

Tidbits and Outrages

The Renegotiation Board is charged with recapturing excess profits in defense contracting. But, according to a recent study by the House Government operations Committee, the 100 largest contractors who receive about 70 per cent of the weapons business are so mammoth that they have been excluded from examination almost entirely—because of understaffing on the Board and loopholes in the law.

From Jim Clark, *The Miami News*:

Aside from bureaucratic inertia, we have come across a new reason why government can't accomplish much these days. It is the polar effect—where a federal agency on one side of Washington is steadfastly dedicated to undoing the work of an agency on the other side.

The mutual nullification has produced many candidates for the Most Absurd Contradiction Award. Three examples are listed below, and readers are urged to try to top these.

The most publicized contradiction involves smoking. While Daniel Horn of the National Clearinghouse on Smoking is paid by the government to encourage people to give up cigarettes, Hugh Kiger is paid by the same government to encourage people to smoke more. His job is to promote tobacco products abroad, although the effort is currently active in only two countries—Thailand and Australia.

At the White House, Presidential aide Harry Dent still spends a lot of time trying to deal with the threat of Japanese imports on the U. S. textile industry.

Next door, a Treasury official explains how the U. S. made Japanese textile production what it is today, by loaning the industry \$300 million over the past five years.

In a similar vein, while President Nixon imposed a 10 per cent import surcharge to quell the flow of foreign cars into the country, the State Department negotiated a \$13.5-million loan with Toyota Motors to allow it to increase production and thereby increase exports to the U. S.

Over at the Bureau of Land Reclamation, they spend about \$384 million a year to convert useless land, such as deserts, into farms.

In California, for instance, landowners in the Imperial Valley benefit to the tune of about \$14 million a year from cheap irrigation water that turns their desert into a fertile crescent. The taxpayers foot the bill because the project enriches the nation's breadbasket.

But while the Bureau gives the farmers the irrigated land, over at the Department of Agriculture the farmers get paid millions more to take the breadbasket out of production.

From Campaign Insight:

A poll conducted by political technicians Joseph Napolitan and Michael Rowan gives us a look at what voters who see a candidate only on TV expect from him:

Honesty: 47%
Compassion: 14%
Capable and qualified: 9%
A good person: 7%
A leader: 5%
Intelligence: 4%
Understands the issues of the time: 3%

The Bureau of Mines recently installed a telephone hot line which gives any miner in the nation five minutes after the beep to explain where he is and why he thinks his mine might cave in. The Bureau said it would take action the next working day after the calls.

Last month, a *New York Times* reporter, Ben Franklin, reported that the hot line had not been working right for two months. The Bureau explained that an over-worked staff had caused it to be unattended from November 5 to December 26.

Two weeks after the Franklin story, we called the hot line, to be greeted with buzzing static.

Rehnquist, Powell, and the Cult of the Pro

by Suzannah Lessard

On the surface, the Nixon nominees lend themselves to pleasing textbook simplicity. The starred four make a nice multiple choice: Haynsworth, unethical; Carswell, incompetent; Rehnquist, heretical; and Powell, correct. Behind them hover the disembodied grimaces of Herschel Friday and Mildred Lillie, sacrifices; the unsingular figure of Blackmun, who mysteriously escapes all pigeon-holes; and, raised a bit, Hollywood-handsome Mr. Justice Burger. Too bland to fit neatly into a multiple choice, he provides a neutral anchor to the schema.

The schematic neatness breaks down, however, when one tries to make the cast act out the object lesson they promise. Blackmun, it turns out, was guilty to the same degree as Haynsworth of holding stock in companies whose cases were before his court. The differences between Powell and Rehnquist seem, on inspection, a good deal finer than their characterizations in the press and in the Senate. Only Carswell escapes scrutiny, with his touted image as second-rate and sloppily bigoted in-

fact, a glorious booboo who can be nixed by the student with the gratifying sense of hitting the bullseye. "We'll take the Burgers and Blackmuns, but not the Carswells," said Senator Birch Bayh after Nixon had floated out his six surprise balloons this fall. In the frantic search for Thomistic consistency, Carswell provides a welcome absolute, but unfortunately he is the exception, and no help against the quicksand beyond him. What does it mean to take the Powells but not the Rehnquists, the Blackmuns but not the Haynsworths? What principle would dictate that you reject the Haynsworths but accept the Rehnquists?

The answer is no principle, no lucid rationale or set of clean guidelines emerge from the turbulent court series. The search for dogma, itself relative to mood (no such fervor marked the confirmations of Kennedy or Eisenhower appointments), created more religious atmosphere than theology, and if anything, demonstrated the futility of the quest for rational and explicit justification in the vague constitutional mandate "advice and consent of the Senate." Looking back, it seems pretty clear that despite pious rationalities, the Senate liberals went

Suzannah Lessard is an editor of The Washington Monthly.