

Opinion



'Participating citizens' thinking for most of 'politically inert'

In theory, democracy is "government of the people, by the people, for the people," as Lincoln so eloquently put it. But, in actual practice, this just isn't so.

Government "by" the people assumes that the people are participating in government, at least by casting their votes. But, in the last presidential election, voter turnout was down to 53.9%, the lowest in 20 years.

Maybe Elmo Roper was right. Maybe the vast majority of people in our country are, in his words, "politically inert."

"These are people," said Roper, "who are not very much at home in the world of ideas, at least when ideas are presented to them in raw or undiluted form. They seldom



Lucien Coleman

Things That Matter

are active in their communities, and they rarely speak out on any subject."

Roper also described a much smaller group of Americans whom he called "participating citizens."

These are people who vote with some regularity, contribute money or work in local and national campaigns, belong to organizations active in discussions on current affairs and problems.

Unfortunately, many "participating citizens," who tend to be more active politically, are active

for the wrong reasons.

For instance, they lose their peripheral vision and become single-issue thinkers. They'll support a candidate because he favors a particular constitutional amendment or a specific weapons system, or because his skin is or isn't the right color, or because he (or she) wears trousers or skirts.

What often happens is that the "participating citizen" type becomes the "expert" to whom the "politically inert" turn for guidance on social, political, and economic issues.

The self-styled expert might be a local labor leader, the pastor of a small church congregation, or the most vocal guy in the barbershop or tavern. His political views will be adopted by the others because they are far too busy watching the baseball pennant races to think through the issues themselves.

Officer testifies on military waste

Ernest Fitzgerald, an Air Force official famous for revelations about waste in weapons procurement, recently told a Senate committee that \$30 billion in taxpayer money is being wasted.

He says the military establishment continues to frustrate his efforts to determine proper costs. The Air Force officer was fired after he revealed shocking cost overruns on the C-5A transport aircraft 16 years ago.

Fitzgerald fought his case in the courts for 10 years and finally beat the Air Force, and a court ordered him reinstated, and the military establishment to provide him with the data he needs to check on costs and overpricing.

Hospital Cost: People using the hospitals these days find that the cost has greatly increased.

According to reports, cost shifting to private patients will increase to an estimated \$8.8 billion this year, according to James A. Dorsch, Washington council for the Health Insurance Association of America.

This is an increase of \$3 billion from 1982 and an estimated \$1.6 billion more than the 1983 figure, he told the Joint Economic Committee.

We read that in an attempt to hold down federal expenditures, Congress last year enacted a "prospective payment" system for Medicare.

Rather than pay charges levied by hospitals after treatment, the system predetermines the hospital payments on the basis of "diagnosis related groups" for which fees are determined in advance.

The most sensible solution to the problem, the Joint Economic Committee was told, is to have each state create its own prospective payment program—but have it apply to all patients, private as well as governmental.

Dorsch also stressed the need for federal legislation that would extend prospective pricing to all payers in any state that does not enact its own program within four years after passage of such a bill.

CAMERAS BANNED ... Cameras and tape recorders were banned at a preliminary hearing in the McMartin Pre-School child molestation case by Los Angeles



Cliff Blue

People and Issues

Municipal Court Judge Aviva K. Bobb. Judge Bobb's order to ban the cameras comes just two weeks after the California Judicial Council approved the permanent use of cameras in state court rooms. However, the rule allows judges to ban cameras in the interests of justice or "to protect the rights of the parties."

LIBEL PROTECTION ... New York's highest court has extended a reporter's protection from libel suits to include good faith misstatements about a person's private life made in the larger context of a story or public interest.

REINSTATED ... In Washington, D.C., an attorney should not have been removed from a case because he gave a newspaper information that had earlier been ruled inadmissible evidence, the U.S. Court of appeals decided in Washington, D.C.

DENTAL FEES ... We read that New York and Los Angeles vie for the average dental charges among seven cities surveyed in 1982 and 1983 by the Health Insurance Association of America.

The lowest charges among the seven cities were found in Omaha—the cost of an initial oral exam in Omaha was less than half the charge in Los Angeles. The most pronounced difference was in the cost of a porcelain crown. In 1983, the cost was \$460 in New York compared with \$268 in Omaha.

PRESSURE TACTICS ... Of the estimated 37 million Americans with high blood pressure, 50% to 70% are keeping it under control with drugs and diet, says the Health Association. A decade ago, only 15% to 20% controlled their high blood pressure.

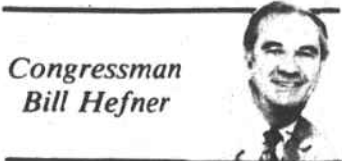
HALF DRUNK ... Government reports state half of the alcohol consumed in the United States each year is drunk by one-tenth of the population, according to the Health Insurance Association of America.

Law may aid disabled

If you are a disabled person, a bill is now passed by the U.S. House and the Senate that would stop the government from cutting your Social Security disability benefits before you've had a chance to recover.

I co-sponsored and I support this bill. Its major goal is to allow a disabled person to continue getting benefits unless there is a definite improvement in his or her medical condition.

The White House has been taking people off the disability roles even before they recovered from their ailment. I think this is very unfair to all disabled Americans including many senior citizens. Apparently, I'm not alone in this thinking because some state governors and courts believe that the White House's policy on this matter is not what the Social Security law intended.



Congressman Bill Hefner

The whole issue started when Congress asked the White House to begin reviewing each case a little closer following reports that 20% of those getting benefits were ineligible.

The problem is that the White House just went too far, so this bill is meant to restrain them.

Another important part of the measure says you must continue getting your benefits even while you are appealing the loss of those benefits.

So, if it becomes law it would become effective immediately and would affect all cases being processed at the time.

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7 OZ. TUB

Plumrose Ham
99¢
4 OZ. PACKAGE

Kraft Orange Juice
99¢
32 OZ. QUART

Coke **mello yello**
TAB **Diet Coke**
99¢
2 LITER PLASTIC NON-RETURNABLE

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All the way Hot Dogs
2/\$1.00
Barbecue Sandwich
\$1.09

Doritos Tortilla Chips
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Doritos
Tortilla Chips
toasted corn

Hamm's Beer
12 OZ. 6 PACK
\$1.59
SIX 12 OZ. BOTTLES

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