

15 June 68

Dear Mrs Meagher,

Pardon me, but I have just popped open a can of beer. Nothing here will require an answer, though, so please relax!

Many thanks for luring me into subscribing to TMO with the remark about how TMO somehow manages to offend everybody. Seems that even Bertrand Russell wasn't immune, and I note unhappily that he has suddenly dropped from the TMO Board of Sponsors without explanation. It puzzles me, but then everything puzzles me.

TMO turned out to be such an extremely unusual, fascinating, One-of-a-kind thing that one night I was sitting down worrying about it when I suddenly snapped my fingers & did it: I placed an order for all the back issues from Jan '64. They have arrived, and I am in the middle of reading it all now. The very existence of TMO puzzles me. I mean, I'm not sure I have it figured out yet how come nobody yet has shot Mr Arnoni after all these years. Maybe the answer is simple & uncomplicated - like some unwritten rule of thumb that says nobody shoots him until his circulation reaches 100,000 or something. On the other side, I have practically completely discounted the idea that he might be a tool. - He says much too much more than he might need to say if that were the case. Possibly it has to do with the nature of the subscribers - the likelihood that very few people would subscribe to TMO unless they were already largely in sympathy with it. ~~###~~ Etc... Anyway, I am happy to be a subscriber.

Am pleased that while TMO points out the degeneration of our own government (even to the point of mentioning in black & white that our elections are sham!), it also does not hesitate - at least not beyond a certain degree - in swatting down other governments including the Soviets. So far he hasn't taken a swat at either Cuba or Red China, but then I'm not yet thru with the back issues. But what he does have to say about these two countries, that I've read so far, is certainly a refreshing variation from our party line here in the USA.

There is a thing which has puzzled me for some time, though, concerning governments and their people#, a thing which nobody ever seems to write about - but which maybe Orwell might have had he not suddenly died of his long-neglected lung ailment just after his 1984 went to press. It has to do governments producing durable durables for their people. Other things being equal, I just can't think of any easier or better way for a communist type government to improve the material wealth of its people than by giving attention to making their consumer-durables actually durable. If it were the intent of the government to do so, that is. An example might be electric light bulbs. Within a ten-minute walking distance of your own address there are probably a scattered number of old carbon filament Edison lamps still lighting tenement hallways. I saw lots of them 20 years ago while living in NY, and as they were for the most part some 20 years old then, I'd guess there would still be survivors to be found. Granted, you get "more light per kilowatt hour" from the modern incandescents than from ancient ones. In fact, taking it to an extreme, photoflood bulbs are extremely efficient in this regard. The main thing wrong with them is that <sup>they</sup> don't last more than 2 or 3 hours. The point: for any one community (depending only on the cost of producing electricity for that community) there will be ~~#####~~ some optimum choice of light bulb - a choice based on the most economical thing for the consumer in terms of what he pays for electricity and what he will have to pay over the long run in light bulb replacement. And as it is a practically zero-cost procedure for a light bulb factory to alter the specifications of light bulb filaments, the question is whether or not the most "welfare type" governments you can think of go to the trouble of providing such light bulbs in their factories. If they do, I have certainly missed hearing about it. Perhaps I ought not be too puzzled about <sup>hearing about</sup> any such

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thing if ~~####~~ it were already a part of the program in these "other" countries - but still, if ~~##~~ I were to find myself in the government of any such "other" country I think I'd want to break my leg seeing to it that everybody else in the world got to know about this electric light bulb bit we are doing for our citizens, and that we are doing it at zero cost to anybody while in the meantime improving the lot of the average citizen - even if only to the tune of \$1 or \$2 or \$5 a year. But what government anywhere is boasting about such things as this?

Lyle Stuart's INDEPENDENT (I think less than zero about Lyle Stuart, but still do subscribe to his paper) mentions that Cuba now has free telephone service for its people. Fine, I guess, though I don't know anything about the details of it. A more convincing boast would be, say, something nice they might have to say about the light bulbs they have down there in Cuba - and Cuba is certainly large enough to warrant its having its own light bulb factory.

Here I got stuck on light bulbs, but I needn't have. Probably all you have to do is swivel your head around right now, wherever you are sitting, and find plenty of examples. If you are reading this at the kitchen table, maybe you could have a real field day just looking around yourself.

I'm not light-bulbing you in terms of "what's wrong with the USA", not in that sense. For better or worse, we do seem to have evolved into this ~~####~~ economic state in which we would all suddenly collapse as a nation if everybody suddenly started demanding durable durables, refusing to buy anything else, and demanding to have durable durables available to us at the same percentage markup as the customary non-durables which are ordinarily provided. It is, I mean, somehow understandable in our own economy that General Motors would not want to sell the populace on the advantages of each family owning a one-lung diesel runabout designed for a 125 year life. What is something less understandable, though, is that I've never yet gotten even so much as a whisper of a hint that any "up & coming" nation anywhere (the Red ones, <sup>even</sup>) are any more willing than General Motors to promote the advantages of such things. And yet the Red nations, if they are for real, seemingly ought to be the very ones who should put durable durables to work for them if it is in the first place their intent to improve the lot of the people they represent. When they make electric toasters, if there is a demand for them, do they make them in the style of 1925 so that they will last forever, or do they produce 1968-1/2 models which require a wet nurse to keep them going? And if there is this willingness & ability on the part of the citizens to purchase toasters, and it turns out that the public demand is for 1968-1/2 supertoasters containing 78 moving parts & guaranteed for 15 days, then where are these "truly Red" leaders who, as I get it, ought to be spreading the word to people how stupid they are for feeling the need for a Uranium coated model 14 toaster with 8 push-buttons? But, simplifying; whether or not the 8 push-button models are available in these Red countries - are there not also available 1925 model toasters, at ~~#####~~ some price related somehow to manufacturing costs, and which might be purchased by citizens who might have in mind to pass the toaster down from mother to daughter or a couple or three generations? Or isn't durable durables in the scheme of things anywhere? Not even in the Red countries?

Don't get shook up with puzzlement about how come I'm addressing this letter to you instead of to my congressman (whatever his name is). Probably Arnoni doesn't cry on his congressman's shoulder either, and for the same reason: simple lack of faith that he might be represented by doing so. My notion is (pardon me while I pop open another can of beer)... is that if anybody has anything left anymore it is only by addressing himself to some other private individual who he sees for himself ~~##~~ is

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now & then able to get into print, and then addressing himself to that person with the hope that at least some part of his problem will somehow be reflected, passed on, or at least not completely lost in any case.

If I should have to single out one single hope here, I would hope to have you turn out to be what you seem to be at the moment: An honest person. (Do the same for me, please.) I have the habit of switching judgements from moment to moment all the time, according to whatever "information" I last read about anything. Seems that you might be more stable than this. I am sure that if I ever wrote a book about anything I would end up seeing that every chapter would vary at some different angle from whatever central viewpoint I thought I had. A thought I have is in marveling at how people everywhere, in general, never seem to switch back & forth in any basic opinions in accord with "new information". It might be that it is a more common thing than is apparent, I don't know. Maybe it is just a simple fact of life with Published People that they lose their publishability, their charm, if they reveal themselves as anything other than Strictly Consistent at all times. My gawsh, even Bertrand Russell, who is something like 300 years old now, goes to the dunking stool regularly because every ten or twenty years or so he is saying something he might not have said when he was in short pants. Seems almost that one of the rules for whatever game is being played is that contestants become automatically eliminated whenever they come into possession of fresh information of a different kind and then make the mistake of trying to present it. As per Philip Wylie's thing which he wrote long ago, interpreting it for him, it seems almost impossible for people to consider ideas as being entities within themselves, and apart from their origin. It seems almost that we are somehow ~~taught~~ taught to consider the origin of an idea first, before even going on to read the idea itself ~~before~~ before forming an opinion. An unhappy thought is that writers who are flexible in the head are just not admissible to any system. And especially in this age, apparently, and maybe not in any other age either for all I know.

My specialty, you see, is being confused. It seems to have been that way with me for going on to 2 years now, as per various reasons - some of which I've given you in past letters. If this is not a solitary thing, then maybe it is a trend. And if it is a trend, then maybe you might welcome some first hand evidence of it. Guess you will understand, I hope, why I am seeming to treat you like a Congressman. At very least you seem to be doing more than any "elected" congressman would do: publish yourself in disagreement with the W/R, plus doing it in such a way that critic-critic could not very easily attack your work.

Have recently had it come to dawn on me, at long last, some part of what might be among your reasons for seeming to want Garrison castrated, or shot, or both, or whatever. Unless I haven't got it right yet, not having read you right, I get the idea of it all now, finally. (How's that again?) As I'm seeing it all now, as of this writing, it seems apparent that no matter whether Garrison wins or loses - in either case the rest of us would all lose. Stupid of me not to have seen it earlier, but it would be a natural fact that if Garrison "won" then the prize would be having 200,000,000 USA citizens, or damned near all of them, sitting around at the breakfast table telling one another "My gawsh - so that is the answer to the mystery! Well, I'm sure glad they finally rounded up that motley assortment of freaks down there in New Orleans, together with those Cuban Nationals & all. Would you believe it, (addressing wife, children, mother-in-law, etc, over kitchen table): for a while there I was actually almost getting to think that some more ~~sinister~~ sinister scheme might have

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been

at work, something even involving the willing cooperation of certain groups, agents, agencies within our own government!" "Whew! Glad that one is over & done with! And say, did you hear that lovely speech by the President before I got home last night? I heard it on the car radio - and do you know what he said? The man actually almost guaranteed us that Peace might even come in Our Own Lifetime. I heard it with my own ears. How grateful we should ~~##~~ be for such news! And on top of it all, yet, we have just learned (thanks to Garrison) that while President Kennedy was indeed shot down on schedule ~~##~~ through some ~~###~~ conspiracy, at least we can be happy in knowing now that the conspiracy was only something involving some bunch of fanatic odd-balls (some of which were even "right wingers", I understand), and that there is therefore nothing at all left for anybody to worry about." Etc etc.

Pardon me if all this, re Garrison, is something you've already written but which I've not yet read, or if I just haven't read you right. Putting it all together, it seems that you probably ought to share my present thoughts about the Garrison ~~#####~~ outcome. But if you do, then I still can't put my finger on any line anywhere where you have ever spelled out clearly to readers that this is what you are thinking. All you seem to be concentrating on is speculation concerning whether or not ~~###~~ certain witnesses might or might not turn out to be good or bad or valid or invalid if and/or when a trial might some day come about, when and if it ever does, etc - while not ever mentioning clearly (to my knowledge) that the One Single Overriding fact relative to the Garrison thing is that if his public speculations "turn out to be true", then the cards are automatically stacked against any opposition possibility that there might have been more to it all than some handful of scoundrels in New Orleans getting together (with a bunch of Cubans, of course), all bonded together in various incidental ways - none of ~~#####~~ ~~#####~~ it leading in any direction away from the guilty scoundrels. With that much then done, it would of course be a small matter for the production of the "Now it can be Told" stories which would convincingly explain to everybody about how the solution to the mystery of this terrible crime would not have been possible but ~~##~~ for the selfless sacrifices of our Most Honored Institutions: The FBI, the CIA (et al al al al), our Government in general, our wise men here & there, our TV & radio networks, the W/C, the staff of the W/C, all those who assisted the W/C, our 1,500 daily newspapers, certain ones among our weekly newspapers, etc etc etc. And this would be the end of it.

Having think it over for a bit, I just somehow can't imagine that you must not be of the same opinion. Which is fine, of course, except that in this case I find myself sitting down worrying how come you don't write this opinion if it is an opinion you hold? This, I guess, is the sort of question which is getting to worry more & more people.

I guess it's time to close (don't mention it), but I can't do it without mentioning that I suspect that any girl who can sit down and write down Renatus Hartogs sideways or slantwise and come up with a couple of variations, especially when the variations fit the theme... well! If this is a back-handed compliment, at least it is a compliment. I poked myself for over an hour trying to come up something else, anything at all, but never got to first base.

TMO: I can't get over it. For a while I was thinking that maybe I was some kind of subversive on account of my having for some months been subscribing to several (5, I think) English language publications straight out of Moscow. I felt the need to balance out the newsy right-wing things I was already subscribing to, so I figured that maybe I would get real brave and order a bunch of stuff from the Four Continents

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Book Shop, and I did this. But now that I have been introduced to TMO, and have read a considerable number of back issues - I am just plain simply amazed to find that my own local TMO is about 14 times more "subversive" than anything I am getting straight out of Moscow! TMO seems to bend toward at least now & then substantiating itself - while my impression of the stuff I get from Moscow is that the editors of the various things seem to feel, somehow, that it is all they need do to keep saying that John is an Imperialist, John is an Imperialist, over & over - seemingly with the notion that it's really not necessary to point out to the reader where he might go look if he should want to check up on things himself. After several months, I find that in the main my Moscow subscriptions don't influence me very much - and that their main use turns out to now & then bringing my attention to little news items quoted out of small USA newspapers, things that never seem to get on to the newswires or otherwise out of town. Such as, for instance, little trivial things like a certain town with a volunteer fire department having on each of three occasions come to the scene of a house fire, only to let the house burn down on account of the annual \$7 fire fee not having been paid. But, somehow, there are never any details or follow-ups on even such tid-bitty things - not any more than we'd expect to learn while living right ~~##~~ here. I almost get the idea that the Russians are bending over backwards for us - at least on the basis of my seeming to feel that our own TMO is providing a better case against us than those imported subversive periodicals we hear talked about.

Well, it is all very confusing. It is also bedtime.

Thanks, Congressman Meagher!

Durably, I guess,



Steffen Sorensen

cc: Helen, who seldom agrees with me properly and seems to think it's me who's got water on the brain.