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MEACHUM FENCING

Our county Board of Zoning Appeals, I believed after attending several of its lengthy hearings, is so good, so fine an illustration of the working of representative society I suggested to its staff that tapes of the hearings ought be provided to the schools for civics classes.

These appeared to be conscientious, hard-working, well-informed and concerned public servants, perhaps a bit too soft-hearted, a little too tolerant of flagrant abuses, but on the whole eminently fair in discharging their important responsibilities.

This I believed until all of us were set straight, the board especially, when Roy Meachum instructed it on the law, history, beauty, property values, the magnitude of its problems and how he is persecuted by the politicians who are out to "get" him, as reported in the Post of December 17.

At issue was his illegal front-yard fence he said is essential, law or no law, because "it fits nicely with the period of the house" and the "historic nature of Frederick" - a fence so beautiful and historical it elicited "innumerable compliments." As pictured in the paper, there is a picket fractured when spanking new, supported by heavier wood that has a large hole where a knot fell out. To rot faster, perhaps intended not to save money on cheaper wood but to give "historical" appearance and the rare beauty of age?

Although the law strictly prohibits what he wanted to do, he did it anyway. He says the law is "Draconian," or harsh and severe. And because he know better than us yokels, he is determined to educate us and teach us the difference between right and wrong. That he knew he was violating the law is not material, nor is it that, as Chairman

E. Robert Bowlus told him, "the law is very clear." Law is no more relevant to Mr. Meachum when it prohibits what he wants to do than is fact or truth or reason when they interfere with what he wants to write and have believed. No matter how wrong, once he says it we are to believe it.

From "the goldfish bowl" in which he says he lives, his "chiding of local politicians" for condemning his fence is not seen as arrogance, nor is violation of the law which supposedly applies to him, too, seen as flagrant. Thus, he Meachumized his violation of law into vengeance from "City Hall."

What a fine example for our young people!

This is the real Roy Meachum, the self-portrayed omniscient, the all-wise and all-knowing. Modest, too, so he works into his columns irrelevant claims to the widest and most significant friendships with the great and important personages of his earlier career. This is the Roy Meachum whose inventions presented as fact and prejudices presented as truth I have addressed from time to time.

Without once a manly response from him; without once even alleging a single factual error in what I wrote about his writing (at least not in print); without once offering a single apology or admission of error, despite his claim to personify the great and glorious American journalistic tradition. Despite his repeated boast that when he errs, which we are to believe he never does, he admits it.

No, Carl Reggio, whose letter was published December 7, this is not a "feud." A feud requires at least two participants. Roy Meachum has been totally absent - silent - in print, that is.

No, James E. Keenan, whose "sympathy for the senile" letter appeared December 2 and whose cheek must still pain from the force of his tongue against it, it is not the "Frederick newspapers sympathy for ... those overtaken by senility" that gives Mr. Meachum his columns and his checks.

It is hardly senility that caused him to write off as "official 'comedies'" President Reagan's responsibility for the slaughter of more than 200 Marines near Beirut by those, it ought be noted, Mr. Meachum has virtually deified as "patriots" rather than terrorists. Rather, in the Meachumized rewrite of December 4, is responsibility for this tragedy that "of the gung-ho presidential advisers." And why in his same writing did we have the Iran/Contra scandal? Not because these advisers were doing precisely what President Reagan wanted them to do, which is without question, but because he "refused to hold accountable" the men who did what he wanted them to do.

Senility is hardly the word for this convolution.

Two days earlier this sage who blesses us with his presence praised the French government for submitting to terrorist (to him "patriotic") blackmail to get French hostages released. As usual, facts caught up with him very soon about the matter of the money France had borrowed from the shah of Iran, which was part of the blackmail deal he praised. Only he said that owing this money (which it had paid) permitted still more blackmail because "it gives Paris leverage for more bargaining to spring its remaining hostages."

"Of course," he continued, "the United States could not use the money (it owed Iran) to bargain for its hostages because" - after the Tower report and those sensational Iran/Contra hearings - "the administration has sold the American public the poppycock that it would never countenance treating with terrorists."

The real poppycock here is pure Meachum, there being no doubt at all that "Reagan" did "treat" with terrorists.

That money we owe Iran is ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> of Mr. Meachum's poppycock. Can it be that in his diligent reading of the out-of-town newspapers he rewrites he did not notice that Iran took us to the World Court over this money and



won?

There is more, much more, every time he writes about international affairs, more that I've written about in the past and he has always ignored.

Mr. Meachum devoted three columns to a convoluted, left-handed defense of former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim's Nazi record and, as is his practice, twisted that into more of his anti-Semitism. He was silent when I exposed those columns for what they were, factually, historically, philosophically and morally wrong. He also was silent when he read the Washington Post of December 7, the story headed, "Waldheim's Own Commission to Damage Him." That commission "will reveal damning new evidence ... that 'Waldheim's unit was responsible for the deportation of thousands of Jews to death camps' ... Waldheim's unit turned over allied prisoners to SS execution squads." The former Austrian chancellor, who appointed Waldheim to the UN, "now says, 'I deeply regret having supported him for any position of trust.'" And "Robert Rhodes-Jones, a ten-year veteran of the British parliament who was a member of Waldheim's UN staff, called Waldheim 'a congenital liar.'" Further, "a Justice Department official confirmed that it had officially notified the commission that its year-long investigation of Waldheim proved he had "'personal awareness' of war crimes" about which he had sworn he knew nothing.

After three long columns in which he misled his readers about Waldheim, Hitler and history and indulged in anti-Semitism; after my chiding him repeatedly over his many errors and criticizing his writing as racist propaganda; after repeated boasting that he corrects his error; and after this and much more in the papers he reads to tell him how entirely wrong he was, Mr. Meachum remains without regret or apology or the decency and self-respect required to let his readers know the truth.

In doing that his problem is he would expose the persisting error

in his writing.

So, as wrong is right when he wants a fence and the law is no good when it applies to him, when his writing is wrong, deceptive, misleading and is propaganda, because it is his writing it becomes right and proper.

This will be in the glorious tradition of American journalism when he can nail raindrops to his illegal fence.