

letters

Teen-ager values freedoms

Editor: I value the many freedoms I have as an American. I've heard about other countries that have fewer freedoms. Two such countries are Guatemala and Russia.

Fifteen years ago my father went to Guatemala. He said that the people do not have the freedom of assembly. They also have limited freedom of speech. The government censors the press.

Guatemala's government regulates all business and industry. Many people are poor because the government controls prices and wages. These are just a couple of examples of how the government controls the economic system.

GUATEMALA HAS a limited judicial system. They have no juries because the courts are military tribunals. In Guatemala, everyone is guilty unless proven otherwise. Because they cannot afford to go to court, the poor are always guilty. Even though the rich can afford to go to court, they, too, are rarely proven innocent.

In Russia, they have turnover taxes versus personal profit. Turnover taxes mean all extra money goes to the government. The United States is more efficient because of an incentive — profit.

After seeing the way that people in other countries live, I have a greater appreciation for the freedoms my country offers me.

Margie L. DeBroux
 Ninth grade student
 Osceola High School
 Seminole

Growth suggestion

Editor: Your Dec. 30, 1983 editorial on state growth (*A state growth policy*) made mention of the bumper-to-bumper traffic on U.S. 19 and the 7,000 people moving weekly to Florida. What you say is true, and that is why I prefer this (Clearwater-St. Petersburg) area because its traffic is not as heavy as it is in the Fort Lauderdale area. So, as bad as it is here, it's even worse on the East Coast.

While recently driving through the northern counties of Florida, I noted there are millions of acres that are very sparsely populated, and although I know that there may be a

lated areas might be a solution to these problems.

J. J. Foltz
 Clearwater

'Travesty of justice'

Editor: Re: *Court takes Florida death case appeal*, Jan. 10, by Neil Skene.

Regarding the case of Joseph "Crazy Joe" Spaziano, it would be a travesty of justice to permit, after a decision has been reached by a jury, a presiding judge to override any decision made by that jury. Any decision regarding the sentencing of a person should be made by a jury of his peers, not by the presiding judge. Irrespective of how the judge may feel following the sentencing, it should still be remembered that the Constitution provides for, in the 14th Amendment, due process of law, which should not be construed to mean that a trial judge has autonomy over a jury.

Stephen R. Losonczy
 Clearwater

ESP skeptics

Editor: The Jan. 10 article by William Broad (*Mind wars — Pentagon reportedly studying ESP*) concerning psychic research funded by the Pentagon gives further evidence to the gullibility of the media toward psychic claims. The writer refers to Dr. Russell Targ as "a physicist with expertise in lasers, optics and microwaves," and goes on to describe in detail his "experiments" with "remote viewing." Nowhere does the article mention that this physicist is the same Dr. Targ who examined the Israeli magician Uri Geller at the Stanford Research Institute and declared him a true psychic, and the same Dr. Targ who constructed an "ESP Teaching Machine" which curiously produced poorer results as the machine was refined.

THIS ARTICLE appeared one day after the *CBS Evening News* devoted time to a Mississippi inventor who has constructed a "perpetual motion machine."

When will the media start bringing a healthy dose of skepticism to these fantastic claims? When will the media start identifying these "physicists" as people who bring a belief in psychic phenomenon to their "experiments" and obtain results any mediocre magician could duplicate?

Terry A. Smiljanich
 St. Petersburg

Editor: The article leaves the false impression that Dr. Russell Targ has successfully conducted experiments in "remote viewing."

Despite the claims contained in his new book, and similar ones published by him in *Nature* (1974 and 1980) and other journals, critical examination of Targ's data and experimental techniques have shown that any "successes" were the result of flawed methodology and data suppression. Well-controlled attempts at replication have proved totally unsuccessful.

YOUR FOLLOW-UP editorial of Jan. 11 asserts that "in fact, there are serious scientists who concede the possibility — though not necessarily the proof — of parapsychology phenomena." I would agree that science must be prepared to take quantum leaps forward as the evidence compels. But the burden of proof is on the claimant, and to date no credible evidence has been offered to suggest the existence of such phenomena. As the years go by without a shred of supportive evidence, science recognizes that the probability of ESP reality is approaching zero.

It is unfortunate that the Pentagon, like so much of the general public, has been so misled by the purveyors of pseudoscience.

Gary P. Posner, M.D.
 St. Petersburg

Protecting the public

Editor: The state of Florida is caught in a squeeze again, this time for stopping the sale of products with certain levels of EDB, a cancer-causing pesticide.

The corporations affected are threatening a lawsuit, and once again we are discovering not only how "safe" levels are determined in an unfree society, but how high the costs will rise to determine those



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Gary P. Posner, M.D.
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Dear Dr. Posner:

I read with interest your recent Letter to the Editor in the St. Petersburg Times, which was printed along with my letter on the subject of Dr. Russell Targ and federally funded psychic research.

I hope you were able to see the PBS "Nova" episode entitled "The Case of ESP" which was aired on Channel 3 the evening of January 17. If you did, I'm sure you were as outraged and disappointed in the usually fine series for presenting such drivel (produced by the BBC). Instead of presenting a balanced and reasoned examination of the claims of psychic researchers, the show was turned over to Dr. Targ, who spoke at length about several "successful" attempts at "remote viewing." The show went so far as to allow him to re-enact (complete with actors, dramatic camera angles and scary music) several selected episodes of this brand of clairvoyance.

Not once did the show ask several obvious and hard questions concerning the protocols and controls used. The show hardly touched upon the literature about this subject which has already pointed out serious flaws and selective use of "results." Nor did the show examine Dr. Targ's well-documented history of gullibility, his personal friendship with the professional psychics whom he studies, or the affiliation of both his colleagues and subjects with the Church of Scientology. "Nova" also allowed Dr. Charles Tart of the University of California, Davis, to expound about the close-mindedness of skeptics and the "exciting" world of psychic phenomenon that awaits discovery and proof, without ever mentioning his own discredited experiments which were so flawed even he retracted his "findings."

Anyway, I hope you were able to see this latest example of "gee whiz" mentality which is now permeating even so fine a series as "Nova". I read your comments in the paper with keen interest, and am grateful for another reasoned voice in this wilderness of silly claims.

Sincerely,



TERRY A. SMILJANICH

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