

Correspondence

Liberty & Postal Rates

To the Editors: Andrew Heiskell's remarks ("Liberty, Ignorance, and Postal Rates," Excursus, *Worldview*, July-August) were read with relief, whatever the motivations of the chairman of Time Inc. might be.

The cost of the mass distribution of ideas is increasingly treated as "no object" in this mass media society. It's the survival of the fittest, or blandest, or largest in the public information market. As if the embrace of advertising revenue didn't adulterate the press enough, now free market postal rates are interjected to separate the men from the boys, and the deviates, and weirdos, and lunatic fringe.

I have much less concern for the hardships *Time* must endure than for the stringy publications whose birth in the future will be welcomed by Madison Avenue road tests. Without sufficient capitalization, these misfits will be orphaned by postal rates and finished off by an inherently conformist advertising market.

The postal "service," by the way, has a most bewildering catch in their Second Class rate classification. That is that a news publication must have a paid subscribers list (not token) to qualify for this comparatively lower rate.

I have not discovered the theory behind this yet—perhaps unsolicited ideas are considered as potentially harassing as discount store circulars. Whatever, the effect is clear. The nonincumbency of young, perhaps different, publications is a great handicap to their prime intent, the dissemination of their particular information or opinion.

A true postal service would make it possible for even the most offensive of ideologues to get it out of his system—and why not? Surely the taxpayers may not wish to pay for such an extended conception of liberty. Let the postal service tax the profits (and only the profits) of the publishers who benefit by such nonexclusive rates (this taxation through the government, of

course). I suspect the chairman of a well-entrenched publication might take issue with me here. Nevertheless, such action would boost the real value of publication while not eliminating the capitalist incentive.

Right now it seems that TV and the local newspaper are commonly viewed as adequate mediums of man's day-to-day discourse. You may even throw in *Time* and *Playboy*. Even *Cosmopolitan*, or any of the specialized publications that depend on dedicated subscription. To add to the mailbox clutter unsolicited, no less uncondoned, ideas is to add to the drag on the great production/consumption machine that the postal service is rapidly becoming a part of.

Maybe our society is doing more thinking. Perhaps our people are becoming more reflective than before. So why is it getting harder and harder to hear the other guy think?

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The World's Food Needs

To the Editors: I wish to commend you for your inclusion in the May, 1975, issue of *Worldview* of the "Message From Consultation on World Hunger" at Wartburg College in February, 1975, and also "The Right to Food: A Statement of Policy" of Bread for the World. Both of these articles lack the unfortunate sensationalism that frequently is seen in statements by the concerned but inadequately informed. Both of these articles address themselves to specific problem areas and seek specific solutions.

The message from the farmers points out the crucial importance of a strong agriculture in meeting the world's food needs. In the past much of our U.S. international development aid has been directed toward industrialization of developing nations. Our efforts were based on the premise that industrialization would raise the economic status of the masses, thereby allowing them to better feed themselves. The industrial technology and food would be provided by the U.S. The fallacy in this concept is the underlying presupposition that the U.S.

is rich because we are industrialized. We have become industrially great because our nation first developed a strong, independent agriculture. In the developing nations 75 per cent of the populace are directly dependent upon agriculture for their livelihood. U.S. agriculture has become so efficient that only 5 per cent of our population are farmers. Only by increasing the agricultural efficiency of the developing nations can they free the labor necessary for industrial development. In an effort to abet this situation the World Bank recently committed \$7 billion toward agricultural development over the next five years, and \$1 billion annually thereafter. However, the World Bank readily admits that this amount constitutes only 20 per cent of the capital necessary for adequate agricultural development.

There are obviously no simple solutions to the world food problem. It is indeed a delicate if not impossible task to implement programs to alleviate hunger without intruding on the cultural and religious mores of other peoples. Developing nations seem to be particularly suspicious of programs emanating from the U.S. as being self-serving.

Solutions to the problem, if they do indeed exist, will require the coordination of efforts in several primary fields: (1) food production, (2) storage, distribution, and utilization of food and feed, (3) population control, (4) resource management and reallocation, (5) education of development agents in areas such as agriculture, sanitation, medicine, water management, nutrition, and food technology and processing. Fragmentation of efforts in the past has led to failure.

The crucial issue seems to be who or what shall be the coordinating agency. Allusion has already been made to the fact that the U.S., although perhaps best equipped to provide the coordination, probably no longer evokes the necessary confidence of the rest of the world.

Our resource-limited, shrinking world can no longer afford the luxury of isolationistic nationalism. Solution of the world hunger crisis seems contingent upon the finding of a suitable

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international superagency to provide the necessary leadership, direction, and coordination of efforts.

Gary R. Lefl

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Economic Snake Oil

To the Editors: Excursus I ("The Ethics of Economic Ignorance") of *Worldview*, April, 1975, is a statement by one PLB, who must be the Peter L. Berger whose name appears upon the back cover of the issue. Mr. Berger states that there is disagreement between two groups of economists regarding treatment of the current economic crisis. The classical group, the adherents of "the old time religion," favor allowing recession to take its course. The Keynesian group, the "purveyors of snake oil," wish to relieve the growing unemployment by deliberate inflation.

PLB proclaims that he, like the ordinary citizen, is an economic ignoramus. But, by implication, he does admit to mastery of ethics, and states an ethical championship of inflation by an ethical maxim: "If one is ignorant of the consequences of two possible courses of action, one should take the course that is less cruel now. This is a rather elementary maxim of medical ethics. It is no less applicable to economic policy."

I cannot subscribe to Mr. Berger's analogy. By extension I question whether his espousal of the short-term good as against a more important longer-term evil is ethically sound.

A patient has a severe abdominal pain of unknown cause. Short-term, his pain (evil) can be relieved simply and easily by an adequate narcotic injection. Everyone, including the patient, can happily go to sleep. Meantime, masked by the narcotic, the distended appendix which, by increasing distress could have been diagnosed and removed, ruptures. The short-term good has resulted in a prolonged and serious illness, or death.

Another patient has accidentally found a painless lump in her breast. It could be an innocuous collection of fluid. It could be a potentially fatal cancer. Why not avoid the cruelty of a

surgical violation of the body's integrity and a possible permanent mutilation? The less cruel course has often resulted in much more serious evil and, depending upon the real character and extent of the disease, has robbed this patient of at worst 30 per cent and at best 85 per cent of her otherwise normal life expectancy.

There is a more cynical viewpoint which should appeal to Mr. Berger. It is conceivable that a few of his liberal inflationists are hoping that their remedy will lead inevitably to the chaos of total collapse and a probable Marxian solution. They are Mr. Hyde. Dr. Jekyll would favor the short-term cruelty of the knife.

PLB indulges in another misleading appeal: "8 per cent unemployment represents a mass of human misery far greater than that represented by 11 per cent inflation." In the first place, 8 per cent unemployment is a fact that exists in the present actuality of 11 per cent inflation. A therapeutic dose of short-term narcotic obviously must be far greater than 11 per cent. And, second, the misery of the unemployed 8 per cent should not be measured against the mathematical abstraction of 11 per cent inflation, but against the equally nonmeasurable misery of a group much larger: the aged, the pensioners, those who depend upon insurance measured in dollars of vanishing value, the credulous savers who had hoped to provide for their nonproductive years.

I suggest an alternate conclusion to Mr. Berger: that he refrain from ceding his case to the liberals until he can refrain from equating apples with numbers instead of turnips; that he re-study medical ethics, and even ethics.

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To the Editors: Professor Peter Berger's attempt to be ethical in his economics while being ignorant of economics fails. His effort fails because his solution assumes the knowledge he admits to lack.

Berger would exchange government spending in an attempt to reduce unemployment in exchange for more inflation. The justification of this moral preference requires scales on which to

weigh the relative miseries produced by unemployment and inflation. No one has such scales.

The physiologist Claude Bernard once told us that in ignorance it is wiser to refrain than to recommend.

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Kurdish Refugees

To the Editors: A number of *Worldview* articles have been devoted to the plight of refugees, but there has been almost no reference to the Kurds.

This four thousand-year-old race of people has been sold out, betrayed, and defeated in their fight for survival as an autonomous nation. Hoping to achieve self-determination, as promised to them in the Treaty of Sevres after World War I, the Kurdish people have instead become victims of the brutal politics of an aggressive power struggle. As their refugees die by the thousands at closed borders and their very existence faces annihilation, the silence of our press and our news networks is not only puzzling, it is an outrage to our pretensions to conscience and consciousness.

This is not a civil war; nor can these people be brushed off as "dissidents" or "rebels." The history of Kurdistan goes back to the Sumerians in 2000 B.C., since which time the Kurds have occupied some 150,000 square miles. After World War I that area was divided between Turkey, Persia, Syria, and Iraq. At the same time, the Kurds were promised the right of self-determination as were Jews and Arab successor nations to the Ottoman Empire. But imperialistic power struggles and oil fields darkened the future of the estimated ten million Kurds in this area. In Iraq the two million Kurds, a nonaggressive people by nature, have been fighting somewhat successfully in their attempt to hold their homes, their lives, their culture. In 1974 the Shah of Iran gave full support to the Iraqi Kurds. Iraq's adventurous foreign policy and growing links with the Soviet Union made the Shah fear for his own

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