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'Cheap Gibe'

While I enjoy the wit and wisdom of the literary excursions of George F. Will, and while I am aware that his article on the "Loch Ness Monster" ["Skepticism as Deep as Loch Ness," op-ed, May 15] may well have been written tongue-in-cheek, I feel bound to correct what may be a false impression. He writes: "But in 565 A.D. St. Columba, who brought Christianity to the Scots (who were in sore need of it), saw a beast in Loch Ness."

First, Columba did not bring Christianity to Scotland. The Romano-British Christian, Ninian, in the early 5th century had already penetrated far into Scotland. In any case, the "Scots" were Columba's fellow Irish who had established a kingdom on the West Coast of Scotland. From there they gradually established sovereignty over the indigenous Picts and Britons, who spoke a language akin to modern Welsh. Then, Columba was no missionary. He was fleeing Ireland where he had copied a psalter without the owner's permission. The end result was Columba's rousing his clansmen to battle and being responsible for the deaths of 3,000 men. In remorse, he fled to a point on the Scottish Coast, Iona, from which he could no longer see Ireland. There he allied with his fellow Scots (Irish) in their desire to dominate the whole of Alban (later Scotland).

To say that the "Scots were in sore need of Christianity" is a cheap gibe. They were, and are, no more in need of it than the unhappy Irish (the original "Scots") or contemporary Americans.

As to the "Loch Ness Monster," I know no more than Will. But, as a boy, vacationing at my grandparents' home in Inverness, I often swam in Loch Ness and lived to tell the tale. I suspect the "monster" is often seen through the bottom of a whisky (Scotch naturally) glass!

—John Barclay Burns

The writer is a minister at Providence Presbyterian Church in Fairfax.

Those Coal Leases (Cont'd.)

An article by former interior secretary Cecil Andrus ["Coal Leasing: They Ruined Our Program," Free for All, May 14] contained a factual error that warrants clarification. It refers to the federal coal leasing program started by the Ford administration in 1976, adding that "the program was opposed by the governors of all the western states where federal coal is found."

It is true that the 1976 Ford administration program was opposed by certain environmental groups with whom the Carter administration subsequently agreed to a withdrawal of the program, thereby delaying resumption of coal leasing for another two years. Moreover, the program which finally emerged from the Carter administration deliberations contained all of the basic elements of the Ford administration initiative. However, it is not true that the 1976 program was opposed by the governors. In fact, governors of the states of Wyoming, North Dakota, New Mexico, Utah and Montana—Democrats all—signed cooperative agreements with the Interior Department designed to facilitate implementation of this new federal coal leasing program. I doubt such agreements would have been signed if the governors were as opposed to the program as Andrus seemed to imply.

—Thomas S. Kleppe

The writer was secretary of interior in the Ford administration.

'Almost Heaven' No More

In reference to the article "West Virginia's 'Almost Heaven' Becomes a Nightmare" [Washington Business, May 16]:

I read with great interest and concern the article on the plight of West Virginians. Maybe it is time we helped our own instead of sending money off to other continents.

—D. E. F. Lyon

In Defense of Flexitime

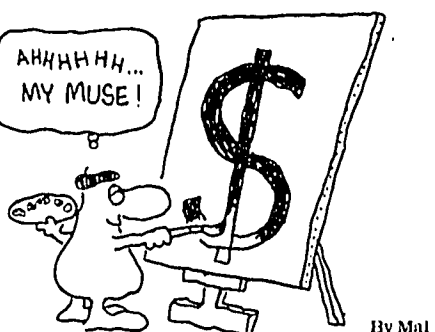
If Nina Novak ["Pooh to Flexitime," letters, May 13] would spend less time cursing government workers, and at least some time in unrecriminating reflection, perhaps her life would not be quite so frustrating.

She is infuriated when she calls for someone in a government office at 4 p.m. and finds him gone for the day because of flexitime. She should know that not everyone in this town works to suit her particular schedule. Perhaps if she could learn to organize her work properly, she might not have to find herself making "must" calls at a time when one might reasonably expect to find workers absent from their offices.

And government workers are not the only ones who work other than a standard 9-to-5 schedule. I board the subway most afternoons at 3:40 (except when I put in extra hours with no overtime pay). At that time, the trains are already filling up, and only a fraction of those people work for the government. It strikes me as odd that Novak apparently never tries to contact, during these hours, any of these non-government people. And would she think it appropriate for these early-schedule workers to be infuriated if they tried to reach her at 7 a.m., only to find her absent?

In fact, the "problem" she discusses is not a problem at all, but a practice consciously implemented to avoid a far greater inconvenience for commuters. If she thinks she is distressed now, let her contemplate the nightmare that Washington commuting would be if everyone had to arrive and depart at the same time.

—J. M. Reed



Why We Didn't Bomb Auschwitz

Contrary to the charge in the disturbingly ad hominem article "Why Didn't We Bomb Auschwitz?" Can John McCloy's Memories Be Correct? [Outlook, April 17], the decision not to bomb Auschwitz was made by the military, by the Army air forces general officers and the president of the United States, not by the assistant secretary of war.

The air force advisory memorandum from Gens. John Gull and Thomas Handy of the War Department General Staff was given to McCloy on July 3, 1944, by then-Col. Harrison A. Gerhardt. The military decided against the bombing on grounds that such an attack would be "of doubtful efficacy" and should not divert our forces from prime military targets. This reflected General Staff consultations with the operational air force commanders in Europe. As civilian assistant secretary of war, McCloy was not a participant in these consultations. He never directed or ordered military operations and had no voice in specifying bombing targets except that he conveyed to Gen. Arnold that Secretary of War Henry Stimson wished that the ancient capital of Japan, Kyoto, be removed from the list of such targets.

Requests for bombing had just begun to come through the War Refugee Board in July 1944, hard upon D-Day, when the world first had irrefutable proof of the operations of the Nazi death camps. President Roosevelt's key aides, Harry Hopkins and Sam Rosenman, asked McCloy to investigate the bombing question. It fell upon McCloy to issue the statement on the bombing decision. The timing was of the utmost significance: the Allies were locked in the final struggle on the Western front, the breakout from the Normandy beachheads.

Similar bombing requests were made to the British, with whom we were coordinating round-the-clock bombing. Prime Minister Winston Churchill himself had urged investigation of the feasibility of such bombing. But the British air commanders also advised against it, and the military's negative decision was overriding.

For Morton Mintz now to blame McCloy for the decision is wrong on the face of it. It also reveals a lack of any historic sense of the crucial circumstances of the time. The fact is that the war was at its climax, with every resource being used on this gigantic last campaign.

As Martin Gilbert clarifies in his book "Auschwitz and the Allies," not only did the request for the bombings coincide with the breakout battle in France; it was only and precisely at that moment that the first proof emerged about the real function of Auschwitz; and, least known, it was at this period that the Nazis were succeeding in their most diabolical deception—the so-called "goods for blood" proposal, whereby the Third Reich would free a million Jews in return for critically scarce goods and materials. This acted to postpone any actions that might torpedo the negotiation.

As author Gilbert concludes, the story of Auschwitz may be partly the story of procrastination in acting on what finally became known; but, above all, it is the story of two infamous successes, the Nazi successes "in the killings themselves and in a series of bizarre deceptions which enabled the killings to be carried out on a gigantic scale, for more than three years without interruption."

Thirty-nine years later, one can in hindsight note, as Gilbert writes, a "lack of comprehension and imagination in the face of the 'unbelievable.'" Many Jews likewise found the scale of the slaughter difficult to grasp. It is hard to appreciate now that the unspeakable enormity of Auschwitz was not revealed until the reports in July 1944 from the first two escapees from Auschwitz, Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba.

Although the military decided the bombing matter, McCloy had some discussions with Harry Hopkins, Sam Rosenman and either Air Force Gen. Hap Arnold or one of his aides. He also recalls that Hopkins and Rosenman conveyed to him the president's view that we should not undertake the bombing. Those were tumultuous days, and

there is no written documentation of such encounters. The assistant secretary of war was known for the multiplicity of tasks he had to look to in those climactic weeks. Undoubtedly, these civilian leaders talked together about the bombing in meetings, in daily contact, probably even in encounters in the corridors. They necessarily acted on the analyses and discussions with those whose duty it was to conduct military operations.

Recrimination in hindsight is one of the possible penalties borne by durable survivors, of whom John J. McCloy is the nonpareil. The "efficacy" of bombing Auschwitz under the conditions of that time remains debatable even today, yet a case can be made that it might have saved the lives of some Hungarian deportees. (In the summer of 1944, when the death camps' existence became known, it was already too late to save the vast majority of the victims.) To take McCloy to task for passing on the military commanders' reluctance to undertake the mission is anomalous. It is also improper to malign the actual decision-makers for their disposition to concentrate on military targets. Those familiar with the period and certainly any real historian would be aware that in July 1944 the Allied offensive hung in the balance, requiring the use of every available resource, not least our bombers. It was the profound conviction of the military that all would best be served by the speediest victory possible over Hitler.

Would that the Nazi deceptions had not prevented us from knowing of Auschwitz in time to destroy it. Would also we had acted on early intimations of the Pearl Harbor attack or, indeed, earlier there had been no capitulation at Munich. But recrimination in hindsight is a demanding and serious business at best.

—Edward T. Chase

The writer is working with John McCloy on his next book.

It's a Threat to the Nest Egg

Ever since the start of the great withholding-on-interest-and-dividends debate, The Post has shown an incredible inability to comprehend why this has turned into such an emotional "people" issue. When the public is upset enough to fire off over 10 million letters, cards and telegrams to Congress, it is absurd for professional journalists to offhandedly explain this away by saying all of these good people were bought by the bankers, or that they were misled into thinking this was a new tax.

While some members of the press were shooting from the lip, the bankers did some very basic consumer research. As a result, they have had the distinct advantage of working from fact, not supposition. Judging from the editorial "The Revolt Against Withholding" [May 11], it is time to try and share the mood of the public with the journalists.

To the public, savings are a lot different from wages and salaries; they represent what is left over after regular living expenses have been met. To many, they represent a precious refuge against an uncertain future. To all, they represent security against any uncontrollable future events.

Even though this is not a new tax, the idea of allowing any government agency to have access to a person's nest egg poses a threat. It is also becoming common knowledge that states and cities have passed or are considering similar legislation. The fact that the federal government passed withholding so quietly has not helped the legislators' credibility.

When state taxes were first enacted, the amounts were so nominal that many states minted special tokens called mills to be used as fractional pennies. Now, some years later, nickels are the standard currency. The public is saying that, for starters, withholding

is 10 percent, but just like every other revenue plan, the next time the government needs cash flow the percentage will undoubtedly increase. As the public sees it, the safest course of action is to cut off interest withholding before it ever begins.

The argument that interest withholding is "equitable" because wage withholding is a *fait accompli* is solidly rejected by the public. The vast majority of honest taxpayers resent the notion that they cannot be trusted to pay the taxes they owe, especially when they know the IRS receives records of interest payments and will soon be getting even more data. The public reasons that anyone now brazen enough to defy the IRS will easily find ways to beat the withholding system.

Let me also add one other item to The Post's list of bankers' self-interests—one that belongs at the top of the list: from their research, the bankers realized late last year that if the law went into effect there was going to be a taxpayer revolt, and they didn't want it to take place in their lobbies. That's why they borrowed the horse from Paul Revere and went for a ride.

—David C. Hastings

The writer, senior vice president and director of taxes at First & Merchants National Bank in Richmond, is chairman of the American Bankers Association Task Force on Withholding and Taxpayer Compliance.



By Wallmeyer

A Limit on French and British Missiles?

Isn't it time we stopped kidding everyone about the so-called Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) negotiations in Geneva and called them what they really are—the talks on third-country nuclear force levels?

In this context, Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger's article [Topic A, May 8] sets forth a reasonable set of arguments as to why British and French nuclear forces should not be included "under a ceiling on U.S. forces." But he errs in failing to address the broader question: when and how will French and British nuclear forces be limited? There's not a chance of getting a long-term INF agreement that doesn't resolve in some manner the issue of limits on British and French nuclear forces.

The French and British problem raises the even more fundamental question of "alliances" and their future in a realm of "nuclear arms control. Just how much "outside action" with allies (submarine basing, sales of missiles and technology, etc.) should be permitted? Serious national dialogue on the long-term character of NATO in a world of nuclear arms control is conspicuous by its virtual absence—and especially among NATO experts.

The most important question is "non-transfer"—the sale or transfer of nuclear weapons systems and technology to allies. Does the precedent of the U.S. sale of Polaris submarine technology and Polaris missile boosters to the British (and the planned future sale of Trident boosters) mean that the Soviets can sell comparable technology and weapons systems to India—someday to the Chinese? And can we assist the French in their submarine and missile programs and still support the claim that theirs is an independent nuclear force?

These arguments bolster the case for some kind of French and British commitment on the future size of their intermediate-range missile forces. Today, the British have 64 missile launchers on nuclear submarines, with prospects for a MIRVed force of 500 warheads by the end of the century. The French, with 18 missile launchers on land and 80 on submarines, could have 500 missile warheads by the year 2000.

Perhaps the knowledge that the insatiable U.S.-Soviet nuclear competition is in danger of escaping the crude SALT II cage will encourage France and Britain to bite the arms control bullet. Independent action on their part now might save not only the INF negotiations, but also the arms control process generally. They could start by seeking agreement between themselves on what they respectively need—motivated by the knowledge that it might make the difference between war and peace. And it might.

—Roger Molander

The writer, a member of the National Security Council staff from 1974 to 1981, is executive director of the Ground Zero nuclear war education project.

Getting Specific About the District's Future

Robert Linowes may have confused thousands of Washingtonians about their city's comprehensive plan with his article, "A Coherent Vision for the District's Future" [Close to Home, May 8]. His interpretation may be such because the draft plan is so all-encompassing that it is not easily digestible. The final, revised plan will be much tighter and clearer.

The city's planners have worked with citizens and the business community for the past four years to ensure a balance of incentives and controls that will improve opportunities for all residents and make our city viable, livable and attractive. Linowes probably knows this to be true, as the Greater Washington Research Center, which he chairs, and attorneys from his law firm have made considerable contributions to both the comprehensive plan and the downtown plan, for which I am grateful.

The comprehensive plan is not just a land-use plan; there also are to be chapters on housing, economic development, public facilities, transportation, environmental protection, urban design and a plan for reviewing the old downtown. These are the local parts of the plan, which are the responsibility of the mayor; responsibility for the federal elements rests with the National Capital Planning Commission. The NCPC is addressing federal goals, foreign missions and international agencies, federal facilities and environment, federal employment, open

spaces, and visitors and tourists. The federal and local governments have co-published a draft on preservation and historic features. District residents can help to shape the plan by suggesting improvements.

The draft plan recognizes the District's role as the nation's capital and as an international center, dealing with the growing importance of the diplomatic community and the 21 international agencies in Washington. Included is a proposed international cultural and trade center in Southwest. Mayor Barry has been working with several federal agencies and community groups to establish this center to take advantage of the international opportunities in the city.

The draft plan also projects about 25,000 new households in the next 20 years, and between 18,000 and 20,000 new and rehabilitated housing units. Contrary to Linowes' perception, the plan goes into great detail, analyzing and projecting who needs these homes and what kinds of homes they should be. It follows this professional analysis with precise policies and strategies to make sure adequate numbers and types of housing are available for lower-income residents, the elderly, the handicapped and those in need of housing with various support services.

In his article, Linowes asked where new housing should be built—but later argues against specifying proposed locations of

housing, commercial development and open spaces. His suggestion that Washington's neighborhoods should be a "seamless web" of all kinds of land uses is unique. The overwhelming message from citizens is that they want their neighborhoods protected from commercial incursion. They want commercial services nearby, but not in their neighborhoods.

Linowes is on target in focusing on the importance of capital improvements for physical development. Planning is being coordinated with commercial and employment-related land use planning; and enactment of the comprehensive plan will give even more guidance.

Types and effects of development at Metro stations have been studied by the city for several years and will be clarified in the final draft. The draft plan says, "Development which capitalizes on public transportation systems can alleviate traffic congestion... lessen air pollution and increase personal choice... Increased retail, hotel, entertainment and arts activity [in downtown] will create a transit demand... making the Metro investment more cost-effective."

Those who want more specificity can help us formulate it next fall when the ward planning begins.

—John H. McKoy

The writer is director of the D.C. Office of Planning.

Face It: The Sullivan Principles Haven't Worked

One of the most powerful supports for the maintenance of white supremacy in South Africa is the \$6 billion of direct and indirect U.S. investment there. This investment provides capital and technology for nuclear, military, police and prison systems needed to maintain control of the black majority.

General Motors and Ford manufacture cars and trucks used by the police and military. Fluor Corporation is building coal-to-oil conversion plants to help South Africa withstand an oil embargo. Exxon, Mobil, Texaco and Standard Oil of California supply South Africa with oil. Control Data has sold computer equipment that is used by the South African police. The list goes on and on.

U.S. corporations deny collaboration with the minority government, claiming instead that they are agents of change. They adopt the Sullivan Principles, a code of conduct calling for labor reforms in the work place, and argue that this justifies their continuing presence in South Africa.

Whatever the original intention of Leon Sullivan, the author of the principles, they have been an extremely useful tool for the South African government and the corporations. Instead of discussing the role that the corporations play in supplying the government with vital products and technology, debate focuses on the working conditions of blacks employed by the corporations that have signed the principles.

These workers represent fewer than 1 percent of the black labor force in South Africa. Sullivan himself admits that even if his principles were implemented to the optimum, they would not end apartheid. What he has yet to admit is that they provide an excuse for U.S. corporations to stay in South Africa and conduct business as usual with the most extreme racist state since Nazi Germany.

Writing in The Post ["It's Time to Step Up the Pressure on South Africa," op-ed, May 10], Sullivan expressed the desire to hasten the end of apartheid. He could indeed make a dramatic contribution, but only by declaring that his principles have been tried and that they have failed, that stronger measures are needed.

The South African government has never opposed the Sullivan Principles. On the contrary, they were introduced with the approval of the South African state. What the state fears is not a code of conduct that makes it easier for foreign corporations to stay, but pressure on them to pull out. South Africa has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars hiring lobbyists in the United States, and one of their responsibilities is to fight divestment legislation. When they lobby, they find they are not alone. Representatives of U.S. corporations lobby with them. This partnership between U.S. corporations and the South African government is what must be broken.

The Reagan administration, adopting a policy of "constructive engagement" has refused to take strong measures against South Africa and rejects the imposition of sanctions. Because of this bankruptcy at the national level, action is shifting to state and city governments throughout the country. The possibility of pulling investments out of corporations and banks involved in South Africa is being debated in at least 21 states and eight cities. Massachusetts and Philadelphia have passed laws requiring the divestment of all public pension funds from corporations and banks involved in South Africa. Councilman John Ray has introduced a similar ordinance in the D.C. Council.

Inside South Africa today, hundreds of thousands of black South Africans are pursuing a struggle for freedom in the face of police bullets, mass arrests, torture and constant harassment. Withdrawing U.S. economic support for apartheid is a powerful action that will speed the day when all South Africans, black and white, can enjoy full rights in the land of their birth.

—Jennifer Davis

The writer is executive director of the American Committee on Africa. An economist in South Africa where she was active in the struggle against apartheid, she has lived in exile in the United States since 1966.