

Nicholas Von Hoffman

One vote for capital punishment

WASHINGTON—This month the Supreme Court is going to decide if it's constitutionally cruel and unusual punishment to execute the 675 men and women under sentence of death and waiting. With Blackmun, Burger, Powell and Rehnquist, they're not going to have to wait much longer. This man thinks they're all going to sizzle like chicken-fried steak. They should, too. All the arguments against capital punishment are wrong. For example, the proponents of mercy say that nations like Great Britain, West Germany, Italy, all the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, etc., etc., have long, long since given up hanging, drying and chopping. What they don't say is that these are all second-rate powers. Russia, on the other hand, has capital punishment. So what the question boils down to is, are we going to be humane or are we going to continue to lead the free world?

Not enough murderers

These life-above-law types like to tell you that in the nine states where capital punishment is prohibited the murder rate is lower than in the 41 where it's allowed. They think that proves the electric chair doesn't deter would-be murderers. Falacious reasoning. All it actually shows is that in those nine states there aren't enough murderers to justify taking steps to deter them. As to the cruel and unusual line, well, we've been executing people for centuries.

It's only since 1968 that crook-loving judges who sympathize with the throat-slitting rapists, have stayed all executions until we now have this unbelievable backlog. These 675 plus are standing in the way of prison reform. They're taking up space in cells that we could use to rehabilitate prisoners. Not only that but they're a drag on the taxpayers. Rich people never get sentenced to death; it's only the poor and the black—more than 50 per cent of the nogoodniks waiting to get juiced are black—so you know if they're allowed to live they'll be a drain on the taxpayer.

But if Chief Justice Burger gives the word it's okay to zap 'em, how are we going to do it? Let's hope it's not two or three at a time. President Nixon should set aside a date and proclaim it as Lawnorder Day. Give it the full treatment. Breakfast prayers with Norman Vincent Peale and Billy Graham. Appoint a national chairman. Bob Hope would be a good one but he seems otherwise engaged... and he does lack the experience of Col. Sanders, who's got the know-how to fry them all at once. The Colonel would probably be adverse to the job and wish to stick to chickens, but, if he could possibly be persuaded, he would be a natural.

National fish fry

Everybody loves the Colonel. As the master of ceremonies, he could turn Lawnorder Day into a national family fish

fry. People would love it. We're on a nostalgia kick, and what could be more reminiscent of the way America use to be? Did you know that at the last public execution in Kentucky back in 1936, 20,000 people turned out to watch?

It's really sumptin' to watch, too. Real box office. Better than Ali-Frazier or a hockey game. Here's a description of the gassing of Luis Jose Monge, the last person to be executed in the United States, by the state of Colorado, in June, 1967:

"Even after unconsciousness is declared officially, the prisoner's body continues to fight for life. He coughs and groans. The lips make little pouting motions resembling the motions made by a goldfish in his bowl. The head strains back and then slowly sinks down to the chest. And in Monge's case, the arms, although tightly bound to the chair, strained at the straps, and the hands clawed torturously as if the prisoner were struggling for air."

Odor of burning flesh

Electrocutions are good show biz, too. Former Warden Lawes of Sing Sing said they generally go like this: "... The body leaps as if to break the strong leather straps that hold it. Sometimes a thin gray wisp of smoke pushes itself out from under the helmet that holds the head electrode, followed by the faint odor of burning flesh." The eyes pop out of the sockets a lot, and sometimes the condemned fight or beg for mercy. You can't beat it for

drama.

That's why Lawnorder Day ought to be televised. Col. Sanders could operate from justice central. Assuming he isn't a cry-baby, humanitarian crime-lover, he might, for this occasion, wear his white plantation suit or we could dress him up as a chef with the toque blanche straight up on top of his head.

Lawnorder Day should be handled like pro football. Put the executions in the big stadiums and charge admission. They should be staggered by time zone, the way they do on Sunday afternoon so if you're not lucky enough to buy a ticket you can see it at home on TV all afternoon and half the night. Sponsors'll line up to put their money on this one. Cars, feminine hygiene sprays, insurance companies, toy manufacturers, but we won't allow the razor blade people to advertise. Instead we'll give their spots over to public service advertising... ecology, U.S. Savings Bonds. Buy a hunk of America, and a message reminding us not to forget our zip codes.

The profits will be equally divided between the wars on cancer, emphysema, birth defects, nephritis and multiple sclerosis. It's not every day you can fight crime and the dread cripplers and killers of mankind at the same time.

Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service

Letters

For the cigarette Tax

On January 18th, students on this campus will have an opportunity to directly affect their own education—by voting for or against the cigarette tax. If the tax is voted down there could be, in the words of that great American (who we all know and love), Spiro T. Agnew, catastrophic cataclysmic consequences. Some of the possible consequences that would affect students are: 1) a possible increase in tuition, 2) a possible cutback in faculty personnel and a curtailment of new faculty appointments, (which would serve to seriously restrict any "new" ideas coming into the school and into the curriculum) and 3) a possible reduction of student services, (cutbacks in E.M.U., work study, cultural issues, concerts etc.).

For my non-smokers, the only cost involved is taking the time to vote; and when faced with the possible consequences, I would hope that this would be an easy decision. For my fellow smokers, the decision is a bit more complicated. But I believe that if you asked yourselves which would cost you more, and which is more important, 5 cents a pack; or increased tuition, decreased quality of education, and decreased student services, then you would come to the same conclusion that I did—that the smoking tax must be supported.

So, smokers and non-smokers, the cigarette tax is going to be affecting us directly, and we here have the power for the first time to at least partially control our own education. I urge you all to turn

out on the 18th and support the cigarette tax.

A.S.U.O. Senate
Off Campus No. 4

Against cigarette tax

Emotional appeals on behalf of the sales tax seem to be leading most students to the conclusion that passage of the tax and stability in tuition rates march hand in hand down the rosy road of life.

Perhaps so. But the fact remains the cigarette tax is the last attempt by the Legislature and many Oregon voters to maintain and support a dying tax system. Passage of the tax may keep tuition rates

down for the immediate future... but as sure as the University needs money raises will be forthcoming.

A negative vote in the coming election will bring the entire state tax system down and force the legislature to formulate a new system which incorporates property tax relief with solid statewide school support and increased industrial and corporate taxation.

There is absolutely no doubt that a new tax structure will happen. The longer the old system is patched together with thin string and chewing gum, the harder the transition will be in the future.

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