

3 Jul 85

**BENZENE**

more than just  
another subzene

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the classical-sounding lead-in is in fact a recent statement, quoted slightly out of context, by feminist writer del martin. my reports tell me that my statement of opposition to the feminist revision of history was well-received by neo-chauvinists both in and out of the closet. the latest ms magazine has a fairly even mix of intelligent and ludicrous points of view, but writers of both types are dropping in martyrdom references like "the prevalent view that women belong in the home." oh come on, who still believes that?

this is benzene, a ~~syb~~zene published by ignatz jerome "mark" lew of 1327 w. 27th ave., anchorage ak 99503 (907) 724-7320. some of you may have noticed the abrupt truncation of recent benzenes in midlife crisis. the explanation is that lately i've been writing profusely and poor paul has no room for everything i send him. so when benzene is too big to fit snugly in what's left of mc's predetermined size, like procrustes he rudely lops off the offending appendage.

let him who hath knowledge reckon the number of the benzene:

in the spirit of scott hanson's irksome, i've restarted my numbering and this is issue #1. the fact that i had lost count is purely coincidental. i think i'll continue to bill myself as a "~~syb~~zene" lest any of you expect any major changes. it is my express intention that in content this will continue to be the same old benzene. the difference is you now send money to me instead of to someone else, and i xerox and mail the ~~syb~~zene. as most of you know "the same old benzene" means the deviant game report and nothing else...unless i happen to have something on my mind, in which case i'll ramble on about it and give others room to ramble too. now it just so happens that recently "something on my mind" has filled about 1/2 legal-size pages, but you won't catch me saying that's the way it will continue to be.

now that i have unlimited space i suppose it's unlikely but possible that i'll do some other game. however, as many of you know, my reservoir of enthusiasm is perpetually low, so the bulk of it will have to come elsewhence, dig? i have some interest in any perverse deviant which shows a reasonable chance of ending in the century (including rusnak's "cosmic diplomacy" with my own adaptations of the powers). i'm also interested in running postal scrabble. i envision a completely open two-player game with a following of interactive kibitzers. let me know if this intrigues you.

i've concluded that paul r. is again touring the u.s.a. for a week i've been trying to reach him by phone, mostly because i wanted to inform him of benzene's plans for the year and also because i wanted to get a hold of the unpublished pages left over from last month's benzene. alas i get no answer, so this will be as much a surprise to paul as it is to you. i hope no one will be upset by the balance of the last benzene i expect will appear in the latest mc which i probably received a few days ago. if not, i suppose it will turn up somewhere. i almost forgot, i'll be charging money for this now. how about, um, 60¢ per issue. i think that's just a bit above average, but i'm rather removed from zene scene so who knows? if it's too much, well i guess you don't have to buy it. if i find myself holding money and feeling guilty, i can put out half issues and thus harass the archivists. my plan for this issue is to send out about 20 copies and xerox another 15 or so for samples. i don't seek subbers but neither do i want to deprive anyone who is interested. if you know such a person, send me a stamp and an address, or something. have i forgotten anything?

rich berch dept:

the temperature here this june has hovered around 60°f which is cooler than usual. it is starting to get hot now. my aversion to "nice" weather is more than a mental thing -- i actually have an adverse physical.... (continued on page 4.)

how's that for eclectic phraseology?

QUONSET HUT

i forgot to note turkey's toadbuild on the dot chart last turn. no harm done.

autumn 06:

eng: a lvp r-wal, tf nwy r-stp(nc) ita: f trn r-tus tur: f ion r-eas

winter 06:

e (jim burgess, 100 holden st. 3rd left, providence ri 02908): even  
f (kevin tighe, 2026 agate, eugene or 97403): build tf bre, a par, f mar, f bre2,  
a par, f mar  
g (conrad minshall, 3702 tarragona, austin tx 78727): build f kie, f kie2, a mun2  
i (mike ehli, 1360 alder st. #9, eugene or 97401): build f rom, f nap, f nap2, a rom2  
r (james wall, 1805 university ave. #5, madison wi 53705): even  
t (pete gaughan, 3121 e. park row #171a, arlington tx 76010): build tf smy, a con, f con2

spring 07:

e: a wal-LON, tf eng s a wal-lon (r-iri,wal,otb), tf stp(nc)-nwy (r-bar,otb)  
f: f lvp-NAO, f edi-NWG, tf CLY s f edi-nwg, tf bre-ENG, f MID s tf bre-eng,  
a par(p)-YOR, a par2-PAR, a BEL h, a PIC s a bel, f mar-LYO, tf trn-TUN,  
f WES s f trn-tun, af lon2-ENG2, a spa2-GAS2, ta por2-SPA2, f mar2-LYO2,  
f bre2-MID2  
g: a2 nwy-STP, a mun-boh (r-kie,sil,tyo,otb), f kie-BAL, af SWE s f kie-bal, f NTH  
s french af lon2-lon (nso), f HOL s f nth, a RUH goads the wall: "to the last  
unit then, sucker!", a war-FRU, a den2-SWE2, f kie2-BAL2, a bur2-RUH2, a BER2  
s a mun2-sil2, a mun2-SIL2  
i: f rom-TRN, f ION s f rom-trn, f TUS s f rom-trn, f tun s f ion (r-naf,otb),  
f NAP s fion, a PIE h, a gre-ALB, f tun2-NAF2, a ser2-ALB2, a ven2-TYO2,  
f nap2-APU2, a rom2-TUS2  
r: a2 boh-MUN, a pru-BER, a lvn2(p)-sil2 (dead), f BOT-swe, a boh2-MUN2  
t: af2 ser-GRE, f bul(sc)-CON, ta ank-ARM (boom), a con-SMY, tf smy-AEG,  
f EAS s tf smy-aeg, a smy2-ARM2, f con2-SMY2

notes:

jim burgess is the english player now. mike ehli's address is new. kevin "vagabond" tighe, i am told, also is in eugene and the address listed is, according to mike, "99% sure." there is a potentially controversial ruling this turn which you probably would have never noticed if i hadn't pointed it out. the german winter orders included "build a mun" and not "build a mun2" the former is a distinct, albeit currently impossible, order different from the latter, and it was my original intent to use the former even though it was clear to me that the latter was intended by the german player. purist gms would say that to change the order is to suppose too much and thus overstep the gm's role. however i have stated on many occasions (particularly in brux linsey's recently defunct voice of doom) that my own somewhat different purpose as a gm is to follow as best i can the player's intent. further i have cautioned players that intentional misorders are ill-advised because i will attempt to correct them. all things considered, i decided it would be contrary to my established gming style to not change the order to "build a mun2." i'm willing to discuss this.

(the triple asterisk signals any board position not reflected in the main season section. this is to help me set up the board next turn.) there is one joke order so one deviant unit becomes normal per rule #16b. the die has chosen and english tf stp(nc) is now f stp(nc)\*\*\*. yes, amphibians can paratroop from land to land as we saw last turn. remember amphibian is defined here as a unit which can act either as an army or as a fleet during any given turn. the paratrooping russian army fails and dies. the turkish a arm hits a bomb and is gone\*\*\*. you'll be informed if the

bomb is yours. arm is impassable until post-spring 09, bur is impassable until post-fall 07, and yor2 is now passable. don't forget that the dots will cease to be dots and the non-dots (including sea spaces) will become dots in pre-fall 07 (right after the summer retreats). funny, i invented pre and post seasons to avoid problems caused by simultaneous happenings but i see that one managed to sneak through now: bombs are placed in pre seasons and bombs may not be placed in dots. my decision is that your bomb placement can be designed to occur either before or after the switch. so for this turn (pre-fall 07) bombs may be placed in any space. note that bombs continue to exist when their locations become dots. have i forgotten anything?

votes:

e:+rs-v f:+rs-v g:+tv-u i:+u-q r:+t-u t:+qv-t

remember that you vote positively for one or two rules and negatively for one rule. any votes not made go to your own rule. rules r & s pass with +2 each. s happens first in case you care; the rules are the same:

20 & 21) board 2 and units thereon disappear. ((this happens in pre-fall 08 per rule #2)) other rules are:

1) bombs. 2) sc-affecting rules delayed. 3) double units. 4) proposals anonymous. 5) only 3 bombs and they're anonymous. 6) aeft get tus. 7) amphibians. 8) olsen. 9) board two. 10) bombs explode summer 04. 11) negative votes. 12) draws include aus. 13) paratroops. 14) gm address. 15) tallman out. 16a) no obnoxious clauses. 16b) jokes undeviate. 16c) alert lose units. 17) draws exclude aus. 18) dots switch pre-fall 07. 19) three german units plucked.

proposals:

w) each country is given one atomic bomb which when used renders any two bordering spaces (land e sea) impassable for the rest of the game. this includes home centers. if all atomic bombs are used then the game ends. (("land e sea" confuses me. the obvious graphological interpretation is to call the e an ampersand, but that makes little sense in context. i'm interpreting it to mean "land or sea": the bombed spaces may be of either element. atomic bomb placement is ordered with spring or fall moves and they explode in post-spring or post-fall.))

x) german suicide rule: gm reveals who proposed rule 19. this player and germany are ineligible to propose or vote for rules, and they each lose two randomly chosen centers each winter. lost centers are distributed randomly as evenly as possible among other players. when either player is eliminated, drops out, resigns or is removed, this rule is void.

y) italy is eliminated

z) each player must attack a german unit or supply center each spring and fall or lose a supply center permanently (permanent = loses a credit for a build for rest of game.) (("attack a german unit or supply center" means legally and singly order at least one unit to move to a german-owned sc or german occupied space. moves which are legal only if convoyed are not sufficient unless the necessary fleets are ordered to convoy the army as ordered.))

a) board 1 and units thereon disappear. ((this would occur pre-fall 08 right after board 2 disappears. if both boards are gone during a winter season all players will be out (out = no centers nor units) and there will be no winner (zero is not more than half of zero) and game will end.))

b) board 2 and all units thereon disappear. ((this too occurs in pre-fall 08, but has no effect.))

deadline:

due on july 31, 1985: summer retreats (egi), pre-fall bomb (if you can and want), fall 07 moves (egit may paratroop), votes, rule proposal. send to:

by the way, orders phoned in late on deadline day probably won't be but might be too late. true deadline could come as early as 6:00 p.m. deadline day (my time) in the unlikely event that i don't procrastinate. i'm flexible in setting deadlines now so let me know if you think they should be shorter or longer. with no delays i figure i could post the ~~sy~~zene the afternoon after the deadline day. however, i

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expect average turnaround to be about three days.

press war:

kraut to borsht breath: after that bs you tried to feed me about supporting g to a win, did you really expect honesty in return? i doubt you'll enjoy this as much as i will!!!

the wall: what a bunch of shitty, boring, unimaginative, mundane, abysmal, wretched, non-inspiring, clone-head rule proposals you chowder brains are proposing. "board two is eliminated" what kind of a faggot proposal is this?

people interested in the deviant might care to know that steve langley has an opening in deviant dip. i'm signed up and so is conrad.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

....reaction to sunshine. i don't particularly mind 80<sup>o</sup>+ temperatures indoors, but if i spend more than 10 or 15 minutes out in the sun i get ill. really. another reason to dread hot weather is that it's when all the nasty bugs come out. i'd never make it in the tropics -- when i see a big bug i freak. really.

something which i don't quite understand is the popularity of sunglasses. women consistently rate eyes as a favorite body part right up at the top next to buns. so why do these guys with obvious exhibitionist tendencies insist on hiding their eyes? i suppose that either they are ignorant or perhaps they intentionally are being coy. do we have any sociology majors out there?

i refuse to wear sunglasses not because i think i have pretty eyes (i contend that just about anyone can learn to have beautiful eyes by knowing how to move the facial muscles around his eyes. it's one of many valuable skills which people learn sub-consciously or don't learn, but hardly anyone thinks to study deliberately) but because i can't wear any sort of glasses without being acutely aware of them sitting on my nose and ears. i refuse to wear a wristwatch for similar reasons.

gossip:

those of you who pay attention to the oil industry might have gotten the impression that the environmentalists have taken over alaska. in fact, they have not, and there is a different explanation of why virtually all alaskans (excepting three who currently reside in washington) favor a delay of a bering sea outer-continental-shelf oil lease now scheduled for december. a few months ago, the environmental protection agency and a half dozen other state and federal agencies announced that the various required tests and environmental precautions were (perhaps more than usual) sorely neglected. under ordinary circumstances, the environmentalists would make a lot of noise but the rest of us would pay no attention because -- there's no shame in admitting it -- we really don't give a damn if a bunch of dumb animals get killed. this time it turns out that the plan is to drill right in the middle of a breeding ground\* for all the fish in bristol bay. bristol bay, i am told, happens to be the most productive fishing place on the west coast, so alaskans would like to hold off on the drilling until they see more than usual environmental caution in this venture. it's not a concern for the environment for its own sake but an economic concern for one of alaska's three big industries. our congressional delegation seems to recognize only one industry in alaska and they all oppose the delay even while members of the appropriate subcommittees are citing the unanimous position of the alaskan delegation as basis for their own opposition to the delay. i think this is a poor political move, particularly for young and murkowski who could find themselves blamed for a bad harvest just in time for the 86 election. i don't think they'd lose any campaign funds from the oil-PACs considering the validity of environmental concern in this particular instance. further, nobody, except some stray liberals, is actually suggesting a cancellation of the lease. as i understand it, the lease can still be delayed by hodel who has expressed a willingness to do so if

\* or something like that -- i know nothing of marine biology, but in any case it's where all the fish hang out when they aren't getting caught.

the alaskan delegation urges him to. meanwhile, the oil people are reminding us of all the wonderful things that their industry brought to alaska, with the tacit promise of more. but i think we are being intentionally misled. unless i'm mistaken, our arctic slope oilfields are being leased by the state, whereas ocs land is leased by the federal government. currently, alaska has no state income tax, so the only money the state gets out of the deal is spent wages of the workers who happen to live in alaska. because the oil is way out in the boonies (even most of the fishermen live there only in summer.), none of the oil workers are truly local, and while quite a few come from the civilized parts of alaska, many others are from out of state, as is attested to by the markair flight schedule i typeset not long ago with its daily flights from prudhoe bay to salt lake city, houston, minneapolis and newark, as well as twice-weekly flights to ten more out-of-state airports.

i'm interested in other states' experiences with the oil industry -- particularly louisiana's. does anyone out there know anything?

one game played by local journalists and other members of alaska's political-literary community is to quote the most recent -- real or imagined -- don-youngism. a don-youngism is a malapropism, gaffe, or other ridiculous statement attributed to our sole representative to the house, don young, such as "don't let their smiles fool you. they don't call 'em killer whales for nothing!" one journalist has recently announced that the distinguished gentleman has been "out-don-younged" by our man-of-action sen. ted stevens who apparently has actually proposed a bill which would have us shoot spies and televise it as a means of deterrence. the local press has tried to raise a stink and has had less success than they'd like but more than i expected. average opinion here seems to be that shooting is reasonable but televising is a bit extreme. typical reaction is to be amused and sarcastic: "that's a swell idea, ted, but don't you think firing squads are a bit dull for prime time? why don't we put them in an arena with marines with bayonets?"

ad nausea:

as much as it pains me to agree with a vocal majority, i must confess that i too prefer the old coca-cola. when i first heard frankie kvetching about how terrible the new coke is i was certain he was exaggerating, and i doubted that the distinction was even significant. so we had our own little taste test and lo, i could indeed tell the difference. the new stuff wasn't so bad that i didn't drink the rest of it, but it was, um, pretty bad. i drink a lot of soda, but i'm not loyal to any particular flavor or brand. my favorite cola has been and remains the slightly more expensive royal crown cola which you'll find is the preference of virtually all cola connoisseurs. i expect that coke will bring back the old formula--perhaps in the guise of a novelty as bob greene suggests. the only person who actually prefers the new stuff is billicosby -- the rest of us are about evenly split between those who dislike the new stuff and those who are indifferent. the way i read public sentiment, old-coke fans are willing to forgive the mistake and go back to how it was with no bad feelings. the company continues to dump money into this unsuccessful experiment, i think, because certain individuals in the company don't want to admit their idea was a mistake. i predict that prudence will prevail and those individuals will cease to have control over policy.

some of the prettiest ads on television recently were courtesy of a company called trw. although the ads don't bother to explain what precisely the company does, one gets the impression it is a conglomerate in the communication-technology biz. my reaction is to ask why they advertise. the viewers certainly aren't about to go buy trw products. i conclude that trw is predicting a popular antipathy toward big corporations and they hope to anticipate it by painting themselves as good guys.

without a doubt the industry which has most successfully manipulated public thinking with a media campaign is the dairy industry. you may have seen their latest ads -- disguised as public service announcements -- telling you how wonderful cheese and milk are. long ago, the dairy industry devastated public awareness of nutrition

with its misleading if not inaccurate notion of "the four food groups." last time i heard the groups were meat & poultry, fruits & vegetables, starches, and dairy products. they vary from time to time as nutritionists try to bend the structure to accommodate genuine information, but the easiest one to remember always is -- you guessed it -- dairy products. the dairy industry would have you think that milk is one fourth of nutrition. i won't deny that milk is nutritious for most of you, but to call it an essential part of one's diet is naive. there are many examples of healthy cultures in which people are weaned as babies and drink no milk thereafter. relatives on my father's side like to say that caucasians have developed an immunity to milk. if you have a system which can digest milk, it can be a convenient source of protein, amino acids and some assorted vitamins, but all of these can be found in equal plentitude in dozens of the other three foods. it seems that calcium is milk's only unique nutrient. am i to believe that calcium is 25% of nutrition?

words:

i once saw joan collins in a made-for-television psycho-drama with the ironic theme of how the insatiable public is continuously idolizing some handsome young actor and then leaving him to rot while moving on to a new victim. i remember thinking that it was more distressing that the public does the same thing to words. the trendy adjective "massive" has now become commonplace even in non-colloquial writing and thus it joins the long list of adjectives which have degenerated to all-purpose magnifiers (gigantic, prodigious, enormous, astronomical,...). "Massive" once referred specifically to something with a lot of mass: one could have a massive pimple but not a massive headache, and your girlfriend's sexual hangups are not a massive obstacle whereas her big brother might be. when criticized for incorrect usage of the language, writers will often reply that language is changing and that to steadfastly defend rules is to hinder expression. i'm all for change provided it is change for the better, but unfortunately i find that change in language naturally tends away from precision and toward ambiguity. in fact, i never hesitate to advocate change when i think it would improve the language: i like to encourage using words in their old-fashioned sense when the more recent sense is less precise (massive, awesome, odyssey, dilemma,...). more radical changes i wouldn't mind seeing introduced are the distinction of the present participial adjective from the gerund (as they have in german), and the abolition of "that" as a relative pronoun.

both participles and gerunds are formed in english by adding "-ing" to a verb. in the sentence, "while crossing the street, i'm careful to dodge moving cars," "moving" is a participial adjective modifying the noun "cars." in the sentence, "the parking lot attendant's duties include moving cars," "moving" is a gerund and "cars" is its object. cases of real ambiguity are, i admit, rare, but the consequences could be catastrophic if, for instance, an eager young swain were to approach a striking young woman in a bar saying, "boy, i sure like striking young women."

the washington post has appointed "that" the paramount relative pronoun, abolishing the interrogative words "who" and "which," and eclipsing somewhat "where" and "when." i think it would allow more precise expression to do the opposite -- use only the interrogative words and relieve "that" of one of its many burdens. this is in some ways more radical than the proposition in the previous paragraph because it has no basis in old english. unpragmatic pedants will cite shakespeare lines like the one preceding romeo's main aria, "he jests at scars that never felt a wound." i know the first few times i read the line i wondered how a scar could feel anything. "he jests at scars who never felt a wound," would be more quickly understood.

one lazy evasion of precision, used constantly by politicians, is the use of "as to" as an all-purpose preposition. except in the rare instance when the "to" is part of an infinitive, "as to" can always be replaced with a more descriptive preposition. i imagine that the writer or speaker can't decide between two prepositions and, afraid of using the "wrong" one, he uses "as to" which is worse than either.

in a previous benzene i bewailed the influence of BASIC on english and cited the introduction of a redundant "then" to every "if" sentence. now i see that communication with machines is causing people to order their words more logically thus communicating

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communicating more effectively. i suppose some minor redundancies are a small price to pay.

more gossip:

our friends on capitol hill have used the recent hijacking as an occasion to unleash a flurry of anti-terrorist bills. new jersey senator frank lautenberg said in some subcommittee or another that "it is the right of all americans" to travel ~~and~~ around the world unmolested. i've yet to see a lucid explanation of what precisely a "right" is, but my offhand opinion of mr. lautenberg's statement is that it reflects a typical american brash naivete about what it's like in the rest of the world. douglas tells me we should make a policy of categorically blowing up hijacked planes figuring that we'll sacrifice a few innocent travelers in order to prevent future hijacks. i foresee problems if the hijacked plane is inhabited by both americans and citizens of a nation which which doesn't care for our policy. i also wonder about the moslem zealot who thinks 50 infidels and a jet is not a bad exchange for his life. one bill (s1321?) proposes that any flights deemed vulnerable by some particularly agency be closed down. this seems unnecessary. if some traveler wants to tour the eastern mediterranean he should be notified that he'd be at risk, but if he'd like to pay extra and risk his life anyways, i don't see why we should stop him.

ira glasser, of aclu fame, is predicting that "terrorist" will become a label used to tag people whom the guys in charge would like to suppress. actually, that doesn't sound too incredible.

i see on the cover of the local newspaper that our governor is likely to get impeached. he has allegedly perjured himself in some sort of nasty goings on over some lease or another. i've read nothing but headlines so i won't venture to guess whether the charges are true or invented by the legislature as an excuse to toss out ol' bill. both parties strike as sufficiently sleazy to be guilty of such a thing.

the local scandal makes me realize that it's been a while since the latest resignation of a be-scandaled cabinet member in washington. hm. weinberger seems to be losing his influence lately, what do you think?

i'm a bit puzzled by everyone's insistence that giving humanitarian aid to the contras is so much more virtuous than giving military aid. certainly the contras already have expenses for food shelter etc which must be met. now that they can use our aid to meet those expenses, they can free up \$14 million of their own funds for whatever military equipment they'd like to buy, so what the hell difference does it make whether our particular dollars were humanitarian or not? my suspicion is that the humanitarian aid idea was more than anything a cheap public-relations trick for a lot of congressmen who wanted to be perceived as neither too hawkish nor too soft on communism.

i see that california has decided to have a state lottery. i liked how wisconsin state house speaker -- i forget his name -- characterized the state lottery: it's just like any other tax. you might say it's a tax on stupidity.

zbigniew brzezinski recently came out saying that us and ussr are both making missiles increasingly more likely to hit their target. if the trend continues, we'll eventually achieve first-strike capability. therefore, sez zbig, we should fund star wars research -- not with reagan's utopian ideal of a foolproof defense, but with the purpose of taking a bite out of a first strike force thus pushing first-strike capability back a bit. i never doubted that we could use yankee ingenuity to devise a satellite system capable of confusing or destroying attacking missiles, but i wonder what this state-of-the-art satellite intends to do when it finds itself on a high-speed collision with a half ton of mundane russian gravel. still, mr. brzezinski's is the most compelling argument for sdi i've hear yet. i've noticed that whenever the pr-sdi folks produce scientists on their side, they always bring out ed "father of the h-bomb" teller. now, i'm not saying that mr. teller is a poor scientist (by no means!) nor do i doubt his integrity, but i do believe that his first loyalty is his passion for research, and he'd say a lot in order to obtain funds. in his feud with oppenheimer, he demonstrated his willingness to put science before national



interest. most certainly a person can change in forty years, but i dont think he has.

neo-imperialists, particularly when referring to central america, enjoy quoting the great new yorker theodore roosevelt, saying "walk softly and carry a big stick." i won't criticize t.r.'s sentiment here, but i find great amusement in the fact that the people who love this catchphrase invariably are oblivious to the first half of it.

the commies have recently increased deployment of medium-range nukes in europe and presidential hopeful george bush says it means they aren't serious about arms control. no no george, they're quite serious; those are bargaining chips. (snicker.)

it is beginning to appear that reagan will join most of his recent predecessors as a president who attempted tax reform and failed. even though reagan's latest tax proposal (treasury ii) is still an improvement over the current tax system, it is an inglorious retreat from the very well thought out tax proposal originally put forth by reagan's treasury department (treasury i), and as such is doomed to be cut to pieces before it passes. treasury i was more or less equally harsh to the various groups subsidized by the current tax system; but with treasury ii, the administration gives in to the most vocal lobbyists' industries. the message to the other industries is that if they lobby that much more, they can get their tax breaks back too. i imagine legions of lobbyists are assailing the house ways & means and senate finance committees even as we speak. if treasury ii ever gets out alive, there will be little reform left in it.

there's much discussion of how the republicans "stole" the tax reform issue from the democrats. i'm all for stealing ideas if they are good ones, but i must confess that the suddenness of the republicans' and particularly the reagan administration's support for tax reform makes me suspicious of their sincerity. we'll see what happens.

brave new world:

a far-fetched idea which has crossed my mind is to actually do what some radical libertarians advocate and abolish income tax and let the government create money when it wants to go shopping. the american public would still be the true footer of the government's bill, but in the form of inflation rather than taxation. my favorite economist, henry hazlitt, attacks inflationary policies with startling vigor, but as far as i can see he only objects when they are naive proposals by those hoping to get something for nothing, or when they are a sly way of ripping off the public while pretending not to (for instance, lowering personal taxes while running up the deficit). i propose taxation via inflation not as a magical cure, but as a means of doing away with the extremely complicated tax system. because any government government spending would devalue all dollars equally, the distribution of tax burden would be the same as a flat levy on capital. effects of this would be numerous. foreign investors in the dollar would be discouraged (though foreign investors in american industries would not). anyone who holds american dollars would become essentially a taxpayer. foreigners wouldn't get the compensating 100% income tax break like the americans, so the value of the dollar on the international market would take a dive. currently, everyone is saying that the strong dollar and the trade deficit are bad things anyway, so they would call this a good effect. i think they are naive: the trade deficit is in fact a bulwark against a tide of greater economic ills, and if it weren't for a lot of foreign investors financing our debt, we'd be paying for it in inflation or something else. i expect the fall of the dollar would be rather painful, but it would be an inevitable realization of something we cant dodge forever. borrowers will raise interest rates by the amount of the new inflation to reflect the dollar's change in value over time, but interest rates will come down some from there to reflect the expense to the borrower (bank) caused by the depreciation of the portion of the money he does not reinvest. personal savings will be strongly encouraged. cash on hand will be depreciating so people will want to purchase things with it or put it in the bank. banks have the same problem so they'll be obliged to invest their money in business ventures. in general, anyone who finds himself with money will not be able to remain rich by doing nothing, but must invest his wealth somewhere. in my opinion, this sort of frantically dynamic economy is healthy. as people stop hanging on to money, the



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federal reserve board will be able to -- perhaps even be compelled to -- take some money out of circulation and thus offset the inflation.

one real danger is that congress will begin to believe that the money it spends is really free, when actually every expense is paid by all dollar-holders. for this reason, i do not recommend that government simply produce money any time it wants to spend, but instead i recommend that each year the government determines how much it wants to tax dollar-holders and accordingly it creates the appropriate amount of money. this money is then considered revenue and is spent in the traditional way. expenses beyond the available revenue are paid for with borrowed money as usual.

allow me to reiterate: in my view, the income tax system is a colossal waster of resources. millions of people are paid to keep track of it, to enforce it, to take advantage of it, to hide from it, and recently, to try to reform it. my plan is to foil the plans of those who would exploit the system (by cheating or whatnot), and to save the public the expense of the internal revenue service, without causing any damage to the economy.

fashion:

but let's face it, changes in economic policy merely rearrange or disguise underlying economic problems, and bold ventures like tax reform or even radical proposals like mine merely toy with incentive and redistribute some wealth. an unhealthy economy is, at heart, a social problem.

the united states recently became a debtor nation. budget deficits, inflation, trade deficits, stagnation, and other economic maladies are nothing more than alternately reared ugly heads of the hydra of declining american wealth. the real problem is that american appetites have kept pace with racing technology but enterprise and initiative have been left behind. everybody wants another car, everybody wants his own home, everybody wants the latest fancy gadget, expensive gifts, fashionable clothes, leisure time, and generally to be upwardly mobile. everybody thinks that progress means more things are available to them. progress does mean higher standards of living and increased efficiency, but progress does not mean a free ride. i don't want to stand in the way of good old american ambition but it looks like yesterday's ambition has become today's avarice. i think americans have been indoctrinated with the idea that they won't be happy until they have something more. i think it's about time to tell americans it's okay to be satisfied.

anticlimax:

something i hear occasionally and condemn each time is teenagers bewailing the uselessness of their lives in the shadow of the threat of nuclear war. i believe that i'm more intimate with the teenage mind than that any of you reading this and i can assure you that that particular bewailment is bullshit. i am not by any means insensitive to the tribulations of teenagerhood but if you believe that your teenager loses sleep over the thought of nuclear devastation, you are straying from another problem, and probably letting your kid get away with something as well. what you were never told is that just as a baby doesn't have a tantrum in private, teenagers don't act concerned about nuclear war unless they think an adult is watching. now i don't claim that they get together and formulate clever ways to dodge responsibility; but like pavlov's dogs, when they hear the shout of a hostile parent, bullshit is instinctively produced in their mouths. the collective subconscious mind of teenagers as a group has noticed that the mention of nuclear war is especially effective in dissolving charges of irresponsibility, so it becomes a regular part of the reaction. so next time your daughter says to you, "well gosh dad, how can i be concerned with the consequences of my actions when (snif) i don't even know if i'll be alive tomorrow," and a tear glistens on her pretty cheek and you're about to turn to butter; remember that, intentionally or not, she is manipulating you.

in the discussion of my anti-tax proposal up there somewhere, the part of my analysis i have the least confidence in is the part about foreign investment, because, i'll

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confess, i still haven't grasped the logic of the situation. i heard it mentioned recently that if a latin american country were to go bankrupt and repudiate its debt, it could cause some banks here to go under and cause some minor disasters in our economy.

now wait a minute. am i to understand that the financial stability of our nation is supported in part by an i.o.u. from guatemala?? and if that trick works, why don't we try an i.o.u. from mars? i would think that everyone knows damn well that we're not going to get that money back in a thousand years. the only way a country like that will ever start earning money is if it gets a progressive government with popular support and is allowed to compete fairly with foreign businesses. unless american foreign policy undergoes remarkable change, that won't happen unless there's an anti-american revolution; and if there's a revolution, the new guys will undoubtedly decide that they don't owe us anything. what i really don't understand is how a simple declaration of bankruptcy makes any difference to the u.s. bank. are they actually pretending that the iou from guatemalahas value?

kevin tigre:

cranston is the only senator in calif up for re-election next year. he's a liberal demo without any competition within his party. the reb. are already reported as conceding the state to him.

in his last election, cranston beat paul sann of prop. 13 fame. this time, rebs. are trying to get charlton heston to run, and yes i'm being serious. calif has strange politics.

((i take it "reb." means republican. the wall has described mr. cranston as a "sure loser." my temporary conclusion is that you are the naive one. remember when you were surprised that knowles had such stiff competition in the mayoral race? though he wouldn't admit it, my suspicion is that knowles envisions downtown anchorage as a tight, living city replete with expensive state-of-the-art community centers and the trashy suburbs can go to hell for all he cares. people like me think this is a great idea but suburban commuters feel neglected when he tries to push public transit and ignores parking, etc. enterprising developers of the carpe diem school know that he doesn't like their type, so they invest money in campaigns to evoke antipathy toward this "no-growth" candidate. the point from which i stray is that you lived in a relatively poor neighborhood and worked in the heart of downtown, so you met many knowles supporters but few of his enemies, and you drew the obvious conclusion. i now hypothesize that you live among a lot of cranston supporters and you don't see the others.

i've heard a bit about charlton "rambo" heston's dabbling in politics so i won't be surprised to see him run. and it doesn't take a lot of research to see that many california politicians have show biz backgrounds. i hear a lot about prop 13. refresh my memory. something about property tax?))

brad wilson:

i thought i'd write concerning child-abuse backlash. i read an article in the philadelphia sunday paper about a group called VOCAL (victims of child abuse laws) -- people who have unfairly and improperly been accused of child abuse. their stories are compelling -- children taken away for little reason, government workers acting like god, insensitive bureaucrats, etc. i think the whole child-abuse thing is being pushed hard by liberals who see it as another chance to have the government tell people how to run their lives and raise the children.

the next big "social malady" may be abuse of the elderly. i've seen at least two articles on that lately. "car abuse" isn't bad, either. i still think we've a lot to worry about from all these mother-hen types. neo-prohibitionists, seat-belt nuts, etc. etc. personal freedom is at stake.

((uh oh.

i must say i think that the government should tell people how to raise their children. to an extent, anyway. i don't share your outrage at the specific and spectacular cases of individual victims of the backlash. my concern lies with the quiet but malignant

social trends. here, i'll cite some instances too:

i believe that it is a decidedly good thing for children to have friends who are adults. i think this helps prevent the gaps in understanding already appearing between generations, and it allows both parties to enjoy the pleasant and edifying experience of a wholesome one-on-one relationship with a person with a different perspective outside of the restricting parent-child relationship. today, however, children are being taught to distrust unrelated adults, and would-be holden caul-fields and mr. pignatis are shunned.

worse, i think we are producing a legion of anxiety-ridden fathers. it is in fact quite normal to think that your 11-year-old is sexy, but rather than find joy in the admiring, today's father wonders if he's a pervert and feels extremely guilty. he is afraid of his own love so he avoids his daughter in subtle ways and the relationship is strained. i'd go so far as to say it is a good thing for a daughter to flirt with her father\* because it allows her to experiment with the new experience of being alluring or sexy or whatnot in a safe context. i say safe context meaning, she can get appreciation but at the same time know she can trust her audience not to get the wrong idea and try to take advantage of her.))

more on angola: did you see when lew lehrman was in angola at a summit conference of unita, anti-communist guerillas in laos, the contras and afghan freedom fighters to create democracy international? not a bad idea -- in fact such a good idea that it won't fly. hope it does though.

my 50% figure was pulled out of my head with background from some conservative publications. unita controls, as you say, about 33% of angola and can probably cause extreme havoc in at least another 25%. at any rate, we could help unita win. but if we're not under ronnie, we certainly never will. what a cause. ((historically, genuinely good causes will be realized under administrations which originally opposed them, as i'm sure you've seen.

i still fail to see the point of spending money and flouting sovereignty to replace one regime with another. i think that if we're so sure that democracy/capitalism is superior to communism/socialism (and i am), we should export it by demonstrating its worth. we should expend our resources to help states like ivory coast and zaire (or whichever is our friend in sub-sahara, i forget) to fully and ostentatiously enjoy the many benefits of our system. unless the neighboring state's government becomes even more repressive, the people will see how goo it could be. in either case, the people will sympathize with our side, and, as the soviets know, a third world country's alignment eventually depends on the ideals of the people. if we want to win a power struggle in the third world, we need superior power, and that could be a problem; if we want to win an ideological struggle in the third world, we need a superior ideology, and that we already have.))

you hit the nail on the head re feminists. they have to remain a "victim group" or else their whines about discrimination will lose their meaning. unfortunately, "women's studies" is a major (equal to history or chemistry) at princeton; can you believe it? ((i'm finding it difficult.)) feminism is a perversion of western morals. i find it amusing that women are often thought of as a "minority group." yeah, 51% is sure a minority.

denouement:

"perversion of western morals," huh? i like that, but i've badmouthed women enough already so i'll put this issue to bed.

i hope there are no gross transcriptional errors here. most of my material goes through about three drafts, and after typing i'm simply unable to read through it one more time.

don't forget to send me money.

\* all this applies equally to sons and mothers, but daughters are the theme this issue.