

Sydney Mayers

VIEWS THE NEWS

The latest distinguished "visitor" from France is the lovely lady da Vinci called La Giaconda, whom we know more familiarly as Mona Lisa. Having observed the various economic shenanigans the world has engaged in for the past 400 years, the mystery is not what Signora Lisa is smiling about, but why she doesn't laugh out loud.

The current feeling of optimism throughout the American business community, which has led to general bullishness in the stock market and a discernable rise in sales, can be readily traced to its source: the Administration's strong push for tax rate cuts this year, or at the latest in 1964, a move all concerned believe will "keep times good." If the promise, or even the hope, of lower taxes is such a boon to business, you'd think the Washington pundits would carry the idea to its logical conclusion, and abolish ALL taxes—except a "tax" on the unearned increment of land.

Despite its rigid controls, the Soviet Union is currently being plagued by repeated outbreaks of two peculiarly capitalistic crimes: illegal dealing in contraband currency, and (believe it or not!) widespread bootlegging of moonshine vodka. Like we said, man seeks to satisfy his desires with the least effort—even if his name is Ivan.

The far-reaching effects of a stoppage at any point of production are clearly demonstrated by the East Coast shipping strike, one example being the shutting down of the Volkswagen plant while these and other foreign automobiles pile up at foreign ports, awaiting shipment to America. Imported motor cars, incidentally, are not "sold"

in this country; they are exchanged for goods produced by United States labor and capital—whose production in turn will stop if their products cannot get anywhere.

Friendship is warm and delightful, but business being business, the Soviet Union expects Cuba to pay in sugar for the goods it is sending to that happy little island—and the Cuban government is having problems growing and harvesting a sufficient crop. But Dr. Castro has found one helpful solution: he has ordered 50,000 city workers into the cane-fields; they are known as "permanent volunteers."

The highly-publicized "free" medicare program recently put into effect is proving quite costly in Saskatchewan, where (in addition to sizable annual premiums for government medical and hospitalization insurance) provincial residents must pay increased retail sales, corporation and personal income taxes to foot the growing medical bill. Maybe it is just a matter of semantics, but we always thought "free" meant gratis, without charge and on-the-cuff.

The government of Quebec has offered to pay \$600,000,000.00 for the eleven Canadian electric power companies it is taking over in that Province, which offer the private owners call "disappointing," though they are obviously a lot luckier than the privately-owned utility firms in certain other countries, whose governments simply "appropriated" such properties. What bothers us is this: if private ownership of public utilities is wrong, why validate the wrong by means of compensation—and if private ownership is not wrong, then why terminate it at all?