

readers might address letters to Ambassador Jorge Aja Espil at the Argentine Embassy to the United States, 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, and, if you will, send the author of this "Excursus" a copy at Box 271, Nyack, N.Y. 10960.)

Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, winners of the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for their peace movement leadership in Northern Ireland, have nominated Adolfo for the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize.

Tom Cornell is Executive Secretary of the Catholic Peace Fellowship and Director of International Affairs of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

EXCURSUS II

Theodore Michael Kerrine on Empowering Families in Education

In a last-ditch attempt to head off a bill that has gained the strong support of more than fifty senators (the "Packwood-Moynihan Tax Credit Bill") the Carter administration has announced a plan of expanded federal assistance for college students that is aimed at providing relief for middle-class families burdened by the mounting cost of higher education.

Under the administration plan eligibility for government scholarships would be extended to students from families with gross incomes of up to \$25,000, and students from families with gross incomes as high as \$40,000 would qualify for scholarship loans. The minimum grant for those qualifying would be \$250. In addition the \$435 million now available in work-study funds would be increased by \$150 million.

The Senate bill, on the other hand, would allow families a tax credit of up to \$500 a student per year, which could be applied to children in private elementary and secondary schools as well as in college. The Carter proposal would not provide any relief for families paying out-of-pocket tuition for private elementary and high schools.

White House officials are said to be concerned about the estimated \$4 billion in tax revenues that would be lost under the tuition credit plan. What is at stake, however, is much more than a dollar-and-cents issue. At the heart of the debate is the question of whether a growing national problem is to be addressed by the expansion of the federal bureaucratic apparatus or through the initiative of private family resources. Education is only one of the testing grounds for this policy debate. In the area of welfare reform, where the administration favors direct cash benefits, HEW secretary Califano has strongly protested the welfare plan proposed by the House Ways and Means Committee (the House plan would maintain the existing categorical approach to

meet welfare needs, including the continuation of a separate food stamp program). Califano says "there is no reason to believe that the poor cannot manage their incomes as well as other Americans." Califano is right. Yet, on the question of tuition aid, the administration apparently believes that Washington, rather than the family, is the better manager of a student's education. Thus, while the president talks about the importance of the family and of trimming the federal bureaucracy, he proposes a plan that not only would increase the amount of federal paperwork but would also continue to deprive families of a more active role in the education of their children. Once again, official conduct belies administration rhetoric.

By excluding relief for families with students in primary and secondary schools, the Carter proposal fails to address another national problem of sizable proportions—miseducation in the public schools. The tuition tax credit plan would allow families of many of these "captive students" the opportunity to seek alternative instruction for their children—presumably at schools with a demonstrated track record at getting the job done. It would also give some relief to those working and middle-class families who already labor under the burdens imposed by "double taxation" when they send their children to alternative schools. The Carter plan would give these families nothing. Further, in limiting assistance to institutions of higher education, the administration plan ignores the fact that most of the damage in our public schools occurs at the primary and secondary levels. The Packwood-Moynihan bill has the advantage of viewing the problem holistically and empowering families to make choices at every stage of the learning process.

One reason many families want to choose private learning institutions is that they reinforce and transmit religious and moral values, in contrast to the diet of "moral neutrality" now fed in most public schools. The desire on the part of many inner-city families, in particular, for a value-enriched curriculum with its beneficial side-effects is keenly underscored by the willingness of some of those parents to sacrifice clothing and even food to secure what they regard as a quality education for their children.

It is good that the Carter administration has come to recognize the growing financial difficulties experienced by middle and working-class families in providing education for their children. The proposed expansion of aid to the most economically disadvantaged and raising the limit on income for federal guaranteed loans are steps to be applauded.

But the administration's plan to increase the number of those eligible for federal grants represents a curious step backward from its earlier stand. The most effective way to ensure the vitality of the family is not by expanding the "welfare-class mentality" by adding the middle class to the list of those on the dole. The family will be strengthened as

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?"

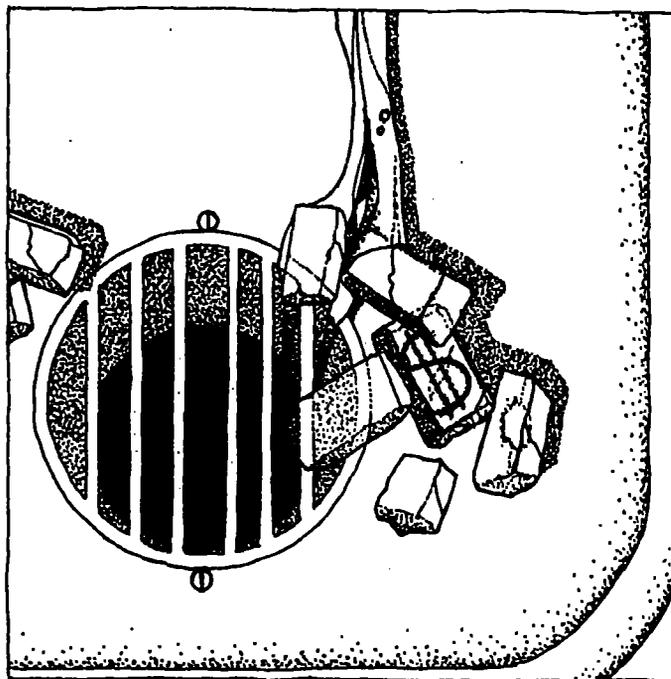
I answered: "Small is beautiful; I figure on starting with a request for \$2,500 to \$7,500."

"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.

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