

AH, MYSTERIES!

One might well be goggle-eyed by the goings-on in our national administration last week.

Perhaps no one can object to the President's statement that "we might come close to balancing the budget if all of us lived up to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule." After all, the economists haven't come up with a better prescription.

But it's not clear which of the Commandments he had in mind. Perhaps he was referring to the 613 Commandments rather than to the Ten. Commandment 197 (Exodus) says that one must lend to the poor without interest. If the banks did not charge interest for the debts of our poor government, the budget could be balanced overnight. Of course, Commandment 195 (Deuteronomy) instructs us to give charity to the poor, and that might get us into budget trouble again -- unless it means only the "truly-poor."

Almost as mysterious was the President's statement that he was determined to bring prayer back to the public schools because "the First Amendment was not written to protect the people and their laws from religious values; it was written to protect those values from Government tyranny."

That's funny. It's for exactly the same reason that some of us want to keep prayers *out* of the public schools. The public school is an instrument of government. The teacher is an agent of government. When they prescribe which prayers they will lead in the classroom, they are imposing their tyranny on some people's religious values. Nothing prevents any student from praying privately at any time during the school day.

Earl Raab

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Reading the comments by the President's Defense Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, on the Israeli tanks/American Marine incident, also could have made one goggle-eyed.

There was only one journalistic eye-witness account, a staff correspondent of the *Philadelphia Enquirer* who wrote the following:

"A U.S. Marine Captain turned back three Israeli tanks yesterday in a confrontation that appeared far less severe than was described by the Reagan administration which called the Israeli actions 'threatening' and 'damaging' to peacemaking efforts. However, as seen by this reporter from about 400 yards away, the tanks were moving about -- never in a single, concerted direction -- in an open field commonly conceded to be under Israeli control. A Marine left the Lebanese University compound, ran several hundred yards towards the tanks and conferred with a tank officer. The tanks then withdrew. Israeli soldiers patrolling near the site of the incident paid little attention to it, and the Marine commander here did not mention it at a news conference more than six hours later."

But Weinberger leaped on it as though another Pearl Harbor had just been committed. Why? A chance for him to play State Department doctor again? Or part of a concerted Administration plan to put pressure on Israel to get out of Lebanon without worrying about the Syrian troops or the security of the Lebanese/Israeli border?

Of course, why a U.S. bent on its own self-interest would want to do that is another matter of mystification.