

It pays to fool some of the people some of the time

The era of 24-hour news makes it difficult to sift through tons of information to learn about our world.

As the media gobble up press releases and the public swallows them whole, it's comparatively easy for official statements to be regarded as truth, rather than opinion.

We've learned from the past that official statements are seldom carved in granite. Once in a while, we learn facts are distorted.

But fooling some of the people some of the time still pays off, even when it has to be admitted down the road that the "official" word was couched in half-truths or exaggerations.

SECRETARY of Defense Harold Brown admitted that Pentagon aides may have exaggerated the weakness of the Navy's defense position in an at-

tempt to drum up support for the MX missile, the New York Times reported Sunday.

Those Pentagon officials know how to play the game. Get that old Soviet scare tactic going, and the politicians, backed by the public, will buy anything. Everybody knows it's the speed, accuracy and reliability of the machines that matter, not the people running them. And because military technology is classified information, only Pentagon officials understand the importance and effectiveness of military weapons.

It's easy to understand why an increasingly complex world dominated by the industrial-military complex should be run by generals. Who else knows what's going on?

IS IT ANY wonder then, that the public has become as skeptical as the press? The average person

boasts that he believes half of what he sees and none of what he hears. The result is a poorly informed public that sees bureaucrats as lazy leeches and politicians as lying buffoons.

But the public must decide important issues — at the polls.

Robert Tisch says his Proposal D will cut property taxes in half. But he doesn't say how the state will pay for colleges and universities, one of the largest uses of state discretionary spending and one of the budget items promised the ax if Tisch passes.

Ronald Reagan says he'll cut federal income taxes by one-third over the next three years. But he doesn't say how he'll pay for expensive military ventures like the MX missile, which Pentagon officials wanted so badly that they were willing to brag to the world about the Navy's supposed weakness.

UNFORTUNATELY, higher education can't pull the same trick. Would anybody blink an eyelash if university presidents warned that our colleges would be inferior to the Soviets if we didn't pay for the latest in technological advancement?

And besides, if our universities aren't as good as the Soviets', who cares?

As the world grows more complex, as our problems become more and more related to those on the other side of the world, we demand simple answers for two reasons: We don't want to be confused, and we don't want to spend time investigating an issue.

We spend less time investigating the records of presidential candidates than we would require of a high school term paper.

We may thoroughly check out all the "R" factors of home insulation, but we won't spend 10 minutes to find out just how three different tax proposals would affect Michigan's future.

— LYNN ORR

'A joint effort'



Vietnam War syndrome lasts for life

Few persons in these parts have heard of Mike Tindall.

A New Jersey resident, his story appeared on the front page of a Detroit metro daily last month.

Just as quickly it disappeared from readers' minds. Newspaper stories are like that.

But Mike's story is that of thousands — just a little more dramatic.

He was acquitted by a Federal Court jury of smuggling hashish. His successful plea was a first for the American judicial system — insanity based on the "Vietnam Syndrome."

THERE ARE COUNTLESS Mike Tindalls in this country. If you know a Vietnam veteran, you know a person who, to some degree or another, will live with the syndrome until the day he dies.

Vietnam Syndrome is for real. The American Psychiatric Association and Veterans Administration say it is. Vietnam veterans know it is.

For some the syndrome is a living death. It changes the personality, sometimes dramatically. Recall the veteran who, for three hours, held hostage a Charleston congregation at gunpoint.

He suffered from an extreme case of malaria and for three years before the hostage incident was plagued with persistent headaches.

He was pleading for help to a society which would



rather forget anything associated with the word Vietnam.

BUT RATHER THAN dissipating, the Vietnam Syndrome grows as the years pass.

Rather than readjusting as time passes, more and more Vietnam veterans are dropping out of society, turning to drugs, crime and the unemployment line.

For others, the majority, it takes on a more subtle form. The divorce rate is acute. A wife only can stand so much of a befuddled partner trying to explain the confused, emotionless state which is im-

possible to explain.

Most Vietnam veterans prove to be good employees. But few employers realize that underneath the workaholic facade is a person combating constant boredom. The boredom never goes away.

Like Mike Tindall, other Vietnam veterans crave a challenge which just doesn't exist.

As Tindall's doctor put it, his smuggling activities represented just another combat mission.

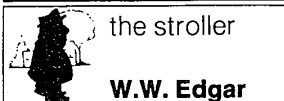
The Vietnam veteran is harnessed with an impatience with the society in which he lives. He has difficulty understanding what he considers the petty complaints of other persons in this society — having to work too much, having to work too little, the car payment, the weather ad nauseam.

VIETNAM VETERANS play the game. They join in on the complaining. It makes them seem to fit into this alien society. But underneath they are satisfied to have a warm bed in which to sleep and a hot meal to eat.

The rest is luxury.

The Syndrome tells the veteran he is living on bonus time — an extra granted to those who at one time had resigned themselves to death.

But the bonus is tainted. The challenge is gone. Life is an emotionless abyss.



The big quiz at the new car dealer's

Have you given any thought to turning your so-called gas guzzler for one of the shiny, new, glamorous, gas-efficient 1981 automobiles?

Better be well prepared for a good grilling. It won't be easy.

Purchasing a new automobile used to be simple. But as the old-timer said, "It ain't any more."

You used to go to the showroom of a dealer of your choice — Ford, Chevy, Chrysler or whatever — and tell him you were in the market for a new car. No dilly-dallying.

Those days are gone now. And when you appear at the showroom, you not only will be asked what model of your favorite car will be, but the salesman will open the drawer of his desk and pull out a questionnaire that appears to be a foot or two long. Then the grilling begins.

The Stroller found this out the other day when he accompanied the lady of our house to the showroom to purchase a car to replace her once classy little car.

FIRST SHE WAS asked, "What model do you want?"

This was sort of an odd question because you just used to ask for the make of the car. Now the make of the car is only a family name, and the models are like children.

When she had selected a model, she was asked, "Would you prefer a six cylinder or an eight cylinder?"

This seemed strange to The Stroller, who had been accustomed to making a choice of a model and then taking whatever engine came with it. No more.

Now she was asked, "Would you like air conditioning?"

When she nodded yes, he moved to the next question, "How about tires? Do you want whitewalls or steel radial tires. I think maybe you would prefer the steel radials."

She gave it some thought and decided on steel radials on the theory they wouldn't go flat on the road and leave her needing help.

"HOW ABOUT the metal band around the body?" he asked, then explained that the metal band would protect her car from damage by careless drivers in supermarket parking lots. So her new car will have the metal band.

"Do you prefer a stick shift or the shifting levers on steering wheel?" She chose the stick shift and sighed with relief, thinking she was finished.

Not yet.

"How about the red lines (defroster) on the rear window?"

She didn't have them on her old car and had never given it a thought. This was something new. She took it.

Then she asked a question: "Is it possible to get an electric seat?"

"Would you prefer the single automatic seat or the double? The single will be \$193 extra." She took the double, being a strong believer in saving money wherever possible.

Then came the color. What did she prefer?

"I always liked a red car," she said. The salesman quickly answered, "The model you selected doesn't come in red," so she chose burgundy.

ALL THE WHILE, there never was a question about paying for the car. This seemed strange.

It was different when The Stroller purchased his first car. It was the year Henry Ford produced the Model A.

He just called his friend, John Hetteche, the Ford dealer, and told him he wanted one of the new ones. No questions were asked.

When it arrived, it was a sporty looking four door in green with a black leather top. And it cost only \$750.

No wonder we call them "the good old days."

Human rights, property rights and socialism

Back in college, we had great philosophical arguments about whether people could have freedom of speech, assembly, press and the rest under socialism.

I had my doubts about whether a socialist government would or could protect those freedoms. A liberal professor of political science, however, put me down good and hard. The prevailing notion was that the Bill of Rights wouldn't go down the tube under socialism.

It's time to reopen the argument. Let us consider events in Poland and Yugoslavia. Specifically, let's consider the workers' strike in Poland and the UNESCO International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems.

IN POLAND, one major difficulty the workers faced in their effort to establish unions that weren't government controlled was finding meeting places. All buildings except churches are owned by the government. You don't just rent the VFW hall or the Knights of Columbus hall. You can't get your hands on materials to put up your own union hall. You don't rent a meeting room in a motel.

Thus, while on paper the right of assembly may be protected, workers can have difficulty exercising it where there is government control of real estate. Another difficulty the workers faced was the in-



ability to print such things as meeting notices, bulletins, membership cards, ballots and all the things necessary for concerted action. The government owns all printing presses. That's socialism.

At this point, persons who are ignorant of Americans will rant in reply that "freedom of the press belongs to the man who owns one." There will follow a tirade about "chain" ownership of newspapers.

The charge is demonstrably inaccurate. I just checked my handy telephone directory — six solid pages of ads for quick printing places. High school activists whose papers were closed down by heavy-handed administrations during the early 1970s were able to get their "underground" papers run off quickly and cheaply at such establishments.

In modern American capitalism, you don't need to own a press to spread your word.

THE UNESCO gathering in Belgrade is being covered best by news magazines. Here are some items gleaned from Sept. (Oct. 6) and the New York Times Magazine (Sept. 21):

• Most Third World countries don't allow newspapers or broadcasters to subscribe directly to wire services. The government subscribes and then controls which stories go to the media.

• While many socialist nations complain about Western news coverage, they make it difficult to report news by limiting reporters' visas to brief periods for single visits.

• Many socialist nations limit drastically the importation of Western newspapers, magazines and books and jam foreign radio broadcasts.

Bills of rights, in any language, are pretty on paper. A government that owns all property, however, can find ways to curtail those rights.

Some non-thinkers distinguish between "human rights" and "property rights," implying that property rights are somehow inferior. The distinction is superficial.

If you think property rights aren't essential to freedom, try to rent a meeting hall in Poland. While you're there, try to get some handbills printed.