

On My Mind  
by Ruth L. Tighe

With election campaigning as entertaining as it is to some, and as time-consuming as it is to others, it's not clear how many people still have the time or any interest in going to the movies. But the movie house is there, and its eight showrooms are a novelty, so I suppose there are those who go just because it's there.

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For the rest of us, who'd like to know why we should go, or whether it's worth going, and which doorway to enter once we get there, the lack of any kind of information on just the story line - much less the plot - is rather frustrating. The titles don't give much of a clue. Nor does the rating. Not even the names of the actors and actresses are evident - for those to whom that might mean anything.

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Unless the "showing rooms" are all over-flowing - and I understand that mostly they are not - one would think that it would benefit those who operate the theater to give its showings some publicity, to put forth some effort to increase attendance. Surely this, too, wasn't meant to be just a money-laundering, or tax-write-off sort of place?

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I went last week-end - for the first time in years - to a movie I'd been told was highly rated, but walked out long before it was over. Ordinarily, the only movies I watch are those on the plane, on those long flights across the Pacific. The screen is tiny - and far down the aisle. There are lots of other things to look at between where I am sitting and where the screen is. In the new theater here, not only is it "sound-surround" but also sight-surround - up close, invasive. There's nothing else between viewer and the screen. It made the violence too raw. I didn't need those images in my mind, on my thoughts. And so I left.

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It almost seems as though the video entertainment world is going in the same direction as C. John Somerville argues the press is going, in his book "How the News Makes Us Dumb" - making people dumb, or perhaps numb would be the better word here. As though movie producers, who are in the business of making money - let us not forget - have decided that only cruder, rawer, stories and pictures at an ever faster pace will continue to attract an increasingly numbed audience.

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Where are the fun entertainment movies, the light-hearted entertainment movies, the heart-warming entertainment movies, the movies of beauty in form and color and sound? Movies that induce warmth, worthwhile ideas and ideals, caring, concern for others, for the world?

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A women's group is apparently making an effort to educate island women about the two legislative initiatives that will be on the ballot on election day. The notice of a luncheon - to

have been held yesterday - has appeared in the paper only in Chamorro. From what those who translated the notice for me said, the purpose of the luncheon was to educate attendees on the two initiatives, not to lobby for one side or the other.

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There have been a few more articles in the paper reporting on individuals who are speaking out on the initiatives. But other than the women's group, no effort to educate the general public from a neutral standpoint. The Election Reform Bill - House Bill 11-115 - calls for the Election Board to publish the full text of proposed amendments in the paper prior to elections. But the bill has gotten stuck in the Senate. And it still doesn't provide for education on the proposals.

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The bill gives the Election Board the authority to deal with questions regarding initiatives, but that isn't the same as providing information on the issues posed by the initiatives. Perhaps when the bill is revived in the next legislature, someone can make sure that education on amendments is included in the Board's responsibilities.

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Judge Tim Bellas isn't exactly running for office, but is appealing to the voters for their support nonetheless. Bellas is hoping for re-appointment as a judge in the Superior Court. As a result of a law passed in 1997, re-appointment of all judges, once their first term has expired, must be done on the basis of approval by the voters. Bellas is the first judge to be affected by that law, so has no precedents to guide him as to how to go about getting re-chosen as a judge.

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So far, he's done rather well. Only this week have ads begun to appear in the papers, and the ads are tasteful and straightforward - except for the fact that they don't indicate who has paid for the ad. But maybe that is a requirement only for political ads? There's also been a nicely done feature interview in this past Wednesday's <I>Tribune</I>, in which Bellas attempts to answer some of the concerns voters may have about his re-appointment.

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There is the question, though, whether leaving such publicity up to the judge - expecting the judge to do his own campaigning, so to speak - is a good idea. Perhaps this is another responsibility that should, instead, be given to the Election Board. The Board could publish a brief biography of the judge up for re-appointment, together with a summary of the decisions issued by the judge. Otherwise, even judgeships could eventually turn on how much money was available for publicity - and that would surely be a miscarriage of justice!

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The idea behind giving voters a say in the choice of judges is that it supposedly takes the decision out of politics - the judge won't feel obligated to the politicians who nominated him and voted for him. It's questionable, however, whether the alternative - having the judge obligated to the voters - is any better - at least in a place as small as this.

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It's rather startling to see that the Governor has actually made a peremptory (putting an end to all debate and action) decision on an issue facing the Commonwealth. He peremptorily decided to

close the Tanapag cemetery - to declare it off limits. The decision was prompted by the high level of PCB contamination in parts of the cemetery, and, presumably, by the delayed action on the part of the Army Corps of Engineers to do anything about it in time for the preparation and observance of All Saints' and All Souls' Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of November by the people of Tanapag.

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The governor has chosen not to take any action - peremptory or otherwise - in regard to the Department of Public Safety, where the credibility of the Commissioner has been seriously eroded by the recent rash of prison break-outs. Nor has he chosen to take any action - peremptorily or otherwise - in regard to the choice, by the Retirement Fund Board of Trustees, of a person of questionable fiduciary ethics as administrator. Yet in these cases, even more people are affected than by the contamination of the Tanapag cemetery; and in the long run, perhaps even more seriously affected.

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Perhaps the governor is hoping the Army Corps of Engineers will be sufficiently embarrassed to get its act together and finally provide the temporary cover for the contaminated soils - as it had promised to do last week - and should have done months earlier? Does that mean peremptory action is only taken when someone else is the fall guy?