

SATURDAY REVIEW: OUTLOOKS

The Taxpayers' Revolt: Act Two

THE SAGA OF the taxpayers' revolt, as was to be expected, has not ended with the demands for reductions and refunds. Now comes the Second Act, in which answers must be supplied to the question: What services have to be cut?

The general idea, during the First Act, was that numberless political sycophants could be lopped off the payroll. It was hardly likely, however, that the politicians would preside over their own dissolution. What is actually happening instead is that the stage is being set for the dismantling of hard-fought gains in the fulfillment of society's responsibility to its citizens.

Education is being marked out as the first casualty. Pent-up prejudices against teachers and teaching are popping out all over. The arts are being derided as secondary to what is believed to be the genuine purpose of education; namely, to teach people to do things for which they will be paid. Research laboratories that can't show measurable progress toward practical goals are being pressured to justify their existence. The concept of a teacher who doesn't have a full teaching load but is given time to think and read or be sequestered in a laboratory or a library—this concept is being gunned down in some places by know-nothings with the zeal and mirthful vindictiveness of a posse closing in on its quarry.

At a time like this, the real failure of education becomes apparent. Education has failed to educate about education. It has failed to provide adequate understanding of the centrality of edu-

cation in a creative society. Schools have somehow failed to get across the biggest truth of all about learning: that its purpose is to unlock the human mind and to develop it into an organ capable of thought—conceptual thought, analytical thought, sequential thought. Such thought is essential not just for the purpose of making a living but for placing a proper value on the enjoyment of living. The development of human potentiality, not just of earning power (there is no contradiction between the two), is what education is all about. And nothing is more absurd than to disconnect human potentiality from the need to think abstractly.

The place of the fine arts in education is being attacked on practical grounds, but it may well be that education in the arts is the most practical function of education today. The average life expectancy is being pushed into the mid-seventies. Nothing is more wasteful in society than to have people casting about for want of interests. Education in the arts is synonymous with education for increased life expectancy. The same will be true of increased leisure time.

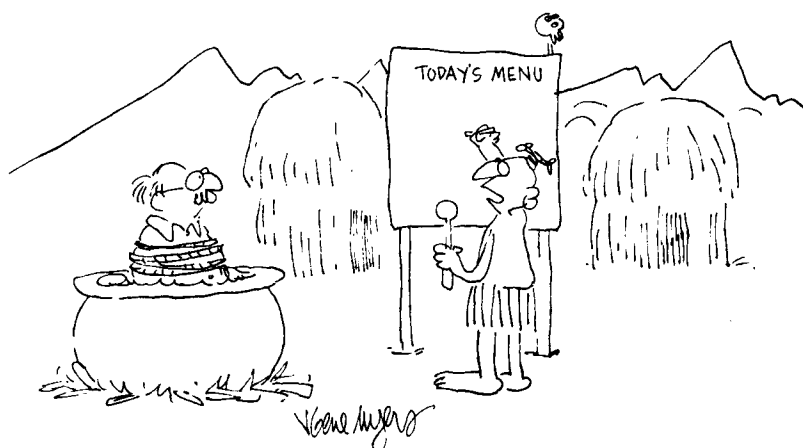
One of the biggest needs of the school is not to teach people to do things but to help them to understand what they are doing. Nothing is easier than to create a society of people in motion; nothing is more difficult than to keep them from going nowhere. The big trick is to get them to think about creating better options—for themselves and the next generation. The making of things, useful though they may be, is not as essential as the making of choices.

The term *humanities* serves as a battle cry for those who see the present retrenchment mood of the country as a heaven-sent opportunity to bring education to heel. What the retrenchers don't seem to comprehend is that history and philosophy are not a preoccupation with dead things but a way of avoiding dead ends, a way of opening up the future, a way of accelerating progress precisely because society has to know where it has been if it wants to know where it is going.

The governor of a great western state recently demonstrated his lack of education about education when he made some offhand and slurring references to professors and teachers who loll around doing research when they ought to be carrying a full teaching load. Similar remarks suggest he regards the state university as a secondary function. What makes his attitude deplorable and dangerous is that the greatest investment any state can make in its future is through a great university. And the way to make a university great is not by teaching students to pass examinations but by creating an atmosphere congenial to the pursuit of knowledge. Such pursuit needs ample room for research. It needs to be understood, especially by state officials, that a first-rate research laboratory is not a tidy place where researchers are assigned to well-defined tasks but a serendipitous arena where important things have a good chance of happening precisely because they are not ordered into being. Even perfectly equipped laboratories can become stagnation centers if the people in them are separated from theoretical thought and are expected to produce practical things on schedule. The freedom to explore is the freedom to make mistakes. Some mistakes are more fruitful than others. The productive research center provides conditions for seminal error.

How do we go about educating our public officials and the general public itself in the care and feeding of civilization? How do we instruct them in the anatomy of creativity? Purely in the long-range educational terms, a well-rounded education is the best investment a society can make in its own future. And the returns on that investment for society will be in direct proportion to its respect for abstractions and the life of the mind.

—N.C.



"How do you spell your name?"

LIGHT REFRACTIONS

Do We Ebb and Flow by the Moon?

by Thomas H. Middleton

IN AUGUST OF 1955, I flew to Puerto Rico. The air in San Juan was like hell's own steam bath, as you might expect considering the season. I remember that as we entered the terminal, we passengers were offered free rum and Coca-Cola, which most of us accepted gratefully. I doubt this happy custom still persists. That was back in the days before Castro, and we were still on speaking and drinking terms with Cuba. It's my guess that at the time, Puerto Rican rum was number 2 and trying harder.

I went to the hotel, changed into dry clothes and, since it was about six PM, clearly high cocktail time, and still sweltering outdoors, I went into the bar, which overlooked the Caribbean, determined to see if the rest of the rum in Puerto Rico was as good as that at the airport.

It wasn't long before I was in conversation with a Puerto Rican gentleman who told me he was in the lumber business. I knew next to nothing about lumber, and I found his conversation fascinating. He told me, for instance, that undried teak has a higher specific gravity than water and will sink like a stone. He also told me that mahogany is never plagued by termites. "Unless," he added, "the tree is felled during a full moon."

I laughed and said something like, "You're kidding, of course." Evidently, he was used to dealing with wisecracks. He wasn't offended but assured me that he was absolutely serious. The moon, he reminded me, controls the tides; why might she not also control the rising of the sap in trees? If at the full moon a mahogany's vascular system is at a peak of turgidity, then after the tree is felled and the sap has dried, might not the resultant porosity of the wood invite termites? He presented this simply as theory. The one fact of which he claimed to be certain was that only mahogany felled at the full moon was susceptible to termites.

The moon has been newsworthy in the past 10 years, what with our having left a plaque and a flag, a few golf balls, and some other paraphernalia lying around on its surface. We've been kept aware of what we've been doing to the moon, but most of us have given hardly any thought to what the moon does to us.

I'm sure it will come as a surprise to no one that the word *lunatic* originally meant something like *moonstruck*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* says of *lunacy*, "intermittent insanity formerly supposed to be brought about by the changes of the moon."

The ancients who supposed insanity to be brought about by the changes of the moon might have known something. In modern times, most of us have thought of the moon principally as something to gaze at and get romantic about and, lately, to send astronauts to. But people who deal in aberrant human behavior—police, psycho-ward personnel, and emergency-room attendants, for instance—have noticed that the phases of the moon seem to have a dramatic impact on a great many of us.

I've just finished reading *The Lunar Effect* (Anchor/Doubleday, \$7.95), by a psychiatrist named Arnold L. Lieber. It contains some data compiled by Dr. Lieber himself and several other scientists who suspect that a tolerant examination of the "myths" about the moon and its influence on our lives might lead to some super-important truths about the universe.

Most of us habitually chuckle at such primitive suggestions as that planting should be done by the phases of the moon or that the moon's position relative to the sun and the earth might have more than just a romantic effect on human behavior. Such notions

seem quaintly folkloric; so I laughed at my Puerto Rican companion's statement about mahogany and the full moon. But as Dr. Lieber says, "Scientific research is beginning to catch up with folk beliefs."

I recall the only time I ever saw acupuncture performed. It was in an outdoor market in Taipei under an awning, between a fortune-teller and a fishmonger. The patient, seated on a wooden stool, was having needles inserted into his bare back. I didn't exactly laugh, but I smiled inwardly at such naiveté. It should have occurred to me that acupuncture wouldn't have endured for centuries if it didn't have some validity. Dr. Lieber postulates a very plausible connection between the lunar effect and acupuncture, and he suggests "the beginnings of a new and holistic view of the Universe—a system in which each part and every organism resonates with the cycle of the cosmos." Thirty years ago, no reputable scientist would have dared such phrases. Today only the foolhardy will sneer. There are, indeed, more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

I'm sure the word *lunatic* contains as much truth as it does poetry and the moon is a lot more than just a convenient rhyme for June, spoon, and croon a tune.

But don't take my word for it. Read the book. ●



DISCOVERY OF THE ALTERNATE SIDE OF THE STREET.