

Good News for Torrance

Monday's announcement of an expansion program at the Mobil Oil Co. refinery here is good news for Torrance.

The \$80 million project will be two years in the building, will bring as many as 3,000 construction workers to the site during the coming two-year period, and will give the city the world's most modern petroleum refinery when completed, according to Refinery Manager J. E. Penick.

The refinery, long one of the city's major industries, will take a firmer grip on its leadership with the new program.

A lesson to be learned from the announcement was offered by Mobil Vice President H. J. Peckheiser, who came here from his New York offices to share in the announcement.

"The modernization and expansion of the Torrance Refinery will cost in excess of eighty million dollars," he said. "This represents the largest, single construction expenditure in the company's history. I mention this just to give you an idea of the profits we must earn to be able to plow back into the business the funds necessary to keep our company forward-moving and competitive."

The selection of Torrance as the site for this major construction program should be reassuring to those who have championed the cause of industry, and it should be reassuring to all Torrance homeowners and taxpayers. The huge refinery pays a substantial part of the city's tax bill, and conversely, demands very little of its services.

We congratulate Mobil for choosing the Torrance site.

Others Say:

About Reapportionment

American politics has long been noted for its healthy and vigorous dissents on a wide spectrum of political and economic questions. But on one thing the body politic today is showing remarkable and firm unanimity of opinion: the dangers to the various states inherent in reapportionment of state legislature under the Supreme Court's one-man-one-vote ruling.

Speaking before the California Teachers Association council in Berkeley, Republican State Senator John F. McCarthy, of Marin County, warned of boss rule as one of the major dangers of reapportionment. "It is an historical fact," he said, "that separate houses of a state legislature, separately constituted, are the best possible protection against boss rule."

From Los Angeles, which stands to gain the most by reapportionment, came this admonition from County Supervisor Warren M. Dorn: "One senator simply cannot be totally responsible to six million people. But 16 senators (LA's quota under one-man-one-vote) is obviously too many. . . . We may just as well have a one house legislature if our present two house system is to be based solely on population."

In the District of Columbia, the very influential liberal newspaper, The Washington Post, points out that rising public opinion may well compel Congress to offer a constitutional amendment "to allow the states some leeway in apportioning their senators along geographical and historical as well as population lines." The Post concludes that such an amendment should "require specific approval of such apportionment plans by the voters of the state."

That is precisely what Californians in daily increasing thousands are seeking as they lend their support to the campaign spearheaded by the Citizens Committee for Balanced Legislative Representation. With Committee Chairman James Mussatti, former General Manager of the State Chamber of Commerce, they believe that the people of each state should decide how their own state legislatures are to be constituted, just as the people of California have decided on four different occasions when attempts were made to alter our so-called federal plan.

This is the American way, and if enough voices are raised Congress will surely grant the people the opportunity to write that way into the Constitution.

—California Feature Service

"One of the great tragedies of the day is the disregard most people have of Congress and its functions assigned to it by the Constitution. It is one of the great changing political values which has been in process since the depression days. Unless reversed, it could ultimately lead to the last days of a democratic form of government."—Louisville (Ky.) Voice of St. Matthews-Highlands.

Progress is a wonderful thing. Just by spending five minutes finding the right directory, another five searching out the proper code and number, then dialing ten digits in faultless sequence, you can get a busy signal from almost any city in the land! —Torrance Lions Club Bulletin.

People seldom notice old clothes if you wear a big smile.—Lee Mildon, Monterey County (Calif.) News.

Fate is a grim joker. The man who climbs a mountain had better be especially careful thereafter lest he stumble on a molehill and break his neck.—Olin Miller, Thomaston (Ga.) Times.

In most cases it's better to get undesirable things out in the open, exposed to sunlight. Germs are killed that way, you know.—J. Johnson, The Heavener (Okla.) Ledger.



ROYCE BRIER

Middle East Riddle Has U.S. in a Strange Role

A Washington news story, speculative but probably true, says the Administration is in a dilemma over providing arms for Mideast countries.

As these nations are still engaged in strife of 2,000 years over territory, race, and real or fancied wrongs, you may wonder why we feel compelled to promote that strife.

The answer is not simple, but the over-all result may not be too complicated. The story runs that Jordan and Saudi Arabia are interested in buying super-sonic fighter-bombers, tanks and electronic equipment now a part of modern war gear. Israel, of course, opposes this, and President Nasser is momentarily silent, except in his antagonism to American or European arms for Israel.

The Washington quandary is that we are loath to offend Jordan, lest King Hussein be weakened, and

Saudi Arabia because of American oil interests there.

We are also involved in a hush-hush encouragement of a West German shipment of 150 tanks to Israel, a deal suspended when Nasser protested, and further scrambled in the squabble over the recent Cairo visit of Ulbricht, the East German puppet.

State Department refuses to talk, though the story is in all the bars and clubs of Mideast capitals. American military aid to Jordan has been running around \$4 million annually, and we have sold Saudi Arabia some surplus aircraft.

Massive military aid to Turkey was for defense against a Soviet threat, but the southern tier wants arms only for possible use against each other, a factor naturally bearing on the world peace.

No doubt technical Israel can, without effort, make its own planes and tanks, a

production beyond present Arab capability. But this is a run of luck the United States didn't devise.

So it is not readily apparent why the United States has to play God out there, unless playing God has become a latter-day American avocation, a point to be debated elsewhere.

As France and the Soviet Union have also been dealing in Mideast arms, it may be argued that arms will be forthcoming anyway. But this argument begs the over-all question, which is: why should we provide the Mideast peoples with means to blow each other up?

Or, put another way: haven't we enough grief already in southeast Asia and middle Africa? If we were smart we would dump this whole arms traffic—schools yes guns no. But maybe it's fun in Washington to play with the tangle of wires labeled intrigue, favor and counter-favor, not to mention fear and hatred.

WILLIAM HOGAN

Bessie Tells His Story Of the 'Hollywood Ten'

"Listen . . . The first thing you have to learn out here is that you can't make anything good. They won't let you. The original material stinks, but if you play it right, you can be on top of the heap in a couple of years and making big money." For a Hollywood writer back in the early 1940s, this was Lesson No. 1.

Alvah Bessie recalls it in a vivid and most revealing document on life in the motion picture industry, and specifically at Warner Bros., his employers, in the essentially non-creative period when the big studio factory system reigned supreme. The book is titled "Inquisition in Eden."

This is a first-person account of the Hollywood blacklist of the 1940s. It is very funny and very grim. It describes the climate of fear, the betrayals and broken friendships in the industry that resulted from the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigation of talent which was alleged to be throwing subversive ideas onto the silver screen. (Lesson No. 2 for a screen-writer might have been that even if he wanted to throw such ideas into the Hollywood "product," it was impossible to do so at that time.)

Bessie was one of 10 writers, directors, and producers who stood on their Constitutional rights and refused to testify before the Committee. They were labeled The Unfriendly Ten, later The Hollywood Ten. Bessie served a year in a Federal Correctional Institution in Texas for refusing to testify—which he still considers a misdemeanor at best that might have resulted in a minimal fine.

The book is narrated in a disarming, dead-pan fashion by a fellow who "may be slightly bitter around the edges," and understandably so. It appears as a series of film scripts—cutting from the prison at Texarkana in 1950, back to Warner Bros. in the '40s to Washington, other "locations." Underneath the madcap anecdotes of a lowly screen-writer's lot, the book serves a serious and important purpose. It reminds us of the "inquisition" of that time that ruined careers (like Bessie's) and proved nothing except, again, that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

No one is spared in the process—Jack Warner, the late producer, Jerry Wald, Bessie's colleague and prison mate Herbert Biberman, Lee J. Cobb, Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, many others, including the late Gary Cooper, whom Bessie portrays as a particularly ob-

noxious straw man. Bessie's account of how he tried to get some reality (certainly not "subversion") into his script for "Objective Burma" amounts to wild satire. ("Look, Jerry, there ARE no American troops in Burma," and Jerry Wald says, "So what? Put in some British liaison officers and stop worrying.")

The mad humor here does not detract from the book's central and serious intent, which is to recall a painful and baffling time in our recent history. It is a tough and honest document, and I recommend it.

Quote

Apparently, expediency has replaced integrity in our culture. — Estelle P. Dwyer, Manhattan Beach.

My Neighbors



SACRAMENTO REPORT

Assessor Explains What He Calls 'Tax Rate Game'

By PHILIP F. WATSON
Los Angeles County Assessor
(Second in a series)

The art of a successful magician rests on his ability to direct the attention of his audience away from what he doesn't want it to see and keep it focused on what he does want it to see.

Something of the same "hand is quicker than the eye" hocus pocus has long surrounded the three elements that make up the property tax — the assessments, the tax rate and the amount of taxes to be collected.

When the citizenry gets up in arms at the size of its tax bill, the spending agencies like to point to the tax rate. "Don't blame us," they say, "we held the line on the tax rate." Or, "It's not our fault . . . the tax rate is only up a few cents."

The impression created by the emphasis on the tax rate is that the spending agencies have done a first-rate job as long as the tax rate remains fairly steady. And the spending agencies, having absolved themselves, point toward the Assessor as the villain.

Having been so indoctrinated, it is no wonder the public believes the tax rate is the magic measure of government spending.

It isn't. The measure of government spending is how much is spent. Unfortunately, that information is not printed on the tax bill, alongside the assessed value and the tax rate. If it were, perhaps the public would not be so easily fooled by the double-talk about "holding the line on the tax rate."

Every taxpayer knows that his property taxes are two to three times as high today as they were 10 years ago. The County's own expenditures have more than doubled in the last 10 years — yet the County tax rate in the same period has only increased 39 cents.

How was this possible? Because in the same period property values on the assessment roll had increased 77 per cent.

So take your eye off the tax rate and look at what's being spent.

The tax rate is simply a mechanical calculation of the relation between the amount of assessed value in a taxing district and the amount of money the district votes to spend. It is the result of dividing the budget needs by the assessment roll of the district, expressed in a dollars-and-cents figure which indicates the amount of tax due on every hundred dollars' worth of assessed value.

If spending increases at the same rate as assessments increase, the tax rate will remain the same but the amount of taxes you pay will increase. If spending increases faster than assessed value, the tax rate will go up and your taxes will increase proportionately. In theory, it works in the opposite direction, too. If spending declines, taxes go down. But we seldom see a demonstration of this side of the theory.

If assessments and spending remained constant, there would never be a change in the tax rate. But by law, assessments must reflect the value in the market. Since, in the rising economy of the postwar years, values have been increasing, the assessment roll has shown a steady climb. By itself, this would not necessarily mean higher taxes. The assessment is simply a statement of the Assessor's opinion of value.

BY ITSELF, YOUR ASSESSMENT CAN'T RAISE A PENNY'S WORTH OF TAXES.

The assessment only become significant in relation of how much money a taxing agency votes to spend. If assessed value increases, it is not only possible to raise more taxes on the same tax rate, it is even possible to raise more revenue with a reduced tax rate.

This is what I call "The Tax Rate Game." By keeping attention focused on the

tax rate, attention can be diverted away from the actual cause of increasing taxes, which is the amount of money the taxing agencies vote to spend.

A perfect example of how the tax rate game can be played occurred this year

in one of the cities that received a sizeable increase in assessed value as a result of our update appraisal program. The city budget was not finalized until after the assessment roll was completed. When the tax rate (Continued on E-6)

HERB CAEN SAYS:

Some Bets on This and That

YOU CAN BET on it: Men who wear white socks also carry three pens in their outside breast pocket; the same guy who announces "I had beaucoup martinis last night" will say "Well, I'll be suing you" when he leaves; old women who smoke cigarettes on the street will stand off the curb while waiting for the "Walk" sign, and will curse when your car almost grazes them; the joker who asks "Stop me if you've heard this one" won't, and you have; the man who says "I'll bet you don't remember me" will win the bet and look mad anyway.

Wondering muse: How come the millionaires who charge onto the front pages to announce they're going to "save" something never do?

Add things that start the day all wrong (and that happens more and more frequently as you grow older): Getting out your personal phone book — and drawing a pencil line through the name of a friend who has just died.

CHANGING TIMES: When you move into a neighborhood with a pretty park nearby, your first thought is not likely to be "Is it sunny in the daytime?" but "Is it safe at night?" (Same pitch: During the depression, we worried about grass growing in the streets; now we worry about the streets growing in the grass. And: From tearing down old buildings that should have been saved, we've progressed to putting up new buildings that should be torn down.)

I forget who said it but it sticks in the mind: "The two greatest menaces in the world today are Communism and anti-Communism."

Who needs: The outsized rear of those nutty little motorcycles (and the childish antics of the nuts who drive them)? Down-the-nose headwaiters who confuse rude pomposity with elegant manners? People who carry on long personal conversations on pay phones? Menus bigger than the table you're seated at? Show-biz types who describe a man as "beautiful — he's really a beautiful man"? Radio stations that play commercials between the movements of a symphony?

NIGHTMARE SOUNDS: The electronic shriek of the telephone when you misdial. The maddeningly insistent beep-beep-beep of a city bus making a right turn. The split second of unearthly silence between the screech of skidding tires and the crash of metal metal against metal. The yelp of a dog hit by a car, the flapping of a curtain through a broken window, the wail of a baby in an unintended carriage on the street.

CHARACTER STUDY: She sailed into the Captain's Cabin of Trader Vic's like a Yankee Clipper under full canvas—her head high under a fantastic hat of white feathers, her eyes and jewels gleaming, her voice gruff, tough, and gravelly. As she marched to her table, the other diners stopped in mid-conversation or mid-bite to follow her progress: here was A Person. She sat down, looked fiercely around the room and proceeded to drink and smoke, talk and joke. When she paraded out, two hours later, every eye again followed her and every face smiled: Sophie Tucker, "The Last of the Red Hot Mamas," is still exuberantly alive, and at 81, she promises to outlast us all.

CAENDID CAMERA: Lilli St. Cyr, who's 40-something but doesn't look it, and her current boy friend, Lorenzo, who looks about 27, looking daggers at each other in Enrico's Coffee House; everybody loves a lovers' quarrel . . . Myrna Loy ringsiding at the Condor, while the joint's young press agent stage-whispers: "Who's Myrna Loy?" (You gotta feel sorry for him—missing her and William Powell in "The Thin Man") . . . Screenstar Richard Egan at the airport, wearing dark glasses big as pie plates and an electric suit so shiny it must have been plugged in . . . Screenstar Ann-Margret and her steady feller, Roger Smith, at Mingei-ya, the Japanese restaurant, eschewing chopsticks and forking away American style.

Morning Report:

President Johnson is fighting a two-front war, thank you. South of the Potomac, he has Alabama, and a long way West of it, he has Vietnam. The only connection between the two is that a few people think he sent the Marines to the wrong front.

It's too early to say exactly how and when he will end either war. But the nicest thing about any conflict is that eventually it ends in negotiation. Both of these will.

In the meantime, however, the President is losing no political points. He has the Republicans in Congress on his side in getting Negroes their right to vote and South Vietnamese their right to live. The two-party system may never again be the same.