

Tidbits and Outrages

For \$80,000, They'll Prevent Tornadoes

Have you ever heard of the Federal Fire Council? If not, here's a report from United Press International:

"Senate investigators said today they have discovered an agency that did almost nothing for seven years at a cost of nearly \$70,000 a year.

"Investigators working for Sen. Patrick Leahy, (D-Vt.), told UPI the Federal Fire Council held no more than two meetings between 1968 and 1974 but throughout the period continued to receive congressional approval of its annual operating funds.

"The agency was established in 1936 to coordinate federal fire prevention regulations in government buildings. It has been moved from department to department since then.

"It is now in the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration within the Commerce Department.

"Two Leahy staffers, assigned by the freshman senator to comb the bureaucracy to find wasteful spending, said the council met only twice during the seven-year period.

"A full time executive director and secretary managed to spend \$67,000 a year during this period,' said Jack Ewing. 'It's unclear how he spent his time. He mailed out some publications now and then but other than that, didn't do anything.'"

Bechtel says: Bechtel!

Stephen Aug, one of the better business reporters around, came up with this gem from the *Washington Star*:

"The Bechtel Corp., which is fighting the railroads for the opportunity to build a \$750 million coal pipeline, at the same time is working under government contract to study the relative economics of using railroads and pipelines to transport coal long distances.

"The contract was awarded to Bechtel, one of the nation's largest construction and engineering firms, by the Interior Department's Office of Coal Research in May 1974, without competitive bidding.

"The first phase of the study—done at a cost to the government of \$413,200—was completed several days ago. On a preliminary basis, it shows—perhaps not surprisingly—that a coal slurry pipeline of the type Bechtel wants to build would provide fuel for electricity cheaper than would the railroads.

"The results show this is true despite the fact that rail transportation is cheaper than pipeline use."

Godmother, There is a Favor I Would Ask of You. . .

Frances G. Knight is the female J. Edgar Hoover. She's held on to her job as head of the Passport Office for over 20 years. Linda Charlton of *The New York Times* reports one reason for Miss Knight's success:

"There are probably very few members of Congress who do not owe Miss Knight a favor or two, very few who have not called her on behalf of a constituent who needed a passport in a hurry. One can be obtained quickly, and when it is, Miss Knight sends a letter—in duplicate—to the member of Congress.

"The letter says something like, 'In accordance with your request, we have issued a passport to. . . ' and ends with the hope that the constituent had an enjoyable trip. The second copy of the letter is for the congressman to send to the constituent to remind him, at election time, of accounts receivable. The original performs the same task for Miss Knight."

YOUR OWN NEWSPAPER

HARPER'S WEEKLY is the most unusual publication in America. It's written almost entirely by **its own readers**. Not by remote experts, gossipmongers, pollsters or pundits. Not by Washington "newsmen" echoing invisible "sources." HARPER'S WEEKLY believes the real world is best reported by its real inhabitants. People. **You**. We publish **your** first-hand experiences, views and observations. Your personal confrontations, crises and dilemmas. The result, week after week, is a fascinating dialogue between real people talking about **real** concerns—their heroes, alibis, outrages, marriages, victories, mistakes, adventures, moral choices. About coping with the human condition.

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- How fathers care for their children after Mom walks out.
- How an incredibly lucky man escaped from a great white shark that mercifully spat him out of its jaws.

People just like you write these articles (for an honorarium of \$25); others send us jokes,

quotes, local proverbs. Still others send the warmest fan letters we've ever read:

● HARPER'S WEEKLY is eminently useful! Of all 20 periodicals to which I regularly subscribe, yours most often offers suggestions, ideas, pointers and insights that I can use **that very day**. It has already improved my life.—**Cable Neuhaus, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.**

● Several months ago my father introduced me to HARPER'S WEEKLY and all I can say is, Dynamite! You are a real experience; you bring me in touch with so many others and so many different points of view.—**Steff Geiple, Glen Rock, Pa.**

● HARPER'S WEEKLY is habit-forming. I devour it with my Saturday morning coffee. I mean I read the whole thing from front to back, and never mind what other things need doing. I hope some of our politicians read it; I'm sure they would profit.—**Harold Anderson, N.Y., NY.**

● It's heartening to find how many people are articulate. To me they're a refreshing change from the clever journalese of many slick magazine articles. I often feel I want to reply to these contributors, and I will.—**Alberta Cushman, Agawam, Ma.**

● I do not know if I would call your paper a Journal of Civilization, as you do. I would call it a Journal of Thoughtful and Reflective Experiencing (which may be a finer compliment). Good luck with your publication. You are bringing forth a citizen's dream, the establishment's nightmare.—**Stanley L. Brodsky, Tallahassee, Fla.**

● I tried to tell myself "I just don't have time to read it." But HW is the **first** thing I pick up to read—ahead of three weekly magazines, one weekly newspaper, four monthly magazines, and numerous special interest publications.—**Phyllis Maurer, Lincoln, Neb.**

● I have been reading a friend's recycled issues. You win. I surrender. I have just sent

my check for a subscription.—**Anne Wittels, Palos Verdes Estates, Ca.**

● After reading my third issue, I feel jubilant and confident that here is a melting pot for the refinement of ideas, and out of it will come much good . . . America needs HARPER'S WEEKLY. May it continue to grow and be a "Journal of Civilization."—**Marjorie Sutcliffe, Audubon, Ia.**

● HARPER'S WEEKLY brings me closer to my countrymen who really care about how we live and feel and think. There's integrity in every column.—**Dorothy Martin, Hutchinson, Ks.**

● When my last issue was delayed a few days, I discovered how much I depend on HARPER'S WEEKLY. I was a nervous wreck. Please don't ever send my copy late again!—**Robert Nash, Fayetteville, NY.**

● Reading HW is like getting a bundle of letters that really put you in touch. It's great to read contributions from enthusiastic non-coterie writers. The pros couldn't match the diversity, let alone the involvement.—**Maureen Cotter, Newton, NJ.**

● In one year, HARPER'S WEEKLY has given me the courage 1) to write a children's book; 2) teach a seminar for government secretaries; 3) take legal steps to use my maiden name instead of my married name. I wonder whether you ever expected to have such influence on your readers.—**Mary G. Overfield, Henderson, Ky.**

● It was exciting to see my words printed in a national publication. But the best reward was still to come: nine incredibly varied people (aged 18 to 52) took the time to reply personally.—**Christine Parker, Fulton, NY.**

● This issue tells me two things. HARPER'S WEEKLY has good editors and there are tons of people out there just waiting to educate me. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. HW is a forum I'd find it hard to live without.—**Carol B. Icard, Dalton, Ma.**

● I am truly amazed at your wealth of subjects. I devour the letters and articles from those who have a compulsion like mine—to share their minds and hearts, to expose their vulnerability a little, to sound off explosively. When I agree, I've found a friend. When I disagree, I've found a reason to re-examine my own view.—**Estelle Pfetsch, Niagara Falls, NY.**

● HARPER'S WEEKLY tells me more

about this country and the people in it than a dozen Gallup polls. Congratulations.—**Jack McClintock, Indian Rocks Beach, Fla.**

● Send me 20 subscription blanks to hand out.—**Lillian Koslover, Redondo Beach, CA.**

● I'm so pleased with HARPER'S WEEKLY that I sent my renewal check gift-wrapped. Getting HW is like getting a present every week, and I wanted to return the favor.—**Kathleen Marquardt, West Allis, Wisc.**

● By the time my copy arrives on Saturday afternoon, I've read all the other hogwash that came during the week. That makes HARPER'S WEEKLY seem like strawberry shortcake after eating a supper of cold mashed potatoes.—**Darius Petty, Great Barrington, Ma.**

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