

Saturday Review



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Books Are Not Expendable

What if a coalition of extremists proclaimed their intention of fire-bombing every school and public library in the country?

The public outcry would, of course, be memorable. Not only would riot police hit the streets in force, but reasonable people everywhere would set up an anguished outcry and take the sternest possible line with the troublemakers. Our schools and libraries are, the cry would go, the backbone of the nation and the arsenal of democracy—who diminishes them diminishes America. And if, in the face of the riot guns and outraged public feeling, the extremists did manage to level a few libraries and classrooms, popular opinion would soon force the government to build ever statelier mansions of learning on the bombed-out sites.

But there is, of course, more than one way to put schools and libraries out of commission. There are ways of doing the job in broad daylight, right under the nose of a somnolent American public. Consider, for instance, the recently announced federal budget allotments for books and educational materials for the coming fiscal year. Where \$237 million was made available a year ago, the Nixon Administration has slashed that amount by a cool 87.5 per cent. Yet the public outcry has been, at best, muted.

Spelled out, this wholesale slash means that no federal funds at all will be given to elementary school libraries, and that only minuscule amounts will trickle down to the public and college libraries.

The libraries are, of course, far from being alone in their deprivation. The proposed federal cuts will bring the budget of the Office of Education down from \$4.1 billion in 1968 to a lowly \$3.2 billion in 1970—a steep, even dizzying decline, and one that is bound to leave wound-stripes on the country's educational bodies for some time to come.

Ironically, Washington's budget-slashers have chosen to hack away at federal grants at a time when their counterparts in the cities and localities are also finding it expedient to skimp and scamp on educational services. The effect of this dual barrage may well prove devastating.

But surely no one in government is *Against* education and the reading process? If, as Senators are forever telling us in commencement day speeches, education is the backbone of our country, why would sober, well-meaning budget experts want to bend their country's backbone to the snapping point? The unofficial explanation out of Washington has been that the programs hit were of "low priority" in this "period of inflation and budgetary stringency."

This "explanation" would be moving and persuasive if only the pesky daily

papers would stop printing stories that give such explanations the lie. Recent news stories tell, for instance, how the Air Force, sans congressional authorization or appropriations, approached an aircraft company and ordered up fifty-seven monster-sized C-5A transport planes, without having any clear idea of how much the planes would cost. The price will depend, it came out, on how much an earlier order of fifty-eight C-5As costs to build. If the first group of planes turns out to cost more than expected, no sweat: Under its contract with the Air Force, the aircraft company is free to jack up the price of the second group of planes as much as is necessary to insure a tidy profit.

This breathtaking display of the juggler's art has moved Representative Otis Pike, of New York, to exclaim that the Air Force was "playing Mickey Mouse with figures." The contract arrangement is so loose-limbed and amiable, in fact, that no one seems sure just how much money may be involved. Thus, the Air Force says its original understanding was that all the planes would cost some \$4,348,000,000 but that of course the estimate has since risen by \$1,382,000,000. Yet one Air Force expert concedes that the cost increase will probably run something on the order of \$2 billion. This amount could give the United States the finest library facilities and services in the world. Meanwhile, each week we read other reports of massive military waste and sloppy bookkeeping that do little to convince the electorate that the values of the society are in happy balance. Fortunately, various groups and individuals are currently pressing Congress to restore these budget cuts—which is to say, they are trying to restore the nation's educational backbone to its original shape. During this month and July, the Congress will be holding hearings and voting on the 1970 appropriations bill. If every American who feels strongly about these misappropriations of educational funds would visit, write, or call his Representative and Senators, there is every chance that the cuts would be restored. If they are not, the bureaucrats—or, as the Germans call them, "desk-murderers"—will with a pen stroke have done more damage to the life of the mind in this country than a regiment of fanatics and incendiaries could do if they worked around the clock. Books are not expendable.

It is the fashion to think of teachers, librarians, and cultivated people generally as timid, sheeplike, and much too well bred to cry out when they are shorn. Perhaps it is time to remind our fiscal hatchet-wielders of Balzac's saying, "Terrible is the revolt of a sheep." —HALLOWELL BOWSER.



Letters to the Editor

open to contributions from the world's peoples.

STEVE L. CULVER,
Fort Hays Kansas State College,
Hays, Kan.

Pits in the Lemonade

I WISH TO COMMEND Professor Garrett Hardin for his excellent article "Finding Lemonade in Santa Barbara's Oil" [SR, May 10], concerning the application of cost-benefit analysis theory to oil pollution. I would, however, offer one caveat in connection with this approach. Although society has seen fit, in fact, if not in theory, to apply this doctrine to remedy social ills in certain other situations (e.g., workmen's compensation), in many instances society has found it necessary to adjudge the product of an activity to be so invidious as to require prohibition of the activity in its entirety. This type of absolute prohibition goes completely beyond the cost-benefit analysis theory.

In the case of the Santa Barbara channel oil pollution incident and similar situations, I am not convinced that even an appropriately applied cost-benefit analysis would necessarily result in maximizing benefit to the public. Professor Hardin, in discussing whether or not the Santa Barbara channel oil is worth the candle, would rely principally on the internal processes of industry to come to that judgment if the same be warranted by cost-benefit analysis. This is misplaced reliance. The companies drilling in the Santa Barbara channel have the vast majority of their operations elsewhere. For many reasons (market demand, cost of transportation, need for reserves, etc.) they may wish to produce Santa Barbara channel oil even though standing alone it is less than economically attractive. Thus, even if we internalize the pollution detriment, the companies may still be willing to operate (and to pollute and pay for it) to obtain the production, provided that revenues to offset the loss can be obtained elsewhere. So, simply internalizing the costs may not achieve the desired goal. This may well be one of those situations in which society must absolutely prohibit the activity and thus simply declare the Santa Barbara channel off limits to mineral exploitation efforts.

It would be interesting to compare the value of the benefit to be derived from such an absolute prohibition with the value of the resource to be produced, discounting the latter by potential adverse effects. It is not inconceivable that society would benefit more from the prohibition than from the development.

H. GARY KNIGHT,
Assistant Professor of Law,
Louisiana State University,
Baton Rouge, La.

Hope for World's Future

N.C.'s EDITORIAL "Proposal to a Foundation" [SR, Apr. 26] deserves wide notice. May I suggest going a step beyond the establishment of a Commission on the World's Future toward a research body—perhaps under the direction of such a

commission—with the enduring practical work of determining and reporting the world's use of energy and materials?

JOHN F. BENNETT,
Assistant Professor,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia, Pa.

THERE CAN BE NO more imperative annual report than on the State of Mankind. A global broadcast by satellite, and, of course, by all other available means, must be implicit in N.C.'s proposal. Mr. Paley, and Dr. Stanton—and Senator Symington—particularly, I believe, might have special interest in making such an annual report a reality.

PARKER WHEATLEY,
Director of Public Affairs,
KMOX-TV,
St. Louis, Mo.

AS A START in my own way, I've had five copies made of N.C.'s editorial which I shall pass on to friends; I have also written to my Assemblyman and state Senator.

MRS. ADA GARFINKEL,
Kentfield, Calif.

I WOULD LIKE to suggest a committee of citizens to pursue this type of action before the human race annihilates itself. Contact me for every possible assistance.

R. THAD TAYLOR,
President,
Shakespeare Society of America,
West Hollywood, Calif.

UP WITH THE COMMISSION on the World's Future! If there is to be an earthly future for man, this generation must think some hard thoughts and accept some least disagreeable choices. I am ready. Let the foundation supporting the commission be

Help for the Blind

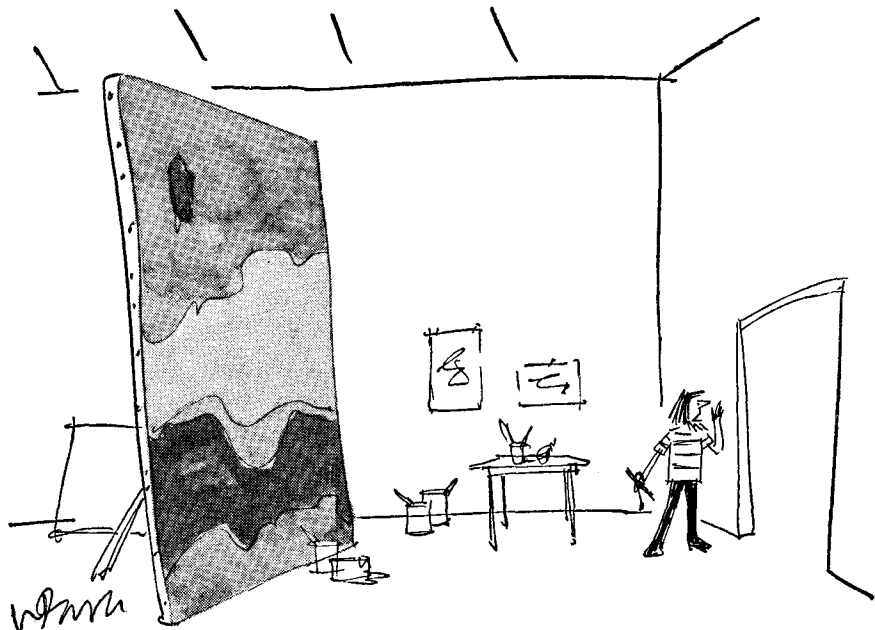
IN HIS TRADE WINDS column (SR, Apr. 26) Jerome Beatty, Jr., mentions a new book *The Making of Blind Men* by Dr. Robert A. Scott. I feel that neither the book nor the column reflects accurately how public and private agencies operate to improve the lives of blind people. Mr. Beatty's column indicated that he had little first-hand knowledge of programs for visually handicapped people. With regard to beggars—they comprise only a very small percentage of the blind population.

I can say with assurance that our efforts go toward helping blind persons become as independent as possible. The greatest number of visually handicapped persons who seek our help have serious physical and emotional problems in addition to blindness. Indeed, even if they had no visual problem, they would still require help from a community resource.

It is also not true, as Beatty states, that the largest part of an agency's budget goes toward children and employable blind adults. The greatest percentage of our funds are allotted to our Home for the Aged Blind, where elderly, highly dependent persons can be assured of complete care. Even at the home, we make every effort to keep residents active.

It may be of interest that Dr. Scott's research was done on the basis of reports and directories from various agencies dating back many years. I'm sure if he had seen our instructors teaching a blind person to use the subway, prepare a meal for himself, or operate a sewing machine, he would have been deeply impressed.

HOWARD A. NEWMAN,
President,
Jewish Guild for the Blind,
New York, N.Y.



"Alice! Is it beauty or evil that exists in the eye of the beholder?"