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The End of the Line

Public officials appear to be getting the message. Most Southland homeowners have received their tax bills, and it is almost unanimous among them that taxes are too high. Reaction has brought reaction—but no action.

So far, it appears to sum up about like this: The poor homeowner who finds that his income has gone up 10 or 12 per cent (if any) the last couple of years, finds that his tax obligations on his home have gone up 50 or 80 or 100 or 200 per cent.

The County Supervisors—almost as a voice—say it is because the county has a new tax assessor. Besides the state and the federal government keep demanding more things from the county and it costs money which the county must raise.

The tax assessor says he doesn't set the tax rates, he just assesses property and that his obligation is to see that all property is assessed fairly and on an equal basis.

Leading state legislators say tax reforms are needed to develop new sources of revenue and to take the burden from the shoulders of the overburdened homeowner.

If any of them have touched on the real problem, however, we missed it.

The real problem doesn't lie in details of assessing or spreading the burden among California's taxpayers.

What all of those responsible for tax rates ignore is the public money is spent like it flowed from an unlimited wellspring.

Most officials on our governmental payrolls go first class, from the shiny limousine that delivers them to work in the morning to the battery of colored telephones lined up on their aircraft-carrier desks in their mahogany-paneled suites of offices.

Durable, functional poured concrete is never used if marble is available. That almost symbolizes public spending.

When public officials realize that the time of lavish, unbridled spending will no longer be tolerated by its tax burdened citizens, some headway might be made in reducing the tax load.

Just shifting it from the property taxes paid by the homeowner to other tax obligations won't solve the problem.

It's still the same little guy at the end of the line who has to dig down and find the money.

IT'S NEWS TO ME by Herb Caen

CIA Pulls Its Grandest Coup

CAENFETTI: Since the Kremlinologists still can't decide what happened in Moscow, we might as well give you one guy's theory: "The CIA was having so much success engineering coups in Vietnam they decided to try something a little bigger" . . . If Bing Crosby is interested, a woman in our town has a rare copy of his old Decca record of "Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams" — the one on which Bing blows his lines, swears, laughs, etc. In case Bing lost his when his home burned a few years ago, she's ready to deal . . . And still champion: Ol' Jack Dempsey ran into Dizzy Dean in the lobby of Reno's Holiday Hotel recently, whereupon they started sparring—and next thing you know, there's Diz, flat on the floor. Carl Hicks, the Holiday's owner, counted him out.

CONVERSATION PIECE: A visiting New Yorker, lurching at Bardelli's with Disc Jockey Don Sherwood, asked him: "What's the matter with the Giants and the 49ers? I've seen 'em play, and they don't seem to have any fire—no spirit at all."

Don: "Well I go along with Nelson Algren's theory—that there's better writing, better teams and all that in the East, where the weather is harder. Things are too easy out here—the temperature is too even. It's always 58. People just sit around, yawn and say the hell with it."

New Yorker, getting excited: "But Don, the record doesn't bear you out. Why, that theory just won't stand up to close scrutiny. Now, let's examine that premise point. Now, in the first place . . ."

Don: with a yawn: "Oh, the hell with it."

WHEE, THE PEOPLE: Actor Jeff Corey, who plays a Police Inspector in "Once a Thief" (now being filmed here), is a tennis nut. The other day he suited up, went alone to a public tennis court and was shocked to find only one person to play with—a 10-year-old Chinese girl. He was further shocked when she beat him 6-0 6-0 (she's Marcie Louie, a junior champ) . . . And here we have the Chesse family, our answer to the Barrymores (or didn't I hear a question). Papa Ralph Chesse is in "Showboat" at the Hyatt Theater. Son Bruce is in "My Fair Lady" at the Circle Star. Son Dion is in "The Hostage" at the Sausalito Little Theater—and the director of THAT play is his wife. Grandson Damon, 4, is currently at liberty.

WELL, THERE IS no end to learning. As soon as you've mastered one facet of The Good Life—the proper tying of a Windsor knot, for example—fashion rules it out (the Duke of Windsor still hasn't heard). You wade through the collected works of Baldwin, Rechy, and Burroughs and find everybody's talking about Ken Kesey. You collect Stan Getz records and discover it should have been Sonny Rollins. And so it goes.



"This Should Get Us a Nobel Peace Prize"

HERE AND THERE by Royce Brier

Will Next Nuclear Test Be Staged in Chicago?

There is a hamlet, Baxterville, in southern Mississippi, near the Louisiana line. It is in sparsely settled Pine County. Jackson, population 144,000, is 75 miles north and Biloxi, population 44,000, is 65 miles south-east. New Orleans and Mobile are about 100 miles distant.

Recently the Atomic Energy Commission touched off a nuclear device 2,700 feet underground near Baxterville. It was of five kilotons, one-fourth the Hiroshima bomb.

It was detonated in a salt dome, and scientists estimated it created a cavity 120 feet in diameter, but without radioactive escape. The blast shook the surrounding countryside. Buildings rocked and automobiles shook four miles away. A seismograph needle at Mobile was dislodged. Dust rose over the site and the ground rippled.

AEC had temporarily evacuated 400 people.

One family near the edge

of the evacuation zone refused to leave, and was permitted to remain. This alone raises some questions.

Were the evacuees fully informed of the nature and purpose of the blast? How many left their homes voluntarily? Was there coercion of those reluctant to leave? (Necessarily many evacuees were poor white or Negroes).

Now this event, first of its kind east of the Mississippi River, is of great import to the American people. The Nevada experiments in recent years have been carried out in almost uninhabited desert regions. The scientists like salt domes, but the 4 million square miles of the United States must contain many, so why this particular salt dome? If you can find a salt dome 100 miles from New Orleans, can you find one 100 miles from Chicago?

The underlying and disturbing factor in this test is not the material danger. The scientists as a rule can

accurately estimate the result of their tests, though there was considerable miscalculation in Nevada some years ago.

The underlying and disturbing factor here is the precedent established and the philosophy of action behind it. Can AEC choose its tests sites arbitrarily? Unhappily the commission has a record, as in the Johnston Island test, of bulling it through regardless of qualified protests. Unhappily, some of these tests seem to have no purpose beyond satisfying the curiosity of the scientists.

But nuclear energy is a force which cannot wisely be fitted into a framework of mere curiosity, or of summary decisions which disregard opposition and discussion. Nuclear energy is a force which hangs over all mankind as a mortal enigma, and even the smallest area of irresponsibility in its use is something which the American people can hardly turn away.

BOOKS by William Hogan

New Baldwin-Avedon Book Just An Expensive Trick

The blend of two unquestioned talents — photographer Richard Avedon and essayist James Baldwin—in a contemporary appraisal of America seemed, at first announcement, an exciting autumn publishing event. But here it is—another pretentious coffee table ornament for the pre-Christmas trade. As an admirer of both Avedon and Baldwin, I am depressed by the result, called "Nothing Personal."

This is all chichi, like those queer, pale fashion plates in the expensive women's magazines. Baldwin is never a bad writer, and certainly he is disturbed by contemporary moves and pressures in our society. So he scores a few barbed points in a brief, incongruous text that accompanies Avedon's garish plates. There is little real fire in Baldwin's words, though, as there was in his impassioned essay, "The Fire Next Time."

He does mention the racial crisis, but it seems to me, with an unconvincing gloss that appears to be more fitting in a \$14.95 portfolio produced in Switzerland for an American upper middle-class audience than it does when Baldwin is appealing from his heart to all America.

"I have not heard anyone singing in the streets of New York for 20 years," he

notes at one point. At another: "When a civilization treats its poets with the disdain which we treat ours, it cannot be far from disaster; it cannot be far from the slaughter of the innocents . . ." And so on, but in this setting I don't believe him.

Avedon's photographs have nothing to do with the text (and vice versa). There are a few sensational shots: "The Generals of the Daughters of the American Revolution," graphic as Hogarth, satirical as That Was the Week That Was. Avedon is a master of the shock photograph . . . an appalling close-up of Governor Wallace; Mr. Eisenhower with the face of a corpse; a naked

Allen Ginsberg, like John the Baptist just before the beheading; Fabian and the Everly Brothers as grotesques out of some Mothers for Moral America movie. An ex-slave; Arthur Miller; Lana Turner's daughter juxtaposed with the son of Martin Luther King, and a series of pictures made in a madhouse that are less a documentary on Bedlam than a display of sick trickery.

The book strikes me as pixie nonsense that suggests a corruption of talent rather than an honest assertion of it. Over the years I have seen too many of these glossy ornaments come and go (toward the remainder shelves) to be impressed by silver and black portfolio production and price. In this case, I am distressed that Baldwin would lend his reputation to such an essentially hollow package.

Notes on the Margin— . . . Readers who have heretofore foregone the pleasure of nibbling Proust's famous tea cake for fear of biting off more than they could digest may find a new paperback book a help. Wallace Fowlie's "A Reading of Proust," an Anchor Original, is an informal guide to "Remembrance of Things Past," an examination of the seven-volume work, its important scenes and characters.

TRAVEL by Stan Delaplaine

Mexican Lawyer Can Help Plan Retirement Program

MADEIRA—"Do you think Spain would be the cheapest place to live abroad for a year? Our funds are limited . . ."

It appears this island of Madeira might be better. (Spain has been rising in price.) You can rent a two-bedroom house for \$25 a month here—you rent the furniture for \$25 more. A cook costs \$11 a month, \$8 for a maid. Steak for 75 cents for 2.2 pounds. Fish is almost nothing. Weather is warm—this is off the coast of Africa, 500 miles southwest of Lisbon.

An American couple here are paying \$200 a month for a seaside, hotel bungalow. This includes three meals served from the hotel and afternoon tea. And the hotel gives them a full-time personal maid. A hotel double room with three meals and tea can be had for \$7.80 a day. That's for TWO people, winter season. In summer it goes down to \$5.50.

"We would like to retire in Mexico—(have been reading what you say about it)—but I would like at least part-time work. Is this possible?"

You must live in Mexico as an "immigrant" for five years before they let you work. Some retired Americans have found part-time real estate gives extra money and an interest. But you must wait five years.

If you have a product you can create in Mexico and sell in the U.S., you can work at that. Writing, photography, business reports, etc. And, if you want to invest \$16,000, you can work at your investment. A motel, maybe? A fishing resort?

There are some rules on ownership. You need a good Mexican lawyer before letting go of your money. You can get land along the sea coast, for instance. But it goes back to the Government when you die. However, I believe there are corporation laws that might get around this.

"How about retirement in the Caribbean Islands?"

I don't think work permits are easy except in the U.S. associated territory . . . the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The Virgin Islands are moderately priced. Puerto Rico is a little higher than Continental U. S. The value would be that the weather is tropical. And you have splendid beaches.

If you are going to live in the tropics, look for two things: One the mainland, plan to live at least 5,000 feet up. Summers below that altitude are too hot. Or, get on the trade wind islands like Puerto Rico. Then the beach land is liveable in the summer.

"Would we be safe on a fixed income in these countries? Or are costs rising?"

They're rising — in Mexico, Spain, the Caribbean and Portugal. Mostly at the

Quote

"The highest of distinctions is service to others." —George VI.

"We are here to add what we can to, not to get what we can from, Life." — Sir William Osler.

Candor need not be personal denunciation. Courtesy need not be weakness. —T. Michael Holmes, Los Angeles.

My Neighbors

Look, honey, this collection is for our marriage—must I kick in?"

same rate that cost of living is going up in the U.S. But in some places, like Spain, where the living cost has been regulated, it's jumping faster.

I am getting quite a lot of information from Americans living abroad in the cheaper countries. If you wrote me before for this, you are on an off-and-on mailing list. If you haven't asked for this, you can send me your name, address and one stamp.

"Could we do well with modest investments in these countries?"

I wouldn't invest in any of these countries until I had lived there a year. Got a pretty good idea of how safe it is. I hear you can get 10 per cent on bank deposits in Mexico. The peso has been strong for a long time. The Government has shown long stability.

There's a lot of quick money real estate in Spain along the coasts. Portugal looks ready for a coast boom. However, both of these are "strong man" gov-

ernments. And both strong men are over 70. Bound to be a shakeup when they go out.

"We would like to live in the tropics but under the American flag . . ."

Then your choice is: American Samoa, U. S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hawaii. For the Virgin Islands, read "The Virgins: Magic Islands" by Jeanne Perkins Harman, \$4.95, book stores. For Puerto Rico: "Puerto Rico Living," \$1. From Puerto Rico Living, Inc., First Federal Bldg., 1511 Ponce de Leon Ave., Sanurce, Puerto Rico. You don't need a book on Hawaii . . . it's a State with State prices.

"In the so-called 'cheap' countries, where do you save? Where do you lose?"

You save on labor, housing, clothing. You CAN lose on your tastes . . . imported food, liquor, household equipment like refrigerators. But if you don't need these imports, you win.

Our Man Hoppe

Miss Amanda's Plea for Unity

By Arthur Hoppe

"Stamp out disunity!" It was my good friend, Miss Amanda, national commander of "!", the super patriotic stamping-out society. And I was glad to see that despite Mr. Goldwater's crushing defeat, she looked as chipper as ever.

Disunity? "Right!" cried Miss Amanda, waving aloft her walking stick. "It is time to bind up our wounds, put aside our petty differences and march forward as one!"

Wonderful, I said. Those were virtually the very words of Mr. Johnson's own plea for unity and I was delighted she was putting the good of the Nation above . . . "Nation!" snapped Miss Amanda. "I'm talking about the Republican party! Disunity cost us the election! We must see that it never happens again!"

Fine, I said. We certainly need a strongly rebuilt, unified Republican party, marching forward as one. And what were some of the petty differences Miss Amanda felt should be resolved?

"Well," she said, tapping a tennis-shoed foot, "like should Nelson Rockefeller be drawn and quartered? Or merely boiled in oil?"

A petty difference, I agreed. "And Javits! And Kuchel! And Romney! And all those other so-called Republicans!" she cried. "String 'em up! Stamp 'em out!"

I said I supposed this would create greater unity in the party. Or what was left of it. "Right!" she snapped, "We must unite in the mainstream! Sink or swim! We must rally behind the principles of true Republicanism!"

And what were they? "Hang Earl Warren! Abolish the State Department! Eat more yogurt! Crush mental health! Smite smut! Fight flouridation! Sleep with windows closed! Grind your own wheat germ! Stamp out forest fires! Investigate . . ."

That certainly was a vigorous, positive program, I said. But who did she think would wish to unify behind all those principles?

"Me!" said Miss Amanda. "I've been unified behind them for years! But this is the hour of crisis! We must all make supreme sacrifices for the good of the party! And I am willing to make mine!"

Very noble. Was she going to give up wheat germ? "Never!" cried Miss Amanda. "Principles forever! But in the interests of party unity, I stand ready to compromise! After grave thought, I have decided to allow all factions to unite! Behind me!"

Well, that's unity for you. I doubt there's a political virtue more universally extolled and admired. Yes sir, everybody in politics is for unity. His way.

Morning Report:

In an amazing reversal of the trend, there is one less new country in Africa now. Tanganyika and Zanzibar have made their union complete by dropping both names and now go forth as Tanzania.

This, of course, puts an added burden on seventh-graders studying geography, but otherwise it's a net gain.

Now, maybe Tanzania could combine with some other country and then with another. In 50 years there will be no chance for it. By then each new nation will have had time to develop traditional enemies, vested office-holders and hallowed flags. If they ever do get around to combining, I have a good name for the new country. Africa.

Abe Mellinkoff