

# Show and Tell With Mr. Laird



Arthur Hoppe

Clipping filed POWs

**SHOW AND TELL TIME** has been temporarily banned at the Millard Fillmore Elementary School. The edict was issued after the third grade teacher, Miss Philomena Phigbee, was hospitalized with "nervous exhaustion."

School officials said the ban would last for the duration of the Vietnam war.

Miss Phigbee collapsed last week after four of her pupils brought newspaper clippings to class dealing with the massive bombing raids on North Vietnam.

The scene, as nearly as it can be reconstructed from Miss Phigbee's somewhat incoherent account, opened with Miss Phigbee asking who had "something to share with the other boys and girls."

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**IT WAS** little Millicent who started the trouble by reading Defense Secretary Laird's explanation of why we had resumed bombing North Vietnam and asking what "protective reaction," meant.

"Protective reaction," said Miss Phigbee firmly, "means we have to bomb the anti-aircraft guns that are trying to shoot down our bombers in order to protect our bombers that are trying to bomb the anti-aircraft guns."

"Oh," said Millicent. And she went out to clean the erasers.

But Bernhard, a born troublemaker, wanted to know why we had violated "The Understanding" — the one where we promised not to bomb North Vietnam any more.

"Oh," said Miss Phigbee, "we didn't violate The Understanding; they did. They shot down our unarmed reconnaissance planes that were taking pictures of North Vietnam so our pilots would have bombing targets in case we had to resume bombing in the event they fired on our unarmed reconnaissance planes."

"Oh," said Bernhard and asked to be excused to go to the bathroom.

But then red-haired Mollie, who was very persistent, pointed out several stories where military spokesmen said the raids were in retaliation for the Communists shooting down four U.S. fighter-bombers (not reconnaissance planes) over Laos (not North Vietnam).

"Let's not get too technical, Mollie," said Miss Phigbee, brushing a wisp of hair from her forehead.

"And what does Mr. Laird mean," persisted Mollie, "when he says the North Vietnamese might try to embarrass Mr. Nixon before the elections next November? Is that why we bombed them?"

"Nor too political, either, Mollie," said Miss Phigbee, fanning herself.

"May I get a drink of water, Miss Phigbee?" asked Mollie.

Finally, it was Irving's turn. He said everyone had missed the point. Mr. Laird, Mr. Nixon and all the other officials stressed that the main reason the bombing raids was to insure the orderly withdrawal of our troops on schedule.

"Of course," cried Miss Phigbee with a sigh of relief. "If we didn't bomb the Communists' supply routes, they'd march into South Vietnam and attack our boys as they were leaving. Then our boys would have to turn around and stay and fight, instead of coming home. There! Any more questions?"

"Just one, Miss Phigbee," said Irving slowly. "Why don't the Communists want our boys to leave Vietnam?"

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**MISS PHIGBEE** says she remembers nothing more until she regained consciousness in her hospital room.

At her request Show and Tell Time is being replaced in the classrooms by a daily Frisbee-throwing contest. She says she feels it would be "less disruptive to the teaching effort."