

Did you hear the one about the college prof?

A university professor is interested in the ethnic joke for what it tells us about people and how we get along together. He is also interested as a teller of ethnic jokes.

"I come from a 'mongrel' ethnic background and I am an honorary Italian so I feel I have a license to tell ethnic jokes," says Dr. Leonard Moss, professor of anthropology at Wayne State, who believes the ethnic joke in one form or another is probably as old as man.

The joke can be a vicious personal attack or it can be a release valve for humans who have to laugh to keep from crying, according to Moss.

"I think the late cartoonist Al Capp probably said it best when he noted, 'humor is man's inhumanity to man,'" says Moss. He goes on to point out that ridicule of others is one way we enhance our own feeling of prestige and play games of one-upmanship.

When Moss was in Poland two years ago he found the Poles enjoyed Polish jokes because of resentment there against Poles who have returned from America to retire in relative wealth in Poland.

One kind of joke that appeals to all peoples seems to be the story describing the person of high status who slips on a banana peel, according to Moss.

HE TALKS of another kind of ethnic joke told in Poland which acts as a release for the Poles.

A Polish citizen finds a bottle

with a genie inside willing to grant him any three wishes he desires. For each of his three wishes the Pole asks that the Chinese Army invade Poland. When the genie asks him why he has made this wish three times he says, "If the Chinese invade Poland three times, they will march through Russia six times."

Moss uses his academic background to point to examples of ancient man using ethnic humor of a sort. In the sixth century B.C. he says the Greeks referred to foreigners as "Barbarians," which means the stammerer, i.e., one who speaks "Ba ba ba . . ." This is the origin of our use of the word barbarian for uncivilized people.

Moss says that in many situations ethnic humor may relieve tensions between groups but in some societies it would be impossible. He cites Moslem-Hindu relations in India as an example.

In the United States, Moss sees a rise in ethnic humor as a barometer of intergroup tensions. He is concerned about the increasing number of black jokes he has heard recently.

Moss says that members of an ethnic group can tell jokes on their own group but persons outside the group who tell the same jokes are resented. The Scots are an ethnic group who have made the cheap joke a part of their culture and wear their frugality like a badge of honor.

Lt. gov's Senate chair, legislators' immunity are ballot questions in November election

Two constitutional amendments which would subject state legislators to traffic tickets year-round and remove the lieutenant governor as presiding officer of the state Senate have been added to the Nov. 4 general election ballot.

Members of the state House of Representatives and Senate are immune from civil arrest for traffic tickets while the legislature is in session.

The quirk in the law resulted when the legislature decriminalized minor

traffic violations last year and made them civil infractions.

The immunity provision meant legislators could not be penalized for traffic violations, such as running a red light, during legislative sessions.

THE OTHER ballot proposal would remove the lieutenant governor as presiding officer of the state Senate.

The proposal would also allow the governor to appoint a new lieutenant governor if the office should become

vacant. The appointment would have to be approved by a majority of the house and senate.

The lieutenant governor now casts a senate vote only to break ties. The two proposals were placed on the ballot by the legislature.

FIVE OTHER referendums are on the Nov. 4 ballot.

Proposals A, C and D would alter the state's taxing system. A and C would provide some property tax relief and

replace the lost revenue with proposed increases in the state income tax and state sales tax, respectively.

Proposal D is the Tish property tax-cut proposal.

Proposal E calls for a five-year increase in the state income tax of one-tenth of 1 percent to pay for new prisons and local or regional jail construction.

Proposal B would lower the state legal drinking age to 19. Voters increased it to 21 two years ago.

Immunization rates at dangerous levels

There's good news and bad news. The good news is that the incidence of measles and rubella in the state has been greatly reduced.

In the first 32 weeks of 1979, according to records, there were 6,970 cases of measles and 2,997 cases of rubella. In the first 32 weeks of this year, the incidence has dropped respectively to 231 and 123.

Now for the bad news. Sometimes parents become lulled into a false sense of security. When they don't see the diseases around them, they neglect having their children immunized.

When children are not immunized, the diseases reappear, children become

sick, miss school, and are sometimes left handicapped.

Immunization levels are still well below safe levels. Only 83 percent had measles and rubella shots and less than 75 percent had mumps shots. Immunization levels below 90 percent are considered dangerous, and are an invitation to future outbreaks.

Be sure that babies have their diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus immunization in four spaced sessions, and that the measles, mumps, rubella, and polio immunizations with booster shots are provided. Your doctor will keep records of these immunizations, and your child will present them upon entering school.

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