

opportunities for free choice are increased. That is the idea behind the Packwood-Moynihan bill. It is an idea whose time has come.

Theodore Michael Kerrine is Executive Director of the Mediating Structures Project.

EXCURSUS III

Frederick C. Dyer on The Measurement of P-Melted Ice

A distinguished, if aging, men's club has affixed to the wall of its main bathroom six urinals. Periodically the bowls of these urinals are filled with ice cubes, which for some reason take longer to melt there than they do in highball glasses.

One evening in the fall of 1976, about a fortnight before All Hallow's Eve, I chanced to stand next to Professor E——, a renowned historian. He commented: "Why do they fill these bowls with ice cubes?"

I mumbled: "Sanitary purposes? Hygienic temperature controls?"

"Probably not. I've never seen it done elsewhere."

"To save water? Melting does the flushing?"

"No, freezing the water first must consume energy, which the energy czars would object to."

I left it at that. Daily life has its little mysteries.

A few days later I joined Professor E—— in the bar. After the usual amenities he remarked: "I asked *them* why ice cubes were put in the urinals and was told it was because the machine that makes the cubes gets ahead of consumption. To save the cubes would violate health precautions. To dump them on the floors, driveways, or environs might lead to accidents. They'd stop up the kitchen sinks or the regular toilet bowls. So they are put in the urinals. Whether only in the main men's room, I know not. Nor do I know who thought of it or how often it occurs."

I speculated: "Perhaps we could obtain a grant to investigate the matter—the economics of ice cube disposition?"

He replied: "Or the thermodynamics and hydraulics?"

A medical doctor nearby joined in. "How about an HEW grant to study the nature of micturition as revealed by the speed at which ice cubes melt? I've noted that I can melt one cube per stream. Can others do so?"

A government consultant—between consultancies—commented: "The study should take into account the season, time of day, humidity, age of subjects, what they had eaten, imbibed—medicines and so forth."

Professor E—— added: "And the play element in human nature. Some men may approach the cubes frivolously and even try to miss them."

The consultant asked: "How big a grant are you going for?"

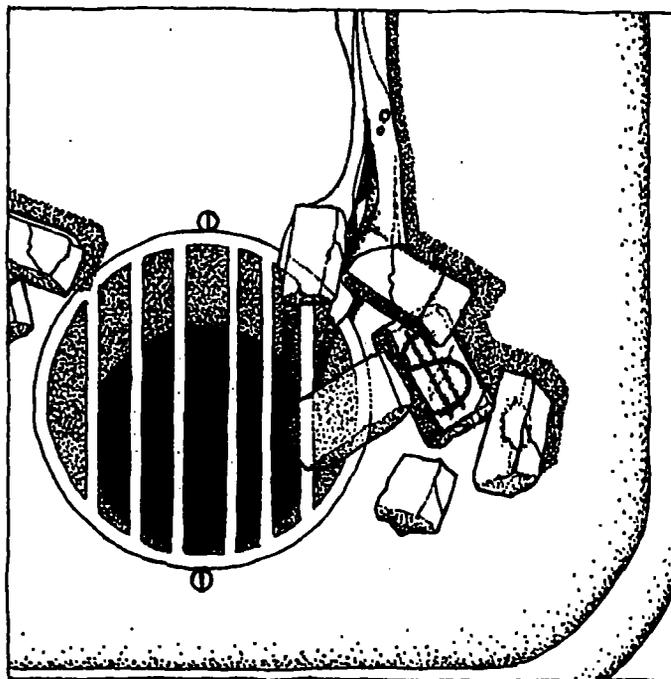
I answered: "Small is beautiful; I figure on starting with a request for \$2,500 to \$7,500."

"Never!" expostulated a physicist. "Such a tiny request will be ignored. Ask for \$250,000 to \$7,500,000 and they'll take you seriously."

The consultant said: "Make it \$367,502.38. That sounds well planned, carefully estimated, and of such a cost-benefit nature that it will be worthy of any bureaucrat's support."

"You might even win a Golden Fleece award from Senator Proxmire," Professor E—— added.

About a year later, perhaps forty days after St. Swithin's Day, I came upon David Cohen's article, "Bathroom Behaviours" in *New Scientist* (July 7, 1977), which discusses—sarcastically and humorously as well as scientifically—a "debate" in recent issues of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. The *JPSP* had published a report by three psychologists (or students of psychology)* of a study they had made by hidden periscopes of men micturating in a public lavatory.



Then a person from Harvard Medical School wrote to the *JPSP* claiming that it was unethical to observe people in public lavatories, especially without their knowledge or permission. The experimenters replied that they had done a pilot study in a large lavatory where they openly timed people and no one bothered to ask them what they were doing.

*I depend wholly on Cohen's version in *New Scientist* and won't go to the original sources unless I get a grant. Some forms of research must be paid for.

(Continued on page 47)

P-Melted Ice
(from page 29)

Moreover, they would have included the ethical aspects but space in the *JPSP* was too limited.

The person from Harvard Medical School said the whole study was trivial. The experimenters believed that their lavatory study was important because it tested the null hypothesis that "closeness does not affect micturition." The protester pointed out that the *JPSP* rejects 87 per cent of the papers offered it; and what, therefore, would be the effect on failed contributors when they saw the lavatory study to be among the best 13 per cent published?

The ice cube project no longer seems far-fetched. Should I activate a proposal? Or a series of proposals? One to the National Institutes of Health for a study of the psychological factors occurring when men micturate onto ice cubes? Another to the National Science Foundation for the physics or chemistry involved—temperature, pressure, ionic interchanges, etc.? Several to the National Endowment for the Humanities (or Performing Arts) for explorations of the aesthetics—lyrical, dramatic, choreographic, musical, critical, and novelistic? Another to the Economic Development Administration, Small Business Administration, the Brookings Institution, or the American Enterprise Institute for a study of the economic effects? And two, of course, to the Department of Labor to obtain enough money to ensure that the experiments were conducted without discrimination by sex, religion, age, race, place of origin, type of clothing, makeup, or adornment worn, or by length of hair on head, face, or body?

On the other hand, I admit to being bothered by that bit about the triviality of such studies. The ethics we could handle by getting larger grants to add more parameters and assistants or by obtaining a good old boy from the South to serve as project director.

Sir Isaac Newton is supposed to have said: "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered about me."

Most of us have to go through a lot of sand before we find anything worth holding up. Truth, like precious stones and metals, may have to be dug out of dirty soils and gravels.

But note that Newton sought and held up for view *smoother* pebbles and *prettier* shells. Who wants to chance a search doomed to find only rougher, dirtier, or uglier bits of information?

Thus my hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought; successful grantsmen must be made of sterner stuff. Let someone else forge ahead without fear of professional criticism, Senator Proxmire, or the Government Accounting Office. If the world can be seen in a grain of sand, who knows what might be seen in an ice cube in a public *pissoir*?

Frederick C. Dyer, an author and consultant in our nation's capital city, has had experience with government, business, and academic bureaucracies.

Russian Literature
(from page 32)

few paragons, a few *witnesses*. Perhaps our own sleep is so heavy that only a Terror will restore to us the meaning of value, of life, of faith.

True, the West has its own saints and poets—but who reads them, who knows their names? Would the BBC have given to one of them, as it did to Solzhenitsyn, an hour to denounce our folly? For the most part the cultural figures we elevate, crooners of an insipid nihilism, lack even the strength of those "devils" Dostoevski described. The Russian nihilists, who eventually seized on Marxism as the tool of their purposes, knew what they wanted. At least we can grant them that. Our own heroes do not know what they serve and will be swallowed up still demanding their "rights" and titillations.

Osip Mandelstam was sent to Siberia *because* he was a poet, and he died there of cold and starvation. To the end he still believed it was his joyful privilege to be a poet because Christ had died for his sins (this although Mandelstam was Jewish). With a sort of pride he told his wife: "Poetry is very important here. It must be—they are killing so many poets." She survived and hid his poems and memorized every one of them and escaped through some miracle, and she noted that those who had remained human were without exception lovers of poetry. Handwritten copies of Mandelstam's poems circulated even in the camps—she saw one herself—and were read not only by the "fifty-eights," the political prisoners, but even by ordinary criminals. By the time she wrote her amazing book *Hope Against Hope* (1970), long after the "thaw," Mandelstam's collected works had still not been published in the USSR—but he was known as one of the greatest poets of the language.

It is difficult for a Western poet not to feel somewhat envious of the chance for nobility in the face of horror.

One hears other stories from the camps that not even Solzhenitsyn has written—of silent mystics who recognize each other by the rhythm of their bodies as they chop wood or perform some other labor and realize they are inwardly repeating the Jesus Prayer. The Gulag, it seems, is studded with saints—and martyrs.

A few days ago a "mob" in Russia "clashed with police" because it wanted a church to go to. Nadezhda Mandelstam tells an amusing story about her little niece, who was secretly being taught the Bible by her grandmother (this was in the Thirties). The girl's mother, a good Marxist, took her to the Museum of Atheism in Leningrad to cure her, but there she saw an exhibit showing Christians worshipping Mammon. She refused to believe it.

It is said that Christianity thrives on persecution; but what about other things, like poetry, like real humanism, like kindness and loyalty—do they also need to thrive on persecution? Should Christians in the West *envy* the Russians?

The traditional argument against humanism is not antihuman any more than the argument against rationalism is antirational. Tradition simply points