

---

# EDITORIAL

---



## CAVEMEN ON THE HILL

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

It cannot be easy to be a United States congressman. I know it looks easy, all that smiling, schmoosing, and striking of heroic poses; but the fact is that it must be very difficult for the solons of Capitol Hill actually to perform their public services on a hill. How much more comfortable and fitting it would be for them if their business were conducted in a cave.

Consider last month's humbug with the budget. Do you think it was easy for them to pass that extravagant appropriations bill, the one that put donkey ears and a clown costume on budget ceilings which they themselves had passed last summer midst solemnity and self-congratulations nauseating to behold? Not at all. For months the right honorable gentlemen have been taking bows before the folks back home for passing the Gramm-Latta budget reconciliation bill, that historic bill which gave our thrifty president the ceilings on expenditures he so dearly sought as a tool against inflation.

Yet the corridors of Congress are honeycombed with nooks and crannies. From these dark recesses lobbyists of the milch-cow state have been shaking their fists as the solons hunkered by. Last month the pressure became intolerable. Many of the honorable gentlemen capitulated, passing an \$87.3 billion appropriations bill for social programs that blasted colossal holes through their own ceilings of last summer. It was \$3.9 billion over the president's budget request and \$763 million over the Congress's own ceilings. Such transactions are better concluded in dark places.

Nor is this the last time that the taxpayers are going to be dunned for these social programs. Doubtless by

*Adapted from RET's weekly column syndicated by King Features.*

the end of the year the cost will be even higher. It is the custom on Capitol Hill intentionally to under-appropriate entitlement programs. When the money runs out the solons come forth blubbing for more lest there be starving in the streets.

Of course the blubbing has al-

ready begun, for some of these great statesmen blubber at the least provocation. Thus last month we heard the Right Honorable Silvio O. Conte of the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts pronounce: "This bill is America's investment in humanity." Alas, America has been making in-

vestments of this sort for over a decade, and today an increasing number of observers believe that America has put its money in far too many salted mines. They conclude that a good many of the programs that were fattened up last month are extremely dubious, fraught with waste, corruption, and the kind of inefficiencies for which our Federal Government has grown legendary.

One such program is food stamps, which *Time* magazine tells us "along with Medicare-Medicaid is the most scandal-tinged of entitlements, exceeding even welfare; the rip-off is estimated at about \$1.5 billion a year." Moreover, *Time* calculates that possibly as many as one-fourth of the Medicaid patients in nursing homes and mental institutions do not belong there. Obviously, if the waste and corruption of these programs alone were eliminated, last month's extravagant appropriation could have been fitted under the Reagan administration's budgetary ceilings.

And was our welfare system, our "safety net," really "cut to shreds" by the Reagan budget ceilings as gypsy moth Bill Green declared? This year nearly half of all federal spending will go toward maintaining this safety net, even with the Reagan administration's ceilings. In the 1950s, only one-fifth of our budget went toward such programs. How is it that with this enormous increase in social spending things have grown so desperate for the poor?

In truth, of course, it is not the poor who are in such desperate need of the programs of our milch-cow state but the middle-class tycoons of the poverty programs. Looking back on a decade of growth in the kind of social programs that were fattened up last month Daniel Patrick Moynihan stated in *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income*: "With astonishing consis-



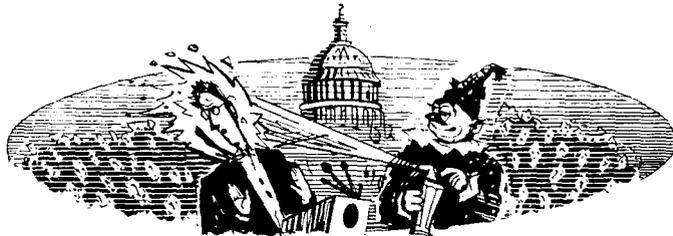
gency middle-class professionals . . . when asked to devise ways of improving the condition of lower-class groups would come up with schemes of which the first effect would be

to improve the condition of middle-class professionals and the second effect might or might not be that of improving the condition of the poor."

The humbug of last month has been going on for years. It has led to enormous deficits and dreadful inflation. Inflation gnaws at everyone's income, but it is most ruinous to

those who have least. If gypsy moths and the other blights upon our budgetary process really want to help the poor they will slay inflation. They will live by last summer's ceilings. □

## C A P I T O L I D E A S



### ARCHAIC NOTIONS

by Tom Bethell

I recently received a letter from my left-wing, *Guardian*-reading sister in England, and enclosed with it was a newspaper article by a certain Professor E.P. Thompson, clipped from said *Guardian*.

"I suspect it will be anathema to your pro-Reaganist views but I ask you to give it more than a casual glance over," my sister wrote. "You will probably say the positive ideas it contains are unattainable dreams but I say that peace through Reagan's insane arms escalation is even more a hopeless cause because it is not really a cause at all.

"I have recently been banging on doors in Whitworth [Lancashire] collecting signatures for the World Disarmament Campaign (yes, even Whitworth has a flourishing peace group). The thing that has stunned me most has been to find that there is widespread fear—not of the Russians walking in but of American aggression. This comes not just from the younger people but from the old people who are trusting enough to leave their front doors ajar so that I knock and walk right into their front rooms. They talk about war and wars, particularly the First World War, and American aggression in the same breath.

"Most sign, those that don't frequently say that they agree with what we are trying to do but it is hopeless anyway. One old gentleman

refused to sign and then called up the street, 'I'm with you all the way, I hope you get that paper filled up!' It is these people the peace groups are beginning to reach. CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] is losing its off-beat image and is becoming respectable. Politicians are beginning to take note.

"The churches except the Quakers and Methodists are being typically and disappointingly cautious and 'unChristian' in their lack of willingness to take any initiative. I find this very chilling and depressing though at least my own priest who is not very inspiring on most matters has come

down firmly on the side of disarmament, no less."

She concluded by saying that she would be joining the CND march on London at the end of October, with 100,000 marchers hoped for. Their guru, Professor Thompson, would be marching bravely at the head of the column, risking the wrath of London bobbies, Coldstream guardsmen, and other such resolute defenders of the existing order.

I thought I might reply to this letter pointing out that in my youth, some twenty years ago, I too used to wend

my way to London on CND marches, which in those days began at Aldermaston. Their main appeal, as far as I was concerned, was the motley array of New Orleans-style brass bands which would add a sprightly beat to the march. The disheveled Cockneys from the East End of London who somehow made their way to Aldermaston never seemed to mind particularly if they were joined by one or two equally disheveled undergraduates, trumpets and clarinets in hand: That was the only way I could ever get to play with the Londoners, who were all far more proficient on their instruments than I was.

Oh well, those distant days of the Aldermaston lark seem innocent by comparison with today's determined neutralists. I suppose that's what my sister meant when she said that CND "is losing its off-beat image." (Bearded trumpeters in duffel coats.)

"Twenty years on," a recent article in the (London) *Observer* noted, "the predominantly middle-class character of the movement still remains. Just as the media caricature of the early CNDER was of a bearded, pipe-smoking, tweed-suited, sandalshod, free-thinking vegetarian, nowadays the corresponding image might be of a thirtyish, non-smoking, university educated, professionally employed person [notice how deferentially the writer draws the modern stereotype] . . . The contemporary movement differs from its predecessor in having a much greater involvement of women. In part this is just a reflection of the growth of feminism and of the politicization of successive generations of young women." —



Tom Bethell, The American Spectator's Washington correspondent, holds the DeWitt Wallace Chair in Communications at the American Enterprise Institute.