

Statistics No Bargains

Not long ago, the National Commission on Food Marketing, after some two years of study, released its report on the food industry. The report leaves much to be desired in knowledge of the food production and distribution system. However, one finding of the report is highly significant. The Commission unanimously agreed that the Consumer Price Index can be improved.

The Commission discovered that the government listing of retail prices—particularly in fresh meat—is markedly overstated because, among other reasons, it doesn't give enough consideration to week-end specials in the supermarket. Rare is the consumer who does not take advantage of these specials. They are an integral part of the modern mass-distribution system under which merchants, both chain and independents, endeavor to move a maximum volume at minimum prices. Consumers are apparently more familiar with the day to day operation of the distribution system than the compilers of the price index.

It is unlikely that government statistics will ever be able to measure accurately the performance of prices in a free market. Statisticians are not bargain hunters. That is why the housewife can beat the statistics. Also, a set of statistics cannot foresee or measure the resourcefulness of the merchant who is endeavoring to meet the changing tastes and demands of consumers. In fact, as long as the free play of supply and demand and competition governs the distribution system, the price index should be looked upon with a wary eye.

One thing is certain. It is far better to have indices that cannot keep up with the flexibility of the market than to have fixed prices in a controlled market for the convenience of the statisticians.

Opinions of Others

Unemployment is rising, and a wave of emigration is causing concern among British leaders for it is draining their country of its most capable people. Doctors, engineers, and other highly trained and productive people are leaving for other countries in great numbers, with Canada, Australia, and the United States the favored destinations. It is logical to suspect that there is some connection between Britain's welfare state and the spreading impoverishment of her people, and the unwillingness of her most highly skilled people to risk their futures there. We are reminded of President Eisenhower's remark about the ultimate in security being a man serving a life sentence in a federal penitentiary.—*Marathon (N.Y.) Independent.*

Some of our fellow publishers give us a hard time every year when we get worked up about our various and sundry tax forms, a state easy to get into around the first of the year. We have heard that all of us work the last three months in every year for the various taxing bodies and we don't doubt it a bit. We might add that you also work the first month out of the year for the tax bodies. A mere report on the number of the various forms makes you dizzy. We reiterate our annual offer. We'll give the government our business if it will just pay us the taxes.—*Moorefield (W. Va.) Examiner.*

Three cheers for Congressman Al Ullman who has severely criticized the U. S. Defense Department which has announced the purchase of 10 million pounds of lamb from Australia and New Zealand. . . . To us, government purchases of American-produced meat for the military service is far better than some of the agriculture subsidy programs that are offered. And we'd like to know if Australian mutton is that much cheaper after it is shipped to the United States.—*John Day (Ore.) Eagle.*

JAMES DORAIS

Status Quo Challenged By Political Activists

More and more in California and across the nation, established authority is coming under fire from miscellaneous groups of "political activists" who set out to challenge the status quo through criticism, public statements, press conferences, demonstrations, and any other means they can use to attract attention.

Seldom does any element of government or individual enterprise exist which cannot be improved or otherwise modified to respond to the true public interest. Thus, there is usually just enough credibility to the activists' complaint for them to command the spotlight.

The battlefronts can range from the war in Vietnam through administration of the University of California and farm labor disputes to the creation of a national park or the efforts to halt development of waterfront property.

Wherever the war, however, the activists are quick to see where the weaknesses exist and to exploit them to gain public attention. Their aim, of course, is to pull enough bricks from the foundation to topple the entire structure.

The organizations attacked usually have a difficult time of it for several reasons. Whether they are public or private enterprises, they are generally startled by the outcry against what they have honestly considered to be a responsible proposal or program, and are unprepared for a gut fight. Second, they are normally reluctant to reply in kind to the irresponsible and wild charges leveled against them.

The result is that the public has a rough time evaluating the equities involved, for often, due to the eternal deadline and other pressures of newsgathering, the broadcast and print

I Said We Gotta Help America Fight Crime!



HERB CAEN SAYS:

New York Declares War In Effort to Get Profs

In one ear. Ex. Gov. Pat Brown was busily leafing through his law books to find out whether Gov. Reagan had libeled him with his crack that the Brown administration had "looted" the State treasury. "Of course," concedes Pat, "it's hard to libel a public official, even an ex-official. Besides, I would have to prove malice, and everybody knows Mr. Reagan doesn't have a malicious bone in his head." On the other side of the country, the word is out that Gov. Nelson Rockefeller has told New York State University officials to "ignore budgetary restrictions" in efforts to recruit Professors from the University of California. The war is on. Let the looting fall where it may.

San Francisco missing for 17 days, turned up unharmed in a Very San Francisco spot: the cable barn on Nob Hill. He had been sighted earlier in the garden of Sally Stanford's old headquarters on Pine, suggesting that this fox is part wolf. . . . It may reassure you to know that not all Bawdway joints in Nude Beach are making it. One Step Beyond went bust and went bust.

Tower of Babel: KGO's fortunately inimitable Ira Blue, caught in mid-quote by Bob De Leon: "And if I should die during the course of my lifetime. . . . At the Domino Club, bald Stirling Moss winced only slightly when a girl passerby whooped "Oh look, there's Y. A. Tittle!" . . . It was Bill Blass Day (and night) here recently! The great young designer staged a walloping fashion show at the Palace Hotel, cocktail on Russian Hill, chopsticked his way through 10 courses at the Empress of China and wound down at the Dragon A Go Go, his baby blue eyes turning red. The 22-year-old leggy lion-maned looker with him: Nancy Stolklin of Beverly Hills-Chicago-New York-Paris-Acapulco ("I just love to travel," she explained unnecessarily).

She sent him some tapes of her songs — and now we take you to Sgt. Russo, via air mail: "Many times we are unable to pick up any broadcasts, so we play her tapes on a little recorder we always manage to carry. Usually around nine at night, when we consider it safe, we gather around and listen to her songs. She has a lovely voice and for a few minutes we can forget the present. Many men think of many things through her songs. I always picture San Francisco and the wonderful life I have lived there.

"The first few nights it was fine, and then for some reason we began to draw fire every time we played her tape. Nobody else in the area drew fire but us, no matter where we moved. So we decided to fan out about 300 yards, leave two men behind to play the tape, and wait and see what happened.

"Sure enough, there was Charlie, zapping away. We captured one, and through the interpreter, we found out Charlie wanted the tape and they were willing to zap all of us to get it. For she sings in French, Spanish and Italian, and I guess they had become infatuated with her voice."

Never having heard the estimable Miss Domagalski, I will take the sergeant's word that her voice drives men wild, even the Viet Cong.

Morning Report:

Golly, I don't see why Senator Everett Dirksen is so scared about that new treaty with Russia. He's afraid the Kremlin will send us more spies along with their new consular offices. Of course they will.

But let's look at the bright side of things. We will be able to reciprocate when we have new consulates in the Soviet Union. And I think our spies are every bit as good as their spies. And maybe a lot better. I'll put my chips on the CIA against the KGB and the GRU combined. If we can lick 'em in space, why not on the ground as well?

Also we get a fringe benefit from the consular treaty if the Senate approves it. The more Russian officials who come over, the more defectors we will get.

Abe Mellinkoff

AFFAIRS OF STATE

Probe of State Finances Runs Into Surprise Snags

By HENRY C. MACARTHUR
 Capitol News Service

SACRAMENTO—It seems somewhat strange that a resolution calling for an immediate study of the state's financial condition should run into difficulties when before either house of the legislature, but such a resolution did recently in the state assembly.

The resolution was introduced by Assemblyman Jesse M. Unruh, D—Los Angeles, speaker of the house. At the same time, Senator George Miller, Jr., D—Contra Costa, put an identical resolution in the state senate.

Both actions were the result of statement which had been made by Governor Ronald Reagan, regarding the condition of the state treasury, and the anticipated gap between income next year and proposed state spending.

That the resolutions were political in nature was a foregone conclusion. Both Unruh and especially Miller, probably have forgotten more about the financial condition of the state than most people know.

Miller said his action was merely to "clear the atmosphere." Unruh sought pas-

sage of the resolution in the assembly, but for some reason or other, couldn't secure a majority of Democratic votes to send the document on to the state senate for action.

One of the causes was the language of the resolution, which criticized the administration statements concerning the financial condition of the state, which at best, doesn't seem to be very good.

Republicans jumped on the language, and despite the fact they have a minority vote in the assembly, managed to halt passage in the form it was presented. Amendment made it a straight resolution, devoid of political implications, and it probably will be passed when it comes before the house in amended form.

The problem of securing an exact financial picture as to state finances is one of great difficulty. In fact, it is almost impossible in view of the many and varied "ifs and buts" concerning state finances.

When the resolution was introduced, Unruh and Mil-

ler said "it is essential that the legislature obtain the unvarnished facts regarding the state's financial condition before we proceed with the consideration of the governor's budget, together with any possible tax programs."

"It does not seem possible to obtain this information from the administration since many figures have been used to describe the fiscal picture."

Yet only a month or so before that statement was given out, Senator Miller made a speech in San Francisco to the state chamber of commerce, in which he outlined fully the state's financial picture, not only at the time, but projected it into the future as to what would be needed in the way of funds if various proposals were adopted by the legislature.

The most significant statement in the speech was the fact that the state general fund revenue gap would be approximately \$332 million, which is not far off from the amount claimed by the Reagan administration, although it was placed higher because of variables.

ROYCE BRIER

European Nations Live In Pale Soviet Shadow

The United States has no particular reason to be cooperative with the Soviet Union or its so-called satellites out of gratitude.

But being cooperative in a sentimental sense is much more becoming in individuals than it is in people or nations. Peoples and nations must act largely on practical grounds, for the most part in their own self-interest. No nation can afford the kind of altruism to be found in a "good" individual.

The self-interest of the United States was once quite limited, to the Western Hemisphere and to the forces at work in Western Europe. But it is now worldwide, touching all mankind. It must deal not only with an unfriendly social order calling itself Marxist, but with widely differing philosophies and aims within that social order.

There are now three differing societies existing under the Marx name: the Soviet, a system of Soviet satellites so-called, and the Red Chinese. The first two talk as if they are fraternal,

but they are not. The first and the third are bitter enemies for large historical reasons.

Those Americans who insist that all three societies are identical in their purpose and in their relations to the bourgeois world, are just not reading the latter-day signs, or even the newspapers.

Twenty-five years ago there was a crisis in eastern Europe. The little nations grouped there were in dire peril from the German power, and the only counterpower available was Russian.

So they became puppets in fact, and the Soviet Union exploited them for its own aggrandizement after the war. But the receding years and a new hope changed this; the puppets gradually escaped from exploitation, first Tito's Yugoslavia, then the Red Chinese. They still professed Marx-

ism, but it was a diverse Marxism, and what was far more important to them was independence, national and ideological.

The great shadow of the Soviet Union still lies over Eastern Europe, but it is a pale shadow indeed compared with the one cast by Josef Stalin.

Recently George F. Kennan, a profound student of the communist societies, and former American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He spoke specifically on a plan in Congress to authorize consular exchange with the Soviet Union, and draw a new East-West trade bill, but his remarks touched on larger questions.

He said there is "no unified political personality" in the communist world, that there is no longer a "single disciplined force," and he called such unity as once existed a "Humpty-Dumpty" which cannot be reassembled.

WILLIAM HOGAN

John Gunther Makes New Trip to South America

John Gunther's original "Inside Europe" appeared in 1936, the era of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin. There have been eight "inside" books in all, including an "Inside Latin America" in 1941. The venerable correspondent has informed generations of readers with his eye-opening once-over-lightly investigations of large political and geographical chunks of the planet.

"Inside South America" is a report on Gunther's second circumnavigation of the continent, a quarter of a century after his first. It is a completely new book, an intriguing analysis of ten nations south of the Panama Canal. James Reston once observed that "the people of the United States will do anything for Latin America except read about it." This could be the exception, for Gunther is an old pro at this sort of thing, and his talent for reporting political, social, and economic problems in human terms has not diminished.

He finds that every coun-

try down there deserves a better government than it has. Argentina is the most advanced country, but moody and frustrated, "a shadow state gripped by psychoses because the world has passed it by." Paraguay is a medieval backwater run by an anachronistic military

dictator, whereas its neighbor, Uruguay, with highly advanced social services and a free democratic development, resembles Switzerland or Denmark.

Brazil, the behemoth, is a great whole world in itself (three of its states are larger than Texas), both backward and enlightened, sumptuous and eaten up by poverty. Bolivia is aloof, anarchic, unpredictable; Peru fascinating, dramatic, held back by a mass of impoverished Indians still remote from the mainstream of national life. Venezuela, oil rich and plagued by guerrilla warfare, worries about what to do when the oil runs out.

So it goes, country by country — and occasionally a stretch of soaring travel writing, such as Gunther's excursion to the continent's tip, Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn itself, segments of the earth's surface seldom seen by anyone.

Poverty in all these countries reaches a pitch almost beyond the comprehension of the average North American. Gunther concludes that the people are coming to the point of wanting to do something about their destitution and virtual exclusion from the decencies of society. This, he emphasizes, makes a blowup inevitable.

This is an eye-opening book for the layman, rather than the scholar or authority on Latin American affairs, a report by a journalist whose energy seems boundless and whose talent for compressing a vast amount of data into a reasonable and moving narrative remains remarkable after all these years.