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THE NATION

AMERICAN NOTES

Remember Gunboat Diplomacy?

Not so long ago, the response of a superpower like the U.S. to the current Arab oil embargo would have been foreseeable and blunt. As in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Lebanon, the U.S. would probably have seen its interests as best served by some form of military intervention. Even now there is fantasying here and there about seizing the Libyan oilfields or parachuting forces into Saudi Arabia, but no one really believes it could happen.

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Author-Professor Irving Kristol, a wise and sometimes truculent intellectual, suggests that such forbearance is all wrong. What's more, he claims, this view of the world overlooks an important segment of reality. A little blackmail is nothing new in international relations, he observes. "What is not comprehensible is the apparent Arab belief that they have both the right and might to use their oil to destroy the economies of Western Europe, the U.S. and Japan, to 'bring these countries to their knees,' as the Arab press puts it. And what is least comprehensible of all is the apparent impotence of these same nations in the face of such extreme behavior ... in truth, the days of gunboat diplomacy are never over. Gunboats are as necessary for international order as police cars are for domestic order."

That is a bracing view but designed more to stimulate nostalgia. Since the Viet Nam War, armed intervention has come to seem anachronistic at best —and not very effective in the end.

The Law as Scrooge

Is nothing beyond the law's reach? When *Now Thank We All Our God* pealed from the loudspeakers on the steeple of Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Mich., at 9 a.m. on Thanksgiving, who inside the church could have suspected that the law was being violated? But Police Sergeant John Mordas, 36, awakened in his home across the street, felt differently. He was so annoyed by the intrusion of the sound of a very fine carillon on his rest that he promptly wrote up a citation and mailed it to the church's pastor, Herman J. Ridder. The charge: noise pollution. A city ordinance passed last March declares that "any noise of any kind" constitutes a "general nuisance." The fact that there happened to be majesty to this particular noise was not a mitigating factor.

Requested by the city attorney to come to some accommodation with Mordas—or risk court action—the pastor lowered the volume and agreed to change the direction of the speakers in order to disperse the sound. It could not be said that the church lacked proper regard for the rights of its neighbors. More widely adopted, however, the city's ordinance could make for a rather cheerless Christmas. Ridder has agreed that the bells will chime only five to eight minutes instead of the 18-minute Thanksgiving toll. "We don't want to be a nuisance," he says. "On the other hand, the church ought to be able to indicate its presence in a community. There is something wrong if *Now Thank We All Our God* is noise pollution."

Penny-Wise

Nothing escapes the surge of inflation—certainly not money. Who could have predicted that the lowly copper penny would one day be priced out of the market? Alas, that day is at hand, and the Senate last week passed a bill, proposed by the Department of the Treasury, that would allow production of a new penny made of 96% aluminum alloy. The Treasury's problem: the copper used in minting billions of pennies annually is growing prohibitively expensive. Last January, the world price of copper was 50¢ per lb. Now the price is more than $1 per lb. and, the Treasury Department notes, if that figure reaches $1.20, the cost of making a cent will exceed the face value of the coin. Metal profiteers call that the "melting point," and it would usher in a vast hoarding of pennies in order eventually to melt them down for sale on the open market.

The new lightweight, aluminum-colored coins will go into production if that melting point is reached, and will bear the reassuring face of Abraham Lincoln on one side and the Lincoln Memorial on the other. The metal needed to produce them will cost the Government 90% less than it now spends on copper. Thus, not only will pennies cost less to produce, but the likelihood of their again reaching the melting point within the next several years will be sharply reduced. To critics who like the reassuring heft of copper, the Bureau of the Mint points out a shade defensively that aluminum is an acceptable coinage metal in 36 countries of the world. What the Mint fails to add is that many of these are among the world's poorest nations.

HALSTEAD

NIXON'S WEEK: GREETING TEX RITTER

The Season of Giving

President Nixon's disclosure of his personal finances *(see page 10)* revealed that he has only a faint impulse to contribute to charities. Millions of Americans with incomes far smaller than Nixon's give far more. In 1972, for example, Nixon donated—excluding the worth of his vice-presidential papers—a total of $295 to charities. On an income of $268,777, this amounted to little more than 1/1000th of his earnings. His donations never exceeded $7,512 in any of his years as President; his contributions for the four years averaged only $3,370 a year, or about 0.3% of his total income. That is well below not only the charitable practice of tithing (giving 10%) advocated in the Old Testament, but also the current rate among the President's financial peers. According to the most recent statistics of the Internal Revenue Service, others in Nixon's tax bracket made charitable cash donations averaging nearly $11,000 each in 1970.

Nixon's smallest donation was $12, given on three occasions to the American Legion Auxiliary, once in 1970 and twice in 1971; his largest was $4,500 to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 1970. Many of the organizations that benefited from a Nixon gift were religious. Besides the Graham donation and a $1,000 donation to the Baptist Community Hospital in 1970, Nixon gave $1,000 to his home-town East Whittier Friends Church in 1971.

Someone else's generosity is a difficult thing to judge. But his countrymen may be forgiven if they regard Richard Nixon—a man who has spoken so much about the importance of voluntary effort and private charities—as exceptionally tightfisted.