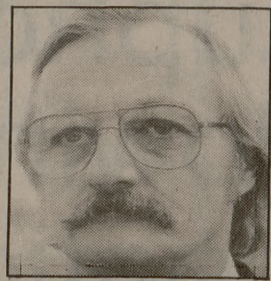


Opinion

Payoffs, bribery and the Pentagon hustle



Donald Kaul

Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa took a step up in class the other day. Not only did he illuminate the failings of the Pentagon and Attorney General Edwin Meese III in monitoring our dealings with military contractors, he did it with an anecdote taken from "Casablanca," the classic World War II film starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman.

So he quoted a movie, you say, so what? You're not listening. I said "Charles Grassley." I said "Casablanca." Grassley is the Senate's token hayseed. His idea of formal attire is white-on-white socks. We're not talking George Will here, who quotes Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" when he orders breakfast. Grassley is more your "Ma and Pa Kettle Go to Las Vegas" intellectual. "Casablanca" is very high class for him.

Speaking on the Senate floor, he called into question the enthusiasm with which Meese and the Pentagon pursued fraud in defense procurement over the years, then said:

"A memorable scene in the movie 'Casablanca' might sum it up best.

"It is the scene in which Claude Rains, the French chief of police, shuts down Rick's saloon on the pretext of his 'suddenly discovering' that gambling is going on in the back rooms.

"He says: 'I'm shocked. Shocked to find out there is gambling going on in here.' Just then, a porter runs up to Rains and hands him a wad of money and says: 'Your winnings, sir.'"

That's good, Chuck. (Sen. Grassley demands that everyone call him "Chuck.") President Reagan, Vice President Bush, Meese, all of them have been walking around saying: "Corruption at the Pentagon? Our Pentagon? No kidding? Who'd have guessed it."

Meese in particular has been vigorous

in his own defense. He called Grassley misinformed and said:

"We're very proud in the Reagan administration of our record of prosecuting defense procurement fraud, as part of the abuse throughout the government, and this latest investigation is just one more example of the fine work that is being done by tough, experienced, professional prosecutors."

This ignores the fact that Meese wasn't informed about the current investigation until last week because his name had come up in some of the wiretaps the FBI was conducting. (President Reagan wasn't told either, but what the heck; if you told him, you'd have to tell everybody.) George Bush, as usual, said he didn't know anything about the scandal but he hoped it wouldn't become a campaign issue. He has a wonderful sense of humor.

President Reagan was characteristically eloquent and lucid in discussing the issue:

"... I think there are some things

that you can see in something as complex as that whole process and the number of corporations and all — corporate heads probably are surprised at what they're learning also — because you can't be down there watching several million people in the total of all the companies and of the Defense Department every day in what they're doing or what phone calls they're making. . . . And I have to say that I think that it should be understandable how such things can happen in something as big as our government is."

Be honest, isn't that a little disappointing? Here's a man who, when the Democrats ran things, got jacked out of shape every time a welfare mother sneaked a slug of vodka with her orange juice. His people allegedly throw billion-dollar contracts to the highest bidder and all he can say is: "Oh well, those are the breaks. You can't be everywhere."

No you can't, but you can be somewhere and the president isn't.

Grassley would have finished ahead of the game had he ended his little

speech with the "Casablanca" story he had to go on.

"Now, I do not mean to suggest an association between the scene in 'Casablanca' and anyone in our government. The point I am making is simply that there is a perception out there in this country that many of our government offices are like the French chief of police in the scene of 'Casablanca'."

Right, Chuck, and the public perception isn't that far off the mark. Our government has been corrupted in and in fact by the vast sums of money spent on defense. Generals retire and walk into high-paying cushy jobs as defense contractors, sometimes as a reward for services rendered while at the Pentagon. Congresspersons trade votes in return for defense jobs in their home districts. And now, outright bribery.

Grassley had one thing right, though. Claude Rains' chief of police was like anyone in the Reagan administration. Rains had a lot more class than those yahoos.

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New York rape case heading for round two



Mike Royko

For months, I've been marveling at the restraint shown by public officials in the New York.

They're the ones who have been trying to make some sense out of the case of Tawana Brawley, 16, the black schoolgirl who said she was kidnapped, raped and smeared with filth by six white racists.

When her story first came out last year, it was a national shocker. A nice schoolgirl so terribly abused in Wappinger's Falls, a quiet town on the Hudson River.

Prominent blacks demanded justice, and rightly so. Rewards were offered. A fund drive was launched. Bill Cosby and the publisher of a black magazine put up \$25,000. Mike Tyson said he would pay for Tawana's college education.

But as time passed, the pieces didn't seem to fit. The story made less and less sense. Evidence mounted that there had been no abduction or rape.

And it made even less sense when Tawana's lawyers refused to let her and her family cooperate with investigators while ranting that they couldn't get justice.

They said everybody was conspiring to protect the rapists and deprive Tawana of justice — Gov. Mario Cuomo, the prosecutors, the police, the entire legal system.

They even said that an assistant district attorney was a member of the rape gang, while offering no evidence.

So it was fairly obvious several months ago that (1) Tawana Brawley's story was phony, and (2) her lawyers were a couple of irresponsible, publicity-seeking, rabble-rousing liars, and (3) New York's public officials should tell them to put up some evidence or shut up.

Instead, the officials sort of wrung their hands while Tawana's lawyers and a New York preacher had a fine time on TV and in the press, making their outrageous charges and ranting about racism.

And many black people believed the

lawyers. They sent thousands of dollars for Tawana's fund and shared in the rage at the way Tawana was being deprived of justice. Just as some people wrongly believe that the average black is a criminal, some blacks wrongly believe that every white is out to get them.

But now the con game appears finally to be over.

A private investigator who worked for the preacher says he was involved in the case from the beginning. He says it was all a fake and the lawyer and the preacher knew it was a fake.

They were out to generate black money and build themselves a power base. The preacher's former aid put it: "There was no case, only a media show."

Then, by all means, let the show

on. There is a matter of the lawyers lecturing all that money for Tawana — was for Tawana. If there was no abduction and rape, the fund drive might be considered a fraud. And it is against federal law to use the mails to conduct a fraud.

The lawyers did a lot of yelling about a conspiracy.

Maybe now a grand jury can ask them about other conspiracies such as conspiring to lie to authors about a non-existent crime, withholding evidence and other fun activities.

Then there is the assistant prosecutor who they said was one of the rapists. He would think that he might slap them with a multimillion-dollar lawsuit for slander.

And if the New York Bar Association doesn't give some thought to revoking their law licenses, it ought to close shop.

As the preacher's former aide said, it was a "media circus."

But at a real circus, the clowns give us laughs. There wasn't anything funny about the act of these New York clowns.

Incidentally, we called Bill Cosby publicist to see if he was still offering a \$25,000 reward for the arrest of meenies who grabbed Tawana.

One of Cosby's publicists said: "We not heard otherwise."

But she didn't sound very enthusiastic.

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Mail Call

He who casts the first stone
EDITOR:
In response to Andrew Myers' letter of 24 June, I would like to say this: I would much rather be large in stature than small in mind. The unfortunate consequence of your letter is that's actually how you appear.

I realize that you're probably getting hours of laughter from the publication of your witty letter, but don't you have a better way of spending your time than composing mindless trash?

In the unlikely event that you reach a state of perfection, please feel free to voice your judgement of others.
Heidi Melton Kamei '88

Let us entertain you
EDITOR:
I was just reading Mail Call and now that the amount of letters is down, I decided to write.

I am on an archaeological dig in St. Mary's City, Maryland for 10 weeks this summer. I am an anthropology

major and history minor back at A&M. I am really interested in Historical Archaeology so that's why I'm out here in rural southern Maryland sweating from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. five days a week in a range of humid temperatures from 98-103 degrees!

I had my boyfriend send me copies of *The Battalion* so I could keep my sanity and contact with A&M and the outside world in general.

I want to tell you just how entertaining *The Batt* really is. No one appreciates it back in Aggeland. One need to come to southern Maryland with no TV or newspaper, live in a cockroach infested house with no A.C., and dig all day to truly appreciate *The Batt*.

I've amused myself and friends by cutting out the headlines and pictures to create whimsical sayings and put them on my walls as decoration.

Thank you for entertaining me out here on my dig!
Virginia Busby '90
Hey, all the news that's fit to print. Just call us USA Today.
— The Editor

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

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Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

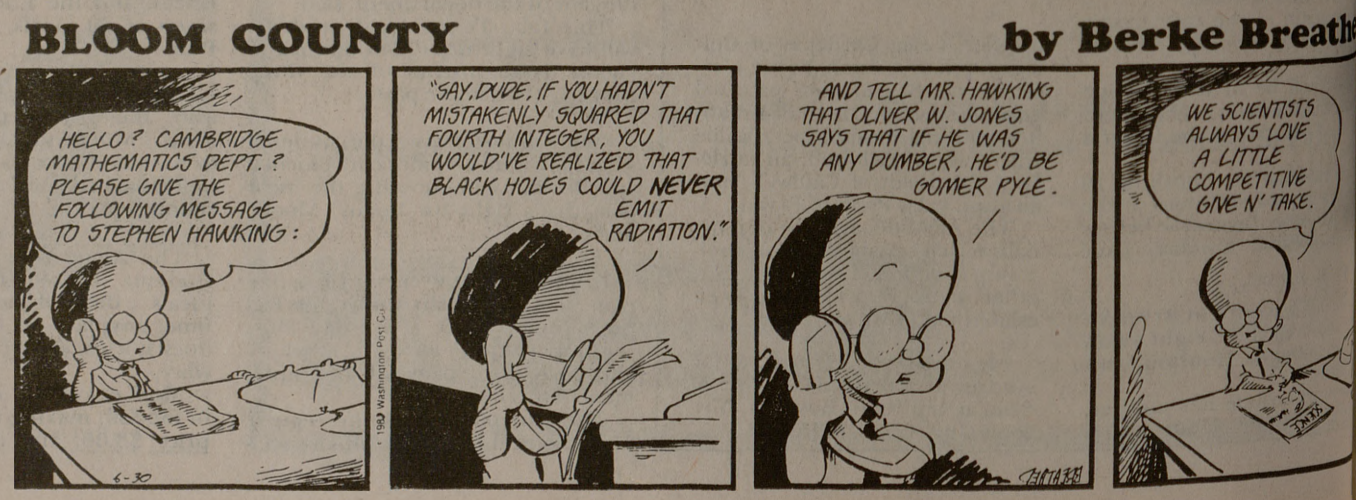
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BLOOM COUNTY
by Berke Breathed



HELLO? CAMBRIDGE MATHEMATICS DEPT.? PLEASE GIVE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO STEPHEN HAWKING:

"SAY, DUDE, IF YOU HADN'T MISTAKENLY SQUARED THAT FOURTH INTEGER, YOU WOULD'VE REALIZED THAT BLACK HOLES COULD NEVER EMIT RADIATION."

AND TELL MR. HAWKING THAT OLIVER W. JONES SAYS THAT IF HE WAS ANY DUMBER, HE'D BE OOMER PYLE.

WE SCIENTISTS ALWAYS LOVE A LITTLE COMPETITIVE GIVE 'N' TAKE.

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