer has merit. Although the U.S. Constitution designates the vice president as presiding officer of the upper chamber, he rarely attends the sessions. The situation is made worse since Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., who is the Senate's president pro tem, likewise rarely performs that duty. The chore falls upon a rotating group of junior senators who usually have little experience in the chamber's procedures. The vice president still could fill the role when he is in attendance.

The report also recommends major changes in the congressional budget process, including the elimination of budget committees and considering the two-year appropriations bills rather than annual measures. The report also urges the Senate to set an agenda of areas to be considered during the session. A two-thirds vote would be required to win consideration of issues not on the agenda. Another proposal calls for considering controversial issues only once a year. If adopted, it would fall heavily on opponents of abortion.

At least one chaplain believes the Senate needs heavenly help in the effort to mend its ways. At a recent opening session, the Rev. Richard C. Halverson beseeched the Lord to "prevent the Senate from being like Humpty Dumpty." He also asked God to "keep it from being so fractured and fragmented that no one will be able to put it together again."

Synfuel economics

The Great Plains coal gasification plant at Beulah, N.D., is only half built, but it is already in trouble, and so is the government synthetic fuels program which stands behind it. A consortium of five companies is building the plant to turn coal into gas with the aid of $2 billion in federal loan guarantees. Originally, the plant was expected to pay for itself and begin turning a profit within 10 years, but that was when everyone expected the price of oil — and the price of gas as an alternate fuel — to be rising steadily during the 1980s.

The fall in oil prices and the lower inflation rate now lead to projections that the Great Plains plant will lose $773 million in its first decade of operation and might not recover its cost for 16 years. The sponsors are expected to ask for additional federal aid to keep the project going.

The worldwide surplus of oil and the softening of energy prices demand a fresh look at the policy and goals of the Synthetic Fuels Corp. created by Congress in 1979 during a period of shortages and rising prices. The corporation was to use revenue from the "windfall profits" tax on oil to finance an ambitious program of developing synfuel technology and subsidizing the production of fuel.

The revised outlook for the Great Plains plant is evidence of how the economics of synfuel production have changed. Energy companies have backed away from some major projects altogether. Revenue from the oil tax is falling short of what was anticipated, and there is pressure in Congress to spend those limited funds on something more important than subsidizing the production of fuel the country doesn't really need.

The problem is that sooner or later synfuel technology may be of vital importance. The oil surplus could vanish. Prices can move back up, perhaps sharply. The cost of producing oil and gas from coal, shale, tar sands and other sources would become competitive. Synfuel plants could shore up our domestic inventory of energy sources if oil supplies from abroad are threatened.

It would seem that federal subsidies should be concentrated at this time on synfuel research and pilot plants to test various technologies, and not on plants designed for commercial-scale production. We do not need synfuel production but we do need information about which technologies are the most efficient. This can reduce the lead-time for building production plants in the future.

The Reagan administration was criticized in its first two years for dragging its feet on the synfuel program. We can now be grateful it did not make major commitments to projects which were based on inaccurate projections of the energy market in the 1980s. A less grandiose synfuel program oriented toward research and development during this decade could be the key to an efficient and valuable production program in the 1990s.

"MY NEW HOME COMPUTER SAID THERE WAS ONLY A 1.7 PERCENT CHANCE OF MY TAX RETURN BEING CHECKED"

Agree or not

Teachers Retirement System is an overlooked industry

by S.C. Van Curon

While the politicians have been talking about bringing new industry into Kentucky, there's an old established one here that affects every county in the state but is rarely recognized.

Its payroll in 1982 was $109,416,096 and went to 16,222 persons all across Kentucky. The payroll has had an annual growth of about 600 to 625 persons per year for the past six years and the outlook is good that the number will increase at about the same ratio this year.

This company wrote its first dividend check in 1942 to its investors that amounted to about $21.00 per quarter. Since that time that fledgling industry has continued to grow until the average dividend was about $860 a month for teachers who retired last year.

However, there are signs that it may level off in the immediate future as the number of investors shows signs of decreasing.

This industry is the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System that was established by the 1938 legislature, but not funded until 1940 and the first retirement check was written in 1941 that amounted to about $21.00 per quarter for these early retirees.

Capital for the system comes from teachers contributions that are matched by the state. Teachers contribute 7.84 percent of their salaries. Their benefits on retirement amount to two percent per year of their average salary.

However, teachers are not covered by Social Security as are state employees who also have their own state retirement system that has a lower funding rate. There are also judicial and legislative systems as well as for county employees.

State law requires that the Teachers' Retirement System have an independent acturial study made each two years. "This is to make certain the system can meet its acturial requirements," Pat Miller, executive secretary, said. He also said the system always has been deemed sound.

In addition to its contributions from active teachers, other income is derived from investments. About 18 percent of its assets are invested in stocks, 1.5 percent in real estate (income producing) and the balance in high quality bonds and government issues.

As the school population has declined as the war babies reached adulthood, so has the number of teachers declined. "We've lost about 1,000 contributing members in the last few years from lower teacher employment," Miller explained. While some school districts have had to lay off teachers others have been able to handle the reduced requirements through attrition by retirements.

Miller said the system has been making good returns on its investments through the years which accounts for much of its robust fiscal health.

This is a Kentucky industry that is not as susceptible to the whims of the market place as most others since its income is based on salaries of teachers in a school system that is required by law to educate our children. It reaches into every community in the state.

The retirement income is a steady source that is overlooked by most people because there isn't a large concentration of retired teachers in any single community.

Down Memory Lane

Elizabeth Clay is Miss Nicholas County

Thursday, June 6, 1963

Miss Rebecca Barlow, daughter of Mrs. W.G. Irvin and Dr. Irvin, and a 1959 graduate of Carlisle High School, was one of 16 persons initiated into the University of Kentucky chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at the U.K. Faculty Club. Selection to the national scholastic honorary is based on outstanding academic work, judged on approved courses only and on the student's dedication to ideals of philosophy, morality and literature.

Homer Hillock, 80, son of the late S.W. Hillock and Annie Rice Hillock, was born in Nicholas County in the Headquarters voting precinct and has voted continuously for a period of 60 years in the Headquarters precinct without missing a year. He picked a winner on his first ballot and picked a winner again this year.

Miss Elizabeth Ann Clay, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Clay, and freshman at Nicholas County High School, was chosen Miss Nicholas County at the county 4-H Style Revue held May 31 at the Nicholas County High School.

City council has given Police Chief Eugene Kelley permission to purchase 12 new parking meters and turn in 12 old meters for repair. All new meters will be the two-hour type.

BORN — To the Rev. and Mrs. James Bates, a daughter, Sandra Fay, May 30 at the Clark County Hospital.

MARRIED — Carol P. Neinuis and James E. Dowd, May 29 at the Carlisle Christian Church. — Miss Freda Jane Platt and Arthur Walters Jr., June 1 at the First Methodist Church in Cynthiana.

DIED — The Rev. May Blaney, former pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Carlisle, June 1. — Miss Frances Thomason, 58, North Middletown, June 1 at the Pleasant Grove Hospital in Jefferson County.

Thursday, June 18, 1943

Henry Howe Bramblet, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bramblet of East Union, received his Bachelor of Law degree at the University of Kentucky last week; Miss Susanna Burton Reynolds, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Reynolds, received her Bachelor of Arts degree from U.K.; Miss Pauline Stone, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Verna Stone, graduated from Eastern State Teachers College, Richmond and Miss Irene McElfresh from K.F.O.S., Midway.

Mr. and Mrs. Roger Womack will move July 1 from the Cole Apartments on Sycamore Street to the home of Mrs. Warren Fisher Sr. on Chestnut Street.

DIED — William Thomas Rigg, 65, June 2 at home in Millersburg. — Albert Lee Dale, 77, Friday at the Johnson Memorial Hospital.

Wisconsin Farm Bureau supports burley

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation officially announced its support for the federal tobacco price support program, U.S. Rep. Larry J. Hopkins, R-Ky., said.

Hopkins referred to an April 28, 1983 news release from the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation, which said that "Pete's bill would be a serious blow to those Wisconsin farmers who derive an income from the tobacco crop amounting to over $20 million last year. In addition, over $100 million was paid into the state treasury from taxes on tobacco products used in Wisconsin," Don Haldeman, president of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, was quoted in the release.

Hopkins has been the leading opponent in Congress to anti-tobacco legislation.

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Op-Ed page

Stare and squeeze . . or how to turn on 4 spigots with only two hands

Sometime ago the American Dairy Association came out with instructions on how to milk a cow. I guess they wanted to preserve a lost art. Like how to operate a spinning wheel, or how to make lye soap.

Very few people milk cows by hand anymore. In fact, those who milk cows for a living use mechanical milkers that put the squeeze on the cows while the farmers catch up on the latest art in Playboy or some other mind-improving publication.

Anyway, it doesn't hurt to know how to milk a cow, so the guidesheet starts off with the obvious:

"The cow does not give the milk. You have to take it from her."

This point conceded, the milker should:

"Use both hands. The method which makes you an expert is to squeeze one hand, then the other. Either start on the two front spigots, or work the diagonal method, which allows you more room. A cow has four spigots located to the rear and low.

"Cut the fingernails, nothing unnerves a cow so much as a set of long, sharp fingernails. She shows displeasure by: (a) stepping into the milk pail; (b) stepping on your left foot; (c) clonking you soundly on the neck with her tail; (d) hoisting you, stool, pail and parts of the barn into the air with her back feet.

"If she stares at you, stare right back. Besides giving good nourishing milk, the next best thing a cow does is stare — at her milker, the hired man, and particularly at city folks out on a picnic.

"Work slowly. A cow operates like a toothpaste tube. Give the milk time to get out. First squeeze the index finger, then the third finger, finishing with the little finger. Reverse the process and you are in trouble.

"Aim for the pail. Important and tightly fought contests have been lost because too much milk was directed outside the pail. It is the milk in the pail that counts. Try shooting for distance sometime. The world's record is about 30 feet."

I think it might be well to know which side of the cow to work from. Most are milked from the right side, but you never know when you'll run into a left-sided cow.

The most lethal weapon a cow carries is her tail. This is a long, slender, whip-like thing with a tuft of hair on its end. During the day, she dangles it into every cockleburr thicket in the pasture to get it loaded for milking time.

It doesn't matter much if you spray and kill every fly in the barn, she will find an excuse to flail her tail in the milker's direction. Her timing is perfect. Somehow she can sense when you have turned your face toward the rear and at that precise second will cut you across the nose with her club.

Some milkers lose their tempers when this happens and this show of weakness does not make for good relations with cows. I always used restraint, finding that a couple of well-placed kicks to the ribs and a few statements about the cow's ancestry was usually sufficient if administered enough times.

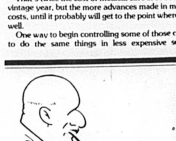
You don't find many people anymore who want to know how to milk a cow. They are having enough trouble trying to get milk cartons open.

— RM —

By 1985, says Standard & Poors, the American people will be spending $460 billion a year to get well and stay that way. Or, in the case of Phyllis Diller, to keep from getting any uglier.

That's twice the cost of medical care in 1980. Maybe 1980 was a vintage year, but the more advances made in medicine, the more it costs, until it probably will get to the point where it won't pay to get well.

One way to begin controlling some of those costs is to find ways to do the same things in less expensive settings. Outpatient surgery in the surgeon's office is one alternative. The kitchen table is another if you could get your wife to clear it of all those dirty dishes.



RUSS METZ

In the Seattle area, Dr. David Davis uses the common sense of an Idaho farm boy to treat 60% of his cases in his office instead of in the hospital. Since he started doing hernia repairs and other procedures in his office, other surgeons realized they were losing out on some very good business and began to follow suit.

Patients who are suitable candidates for office surgery like it because it means they can go home after the operation and can avoid a stay in the hospital. Employers like it because patients who do not undergo anesthesia can return to work faster. Insurance companies like it because outpatient surgery avoids almost all costs of room and board, anesthesiology and operating and recovering rooms.

Using the example of a hernia repair, comparative costs—before the surgeon's fee is added—look like this: A procedure in-hospital would cost between $1,150 and $1,400. A procedure in a hospital out-patient department would cost $450. But the same procedure in Dr. Davis' office would cost $130, making it the cheapest hernia repair in America.

Maybe the next major advances in medicine will be those that not only save lives but save money as well. Those who contribute to that cause deserve the same accolades as all the other heroes of modern medicine.

Phyllis Diller is a medical marvel. She says she has tried everything to stay young, including stealing cells from Dick Clark's body. But nothing worked.

"I was still the only woman who could walk through Central Park at night and reduce the crime rate," she said. Finally, she went under the knife: two face lifts, a breast reduction and a tummy tuck. Phyllis, the self-described "flower girl of the crabgrass set" blossomed into the Bo Derek of the Gerbil set.

"There's nothing original left of me except my elbows," joken the 65-year-old comic.

"I went to the hospital and got put to sleep because I didn't want to be around when they did it. Neither did the doctor," she said. "The first time he operated with a mask over his eyes. Since then, he's come to think of me as a laboratory."

— RM —

It's only my opinion:

- ✓ The main difference between genius and stupidity is that genius has it limits.
- ✓ Our young people should know there still is good reason for getting married. It's the best way to get acquainted.
- ✓ The Mona Lisa always reminds me of a newspaper reporter listening to a politician.
- ✓ If you look at a gorilla in the zoo long enough, he'll remind you of somebody you know.
- ✓ A husband is a person who goes window shopping only when he wants to buy a window.
- ✓ Proof that our continent is on a tilt is that all the fruits and nuts have rolled downhill to California.
- ✓ The only man in the world who understands the U.S. monetary system is the one standing next to you at a bar.
- ✓ The heretofore is where lawyers go when they die.
- ✓ Only the weatherman knows the difference between partly cloudy and partly sunny.
- ✓ High school kids won't have any trouble learning how to operate computers, if someone will read them the instructions.
- ✓ Clothes do make the man. You don't see many naked men high in government or business positions.
- ✓ What this country needs is a seed catalog that will pass a lie detector test.

The less you have to do, the bigger mess you make of it.

Onward, upward.

An editor's random thoughts...

by Warren R. Fisher Sr.
May 2, 1935

Outside the window near which I write, the maple trees are cunningly winged seed pods, whirl down like tiny gyrocopes until the earth is covered with thousands of these delicately staunch little craft of the vagrant breeze, each bearing its germ of life, its hope of fruition sure to be thwarted. For at the first grass mowing, the clicking blades will snip out the lives of the little green sprouts which have thrust up from a fertile spot of soil. Out of the thousands, one may survive to be casually transplanted, to strike downward into the moist and nourishing soil, to throw upward, to tonic sunlight and refreshing rain, leaf and branch; to grow burly-barked, man-bodied — in God's own good time, a tree.

Out of the millions, one! Nature plants prodigally. The Universal Mother takes no chances with her posterity. Cunningly she wings, bars, pours sweet odors into blossoms, honey into flower chalices, that the golden pollen may make fruitful, that winged feeders may bear away from the parent stem the germ of life that may himself may flick a vagrant bur from his hunting coat and carry on her immutable purpose.

The Eternal Soki from her Bowl hos pour'd.

Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour.'

Out of the millions, one! To eat bread and sit in the sun; to live and love and suffer and perchance to envy the bubbles that burst into nothingness, the winged maple pods that never see sunlight, or drink dew or fling up leafy arms to the sun — nor endure winter's blasts, nor feel the slow oncreeping of decay.

"One moment in Annihilation's waste.

One moment of the Well of Life to taste."

But today is lovely; today is today and the slim catbird, graceful aristocrat of shrub and hedgerow, modest cousin of the mocker, sings from the leafy coverts as the maple pods whirl down. So I am tempted away into the sunshine and the beauty of the countryside, where the green fields will soon be empurpled with the seeding of the blue grass. Tiny seed pods by the million, by the multiplied billion, to be sucked up, sliced off by the sighing swish of the stripper's comb. And yet enough will remain to seed the rifled fields, with such inexhaustible prodigality does Nature sow for her posterity. "Millions of bubbles like us, and will pour."

Staggering to the imagination this prodigality and somehow saddening., flipping into memory the cynical philosophy of boyhood's devotion to the Rubaiyat:

Into this Universe and Why not knowing

Nor Whence, like water willy-nilly flowing;

And out of it, as wind along the waste,

I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.

But today is lovely; today is today; field and woodland green beautifully in mourning dove is a sloven builder and a poor housekeeper, yet the male always sings his youthful love-note to her, as though she were the finest of wives. And very like the male thing is he, after the manner of many husbands. As I walk on I hear his coo-coo-coo-acoo-acoo, crooning to her, and me-thinks there will be another nest and more white eggs and no tragedy in the time perchance.

On in the pleasant sunshine into a field of ripening bluegrass, knee high, showing in the purple tints of its seed heads the colors from whence it takes the name. And I lay awhile in the lush grass, watching the wind ripple the tops like miniature waves on a purple sea. All about the meadow larks did hover and call, flinging their flaring carol to float on the breeze and there came a medley of bird songs, the wailing cry of the timid killdeer, the joyous concert of the mocking bird, the cheery call of the robin and harsh "yarup" of the flicker, and ever and anon the crooning love talk of the male dove, soft and low, voiceless lady love.

Presently, in another field, where the black berries begin to shower their snowy blossoms and many second growth locusts and weeds and I would pass on to more pastures, but am taken with the excited chirping of two sparrows whose nest I decide must be near, so not to disturb them. Through my glass I observe the pinkish bill and the wing markings of the field sparrow and wait as motionless as may be, until the female disappears, when I walk slowly to the spot, the wind blowing toward me so that my scent will not alarm the male sparrow made, warning his wife of the enemy's approach, but she has doubtless not heard and flew out at my very feet. A dainty cup it was, set between four weed stalks and lined with horse hair, very neat, and so well hidden that one might search for hours and not find it, unless shown the spot by the nesting bird. Is it there were four nestlings with orange-pink mouths, if such a color there be. At least the mouths were larger than the tiny birds almost and they stretched them mightily when the nest was touched. And all the while the parent birds chipped plaintively, both fluttering near, the female nearest, as is the custom of mothers, solicitous for her safety for her children. Very soon I passed on touched by the solicitude of this feathered mother.

So across the fields home, seeing a pair of cardinals, the male a streak of flame against a background of green leaves, and a ruby-throated humming bird poised near me for a moment. And I was fain to think how different is this darting little bunch of feathers from the dove, for he is but a sad dog of a husband and his wife a model housekeeper, for she labors most diligently to saddle her tiny nest on a twig, lashing it securely with cobwebs, strand after strand and camouflaging it to match the color of surroundings with innumerable bits of lichen, the while he flits from flower to flower and does no whit of work. Very like some men in this third also.

In the cemetery I find the nest of a brown thrasher in a cedar bush and the parent birds both so frantic that I left them at peace, but I note one crouns a liquid "pee-a-wee," that is almost a sob, when she thinks her young are to be harmed.

Home to make slight pretence of eating lunch and eager to be back in the sunshine, though the air grows cool for June. So to the lake to pick wild strawberries, which tempt me not so much as the fishing and I yearn for a bucket of black-head minnows and my rod, for it is June and there is always prospect of hooking a fat bass, many of which live in the lake, but feed I think mighty well on smaller fishes, for they do lake the hook seldom. At the lake it is pleasant to watch the martins and the barn swallows flit and dip and a purple grackle walked sedately to within a few feet of me. Very like a crow is this fellow and well named the crow blackbird.

And there comes over me a spirit of peace as I sit in the sunshine of June, the most beautiful of months. And I think of the fulfillment of the promise of April in this month, mother of the peerless prima donna in Nature's pageant of Summer. All about are the wonders of life resurrected, creeping grubs metamorphose into gauzy-winged insects, ugly groping forms crawl up from the ooze of the pond lowly and float away on lacy wings for a brief hour of life; tiny chemical laboratories by the million pour life and color and fragrance into leaf and bud and blossom. All through the days of June and ice the forces of life have been at work, getting ready, drawing strength from the earth, looking to the fulfillment — to June. And so to me, though it may not come to you, comes a fine sermon, of the kind that nearly always does come to me from the fields and groves — God's first temples. And very truly I think the poet has written that we may find

...sermons in stones.
Books in the running brooks.

So home through the gathering twilight, to read a while, to wish vainly that I might lay down for the month of June the cares of getting a competency, the heavy load for money, the petty worries of business, to listen and look, to angle a bit and to dream much. And there runs through my head as I fall asleep a rhyme of Coleridge, mighty soothing in sound.

A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

And so to sleep.

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