

# The Dallas Post

## EDITORIALS

### Are lower taxes worth handing our kids a \$5 trillion IOU?

It is open season on taxes, as leaders of both parties vie for the spotlight with their new-found commitment to the "middle class," firmly convinced the lesson of the mid-term elections was that Americans want to contribute less to a smaller government, and could care less about the world they leave their children. If it wasn't so sad, it would almost be laughable how quickly President Clinton and Majority Leader-to-be Richard Gephardt put forward hastily-conceived tax cut proposals.

Not to be outdone, Republican Phil Gramm of Texas rushed to print with the simplest — and dumbest — plan, to double the tax deduction for young children from \$2,500 to \$5,000.

Economists were shocked at the race to lower federal taxes because they know the prospect of getting spending cuts to offset them is remote at best. The wisest observers asked why tax cuts should be proposed at all, given that the national debt continues to grow. Why, they asked, not cut spending and leave taxes alone, thus reducing the annual deficit. After all, the Federal Reserve is convinced the economy should be restrained, not stimulated.

Those unruly voters didn't cooperate either, as a Wall Street Journal poll showed nearly three times as many Americans are more concerned with the growing debt than with high taxes.

Potomac tax-cut fever shows that while a different party will control Congress for the first time in 40 years, it isn't because they're any smarter or more responsible than their predecessors. Reasonable citizens, and there are a lot of them, are horrified by the \$5 trillion I.O.U. we will hand our children if these nonsensical attempts to buy votes continue, and succeed. Ask most any parent if he or she would be proud to hand each of their children a bill for \$40,000 owed because of the parents' irresponsibility, and you'll get a resounding no. But that is exactly where the nation's finances now stand, and they're getting worse.

But responsibility has become a rare commodity in Washington, and here's why. Elections draw a bit more than half the eligible voters to the polls. That means a candidate will win if he or she can attract the votes of more than half of the voters, or approximately 26 percent of those eligible. Crafty politicians have figured out who is more likely to vote, and aim their message at those people, knowing all the while the promises they're making to gain office are damaging to the nation.

Make no mistake about it; with rare exceptions, every representative and senator in Congress knows the national debt is a ticking time bomb, with its clock speeding up each year the huge baby boom generation moves closer to retirement. They might even care that future generations will pay an extraordinarily heavy price for our selfishness, but not quite enough to tell the truth.

It is well known that relatively painless measures taken now will avert a major financial disaster 20 to 30 years from now. But each year we wait — and we've already postponed taking our medicine for several years — increases the discomfort that must be accepted if we are to pass on even a semblance of present-day prosperity to our children.

What's the solution? The same one that has always been available in this remarkable democracy — voter turnout. Until 70, 80 or 90 percent of Americans turn out for elections, candidates for office will continue to lie to us, promising painless solutions to difficult problems. And if we continue to elect them, we'll deserve our fate.

### Happy New Year

The optimism content of the human spirit is remarkable. Each December, after a year-long orgy of bad news, whining and complaints, the vast majority of Americans look back and see mostly the good things that occurred in their lives, then look ahead with anticipation. This year has been no different, and we hope you are able to celebrate the coming of 1995 with brave thoughts of a better future for you and your families.

For our part, we vow to print balanced news coverage that reflects our readers real lives, and not an overdramatized caricature designed only to attract attention to the messenger.

### Letters, columns and editorials

The Dallas Post attempts to publish opinions on a variety of topics in many forms.

Editorials, which are the opinion of the management of The Post, appear on the editorial page. Any artwork represents the opinion of the cartoonist, and columns are the opinion of the author.

Letters to the editor are welcome and will be published, subject to the following guidelines:

- Letters should not exceed 500 words.
- No writer may have more than one letter published during a 30-day period, except as a reply to another letter.
- Letters must be signed and include the writer's home town and a telephone number for verification.
- Names will be withheld only if there exists a clear threat to the writer.
- The Post retains the right to accept or reject any letter, and to edit letters for grammar and spelling, as well as to eliminate any libel, slander or objectionable wording.

In addition to letters, we welcome longer pieces that may run as columns. The author or subject's relevance to the Back Mountain will be the prime consideration when selecting material for publication.



### Tying red ribbons on a tree for for sober driving

The College Misericordia chapter of BACCHUS, a peer network for alcohol and health education, held a holiday Tree of Life pledge at the Dallas campus recently.

Attending were, from left, Cyndi Hrinko, BACCHUS secretary; Eric Chase, COPE (College Outreach Prevention Education) coordinator; Maryalice La Manna, BACCHUS vice president; Neda Albertson, BACCHUS mocktail manager; Sr. Jean Messaros, RSM, interim dean of students; and Corrie Canouse, BACCHUS president.

### Letters

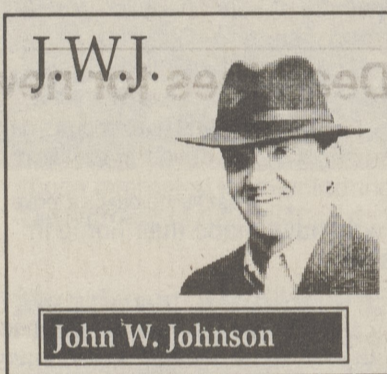
### Metric system: neither logical or necessary

Editor:  
Ordinarily I agree with Alene Case but her December 21st article *The metric system: easy, logical and very necessary* was only off-base by that last adjective. The metric system is no more "necessary" than a common universal language. Whose or which shall it be, Esperanto, English, or maybe Latin?  
Following her logic, we might conclude that a universal standard for telling time, such as the military or 24 hour clock, should be adopted. I might suggest using hundredths of an hour in place of minutes, which certainly makes

it easier to subtract 1892 from 0308 than 6:55 PM from 3:05 AM, if that ever became necessary.  
Further, let's not leave out money. Talk about difficult conversions. Did you ever try to convert lira to marks, pesos, rupees or zloty?  
The entertainment value of the article was well worth the time it took to read it and I found fault only with some of the statements that are less than accurate. For instance, "The United States is the only country in the world (as far as I know) not using the metric system of measurement." is not quite true. Although the metric

system is not commonly used at the grocery store, on gas pumps, or in weather forecasts, it's certainly been in use in hospitals, the sciences, and in many other areas ever since I can remember.  
To tout the metric systems as the panacea for all that is wrong with American (U.S.) industry, culture, and history gives too much credit to the rest of the world. I've always thought that it very well could have been all the other marchers out of step, but Johnny.

John P. Bergevin  
Dallas



A recent Associated Press story read like this:

A teenager sitting with five friends made good on a threat to shoot the next person who spoke, police said.

Nina Scott, 14, was killed on her grandmother's porch by a shot to the forehead.

"It was totally senseless; it was horseplay," said Police Chief Floyd Van Horn.

"There was no physical altercation. There was no verbal argument. You had six young people sitting on the porch talking."

Kevin Barnes, 18, was charged with murder (October 19) and was being held in lieu of \$100,000 bail.

Scott's Aunt, Tina Coleman, said the group told her that Barnes pulled the gun on two of them and said, "I'm going to shoot whoever says the next word."

More's the pity that the preceding is a true story. As it was also true recently when 10 and 12 year-old boys murdered a tiny Chicago boy because the five-year-old victim refused to steal candy for them. He was murdered by being dropped four floors.

And while this column is normally devoted to something other than movie reviews, a currently showing film speaks to both of the above incidents.

To tremendous critical and audience acclaim, the movie *Pulp Fiction* recently opened around the country. The film—and its director—Quentin Tarantino,—have been heralded with words such as "new, innovative and starkly brilliant." These and other such adjectives flow wildly around this latest Hollywood darling.

Tarantino's chief plaudits have come from those who say he's a master of dialogue. But what does he have to say, other than repeating verbatim what can be heard on virtually every inner-city street corner?

That he says it with the same capturing style as the crisp and penetrating dialogue often found in films of the 30's and 40's (*The Maltese Falcon* comes to mind), mark Tarantino, at best as a borrower of that great style, and suggests why at least part of the

### Pulp fiction at its trashiest — must life imitate art?

audience values what he's done. From this chair, *Pulp Fiction*, is also one of the few ever successful attempts to film a play...and to keep the teasingly close proximity between audience and performers that rarely translates to film, and conversely almost always makes the theater a particularly satisfying experience.

And what Tarantino says in his film/play is three things:

- Senseless violence is cool.
- Senseless violence is something at which we should be, and at the same time, dispassionate and falling-down amused.
- Senseless violence doesn't have to make sense.

Some say that senseless violence/humor in American entertainment began with the *Three Stooges*, and graduated to cartoons with the likes of *Mighty Mouse* and later *He-Man and She-Ra*.

Of course, this is said because cultural memory extends only to the last time it was titillated, i.e., had everyone forgotten the Romans feeding Christians to the lions? Whether or not this was filmed begs the question of its senselessness.

Tarantino is an obviously gifted filmmaker who—and because he has no training—apparently doesn't realize that Hollywood, and the audiences it serves, are simply using those gifts to achieve yet another titillation; yet another intellectual high; yet another collective rape of the mind in the name of art.

*Pulp Fiction's* premise is that it has no premise; and, like the juvenility of its creator it revels in that fact. Slices of life and death are served up as so much mirth. Each scene, and the horrific violence it implies or actually shows, is treated with the banality of a backyard barbecue in Des Moines.

We are served a drug overdose, preceded by learning that the hit man whose heroin his boss's wife has just snorted thinking it was cocaine did not, in fact, have her feet rubbed by one of her husband's best friends, thereby causing the husband to toss the friend off the balcony...maybe.

(And this is all in the first 30 minutes).

We are also treated to a male rape, at which one of the rapists is skewered with a sword, followed by the accidental (and nothing in this film is accidental) shooting and showering of the inside of a car with the brains of another young man...and the audiences are laughing right on cue at each

bloody and/or mentally violent act. Is it because the audience is embarrassed at those chained to the wall in their own minds, or is this senseless violence genuinely amusing? (Parenthetically, Tarantino couldn't be more sexist in his portrayal of women).

*Pulp Fiction's* supporters will argue that the film mirrors (as opposed to causes) the elements it portrays. And the film obviously did not cause the two incidents cited above...not directly, at least.

But when a society loses grip on the simple reality that death is, in fact, a reality then it's no surprise that senseless violence starts to make sense.

Many Americans would say that such films—and to use the vernacular—are 'bad' and should be banned. The Supreme Court has sought to reconcile those concerns with First Amendment rights by saying that while you might disagree with the contents of a book, play, movie or photographic exhibit, and might find the contents of same to be offensive, immoral or whatever, the U.S. Constitution does not give you, as a citizen, of the government the right to decide the beliefs and habits of others.

The First Amendment is of paramount importance. It is, in fact, the basic tenet upon which our forefathers founded this nation, a tenet consistently upheld by the Supreme Court.

And while it's clear from this chair that *Pulp Fiction* is yet a further decline in society which will not heed Ayn Rand's advice: "If you would destroy greatness, do not attack it; merely elevate mediocrity"...at the same time, it is through the protection of Tarantino's—and whether mirrored or perpetrated—kind of sickness that any kind of sanity prevails.

We, in fact, define, cherish and promote the middle by protecting the extremes. And in protecting Tarantino's vision, however perverted it might be, we are preserving for ourselves the right to be wrong; indeed, the right to be heard at all.

All we can do then is speak out, and promote other values. That takes time and energy, and will not be fueled by the hot air of complaint.

As such, don't see this as a complaint. Hear it as a request: Don't see *Pulp Fiction*. Don't glorify and finance this—at best—juvenile act of mental masturbation.

Can senseless violence on film really be fun?

### Only yesterday

#### 60 Years Ago - Jan. 4, 1935 SNOWSTORM CLOGS AREA ROADS

The Public Service Commission will meet at Luzerne County Court House this morning for its second hearing in the case of the Dallas Borough Taxpayers Association vs. Dallas Water Co. It will hear two reports which it ordered made at the first hearing of complaints early in November.

Taxliens totaling \$751,781.021 against all county tax collectors were filed this week with the Prothonotary by Luzerne County Commissioners. The liens represent the balances due the county on 1934 duplicates.

Heavy snow drifts on side roads in this section handicapped school buses carrying children to resumption of classes after the holidays on Wednesday and yesterday.

#### 50 Years Ago - Dec. 29, 1944 PVT. MISSON KILLED IN ACTION IN GERMANY

Pvt. Donald Misson, 27, member of a Tank Destroyer Battalion that has seen action in France, Luxembourg and Germany was killed in action in Germany, December 11, according to a War Department message received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Misson, Main St., Dallas.

1945 Thumbnail Outlook: Farmers' cash income will approximate that of 1944 which was \$20 billion; both bituminous and anthracite mining will run 5% below a year ago; Iron and Steel will decline 10%, a similar drop in prospect for chemical manufacturers. Lumber output will increase 5%. Industrial employment will be 7% less and factory payrolls will decline 10%. Greatest single expansion will come in construction and building. Look for a sharp drop in retail trade especially in luxury items.

#### 40 Years Ago - Dec. 30, 1954 COAL GAS AFFECTS LAVELLE FAMILY

Granville Sowdon, Back Mountain Lumber & Coal Co. and Lawrence Updyke, Dallas Hardware & Supply, announced yesterday that an agreement has been reached for the sale of Dallas Hardware & Supply. The amount of the offer was not disclosed. Final papers are to be completed in order that new management can take possession by January 3.

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Lavelle and their infant had a narrow escape from death early Tuesday when their home on Elizabeth Street filled with coal gas fumes from a hot air furnace. Persistent crying of the baby sleeping in another room awakened Lavelle, who staggered to his feet and realized the air was filled with poison fumes. Baby and father needed no oxygen. James Bessecker and Charles Flack, using fire company rusesucator, worked over Mrs. Lavelle for 15 minutes. She is being observed for possible toxic after effects.

Some newsworthy items for 1954 that happened here: An active Dallas Community Ambulance Association served its community by getting funds for the ambulance in 1954. Everything was fine until the new ambulance was wrecked. Undaunted the association has procured another ambulance that now stands ready; Miss Frances Dorrance was awarded the District Service Citation by the American Legion and was cited for her services to the community; Symbolic of the trend for better schools in this region was the discontinuance of one-room schools in Ross Township and the building of the new and modern Ross Township Elementary School.

#### 30 Years Ago - Dec. 29, 1964 RIG ACCIDENT TIES UP DALLAS TRAFFIC

Mr. and Mrs. Courtney Carkeek, Pikes Creek, will celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary on New Year's Day. The couple are the parents of three children; eight grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. George W. Belles, Dallas, celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on Christmas Day. They are the parents of four children; 13 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

A tractor-trailer rig carrying new cars came apart on Memorial Highway south of the Dallas traffic light yesterday morning but did no damage. The "fifth wheel," which is the disc on the tractor that the trailer rotates on, somehow broke loose and the trailer fell onto its dolly wheels. Caddie LaBar's wrecker and a borrowed railroad jack helped lift the trailer back on the truck after a new 5th wheel was procured.

You could get - Country style spare ribs, 35¢ lb.; turkeys, 11-17 lbs., 35¢ lb.;

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