



Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury

PROHIBITION

As a kid I watched the TV show “The Untouchables” and got a big charge out of super-serious Robert Stack as “untouchable” G-Man Elliot Ness taking down beer barons, rumrunners, and other bad guys in Chicago during Prohibition. But now as I watch Ken Burns’ brilliant new documentary “Prohibition” about the historical background of the federal government’s ill-fated attempt to legislate morality, a recent parallel comes to mind: overzealous U.S. attorneys threatening to prosecute legal cannabis dispensaries. Shame on President Obama for reneging on his campaign promise to support medical marijuana. Prohibition may have been repealed 80 years ago, but the puritanical mind-set is still alive and well in Washington.

IT CAN’T HAPPEN HERE

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Federal Theatre Project’s production of the play “It Can’t Happen Here” by Sinclair Lewis and John C. Moffitt, join a nationwide event on October 24 by organizing a local reading or performance of the play. In 1936, the play opened in 22 theaters in 18 cities across the country. It ran for 260 weeks and was seen by more than 316,000 people. Director Hallie Flanagan wrote: “We

want to do ‘It Can’t Happen Here’ because it is a play by one of our most distinguished American writers. We want to do it because it is about American life today, based on a passionate belief in American democracy. The play says that when dictatorship comes to threaten such a democracy, it comes in an apparently harmless guise, with parades and promises; but that when such dictatorship arrives, the promises are not kept and the parade grounds become encampments. We want to do ‘It Can’t Happen Here’ because, like Doremus Jessup [the novel’s newspaperman and hero] and his creator, Sinclair Lewis, we, as American citizens and as workers in a theatre sponsored by the government of the United States, should like to do what we can to keep alive the ‘free, inquiring, critical spirit’ which is the center and core of a democracy.” The Federal Theatre Project, part of the WPA, employed theater workers, circus performers, and cabaret and vaudeville acts. People who’ve seen Tim Robbins’ 1999 movie *The Cradle Will Rock* were introduced to that incredible time, when Uncle Sam became the greatest producer of plays in the United States. Help call attention to this great piece of American history by reading or performing the play. It

can be adapted easily to each community. The characters include a small-town newspaper editor, townsfolk, local politicians, and the sinister “Corpos.” To do a reading or performance of the play, email Darryl Henriques (pointoforder@juno.com) about obtaining scripts or joining with committed theater groups like the San Francisco Mime Troupe and Dell’Arte International in sponsoring this event.

BAY AREA FOODSCAPE

The San Francisco Bay Area is well known for its dramatic natural landscapes as well as its diverse and metropolitan culture. But what very few people realize is that alongside these dynamic urban areas, extensive beaches, and parklands lie nearly 2 million acres of working farms, ranches, and vineyards, constituting more than 40 percent of the land of the nine-county Bay Area. These food landscapes are the focus of the October–December 2011 issue of *Bay Nature* magazine. *Urban Farms to Open Range: Putting Bay Area Food Landscapes on the Map* is a special eight-page section bound into the issue that features a three-page foldout map highlighting the various food-producing regions in and around the Bay Area, as well as the large variety of food products produced here. Thanks to funding from the California Coastal Conservancy, Greenbelt Alliance, and Union Bank, an additional 15,000 copies of “Urban Farms to Open

Range” are being distributed free of charge through farmers markets and food and open-space nonprofits around the region. *Bay Nature* also is sponsoring a forum at the David Brower Center in downtown Berkeley on the evening of November 16. “From Urban Gardens to Open Range: The Present and Future of Food Landscapes” features four local food producers who will discuss the challenges they face in creating a sustainable food system in the Bay Area. For more information about the map or the event, contact Beth Slatkin, Marketing Director (beth@baynature.org; 510-528-8550 x 207).

NASTY LITTLE SECRET

“Solar panels do not work that well. Often far below expectations. And few know it. Not the owners who depend on power. Not the bankers who finance it. Not the brokers who insure it. And not the government agencies who subsidize it. There I said it: The nasty little secret of the solar business. And I said it right at a time when we who believe in solar are under public scrutiny like never before. But if we who love solar and alternative energy do not put our house in order, those who believe solar is some kind of government-funded shell-game will do it for us. This would be a disaster for our country.” (Ray Burgess, energy.aol.com, October 7)

WAVELENGTH

This month on *Wavelength*, PCT’s award-winning TV show,

host Ian Butler interviews “Farmer” John Muller, Half Moon Bay city councilman; and Mike Lause, a local medical cannabis activist. You can watch those shows and many others anytime at vimeo.com/channels/wavelength. Or watch them on cable channel 26 in Pacifica and cable 27 in Half Moon Bay, Mondays at 6:30 p.m.

EXTREME DUI

Now there is scientific evidence (2011 Ig Nobel Prize winner) that driving with a full bladder is as dangerous as other forms of impairment, including most kinds of driving while stupid.

PALINDROME PIT

Following the police probe of the brutal pit bull mauling, other Pacifica pit bulls now plead their case for survival, as in this palindrome: “No evil! Won’t I, Pacifica ‘pit’, now live on?” (Alan Wald)

SWAMI SEZ

“I just cut in front of a guy wearing camouflage while we were waiting in line. When he said something about it, I told him I didn’t see him.” (Gary Indiana)

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