

Capps' 'Little Vacations' Should Not Be On Taxpayers' Tab

Travis Moon

UCSB Nexus OCT. - 3 1996

It simply would not do my feelings justice to say that I wouldn't vote for Andrea Seastrand if my life depended on it. Stating, instead, that I believe that she is the embodiment, the epitome of ignorance and evil is a little closer to how I'm feeling about our representative.

Nevertheless, I do have some concerns about everyone's favorite professor-politician, Walter Capps. I have recently heard his foes describe Capps as one of those dreaded "tax and spend liberals." Unfortunately, I have some firsthand knowledge that there is some truth to this charge.

Two summers ago, while a tenant at Studio Plaza Apartments here in Isla Vista, I had the misfortune of meeting a handful of educators from across America who had arrived in Santa Barbara to attend a six-week course on "Democracy in America," hosted and taught by Walter Capps. The "students," mostly secondary teachers, had come to UCSB to read a little Tocqueville in hopes of sharing with their students, upon returning to their jobs, some of their newly acquired knowledge about democracy and American institutions.

Upon doing a little research, I learned that the course was financed by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded to Walter Capps.

So far, so good, right? Well, each apartment (and each participant received his or her own) cost about 500 smacks a month. There were about 20 "students" in the group. Well, to make a long story a little longer, I must say that I witnessed very little studying in those six weeks.

You may probably ask, "How the hell does Travis know what these

people were doing in their apartments?" The only answer is that these people didn't spend time in their apartments — they spent most every spare moment laying out at the apartment pool, taking in the rays, playing billiards, sitting in the sauna, playing tennis and watching television, all of which I witnessed.

I spoke to more than a couple of these students, who readily and candidly admitted that they took advantage of these grant courses to enjoy a little vacation. Did I say "little vacation"? Perish the thought! The six weeks included trips to the Channel Islands, Solvang, Disneyland and Universal Studios, among other places. A few of the students assured me that all entertainment was included in the price of the course, which was paid for by me, Travis Moon, and every other taxpayer. A few of the students had been coming for a few years.

"What happens," I asked a student who was proud to be a Marxist, "if you don't pass the course?"

"Nothing," he replied. "What can they do?"

So there it is. On paper, Walter Capps applied for and was awarded a federal grant for his summer course

to help select applicants learn a little bit about "Democracy in America." The truth, however, is that more than a few of these applicants viewed the course as a free vacation to Santa Barbara with the taxpayer footing the bill. By their own admission, they neither studied hard nor did they have to pay their costs if they did not perform well in the class.

This is completely irresponsible and wrong. This is, to me, precisely what is wrong with government today. With all the fiscal problems in our national, state and local governments, I'm flabbergasted and angry that there should be any money to pay for free vacations for professional freeloaders.

Even if these people paid for their own Disneyland tickets, I'm not sure if it's possible for Capps to justify the waste of money when tuitions are going up, and when poor people don't eat every day, or when our infrastructure needs updating.

I don't know about everyone else, but I am sick to death of my tax dollars going to countries that shoot people for throwing bottles at soldiers. I hate the thought of my hard-earned bucks going to oil wars and throwing missiles at harmless dictators. I'm tired of my money going to so-called artists, in the form of NEA grants, who create offensive images and have the gall to call it art. Finally, I'm tired of my money going to governmental bureaucracies like the National Endowment for the Humanities, who create courses like Capps' and give irresponsible people money for doing nothing while school lunch programs get cut. I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore! If Walter Capps gets elected to Congress, and I do hope he does, he

will be in a position to influence and cast votes regarding important issues such as tax monies. I, for one, think that he owes us students an explanation for wasting that tax money on frivolous grants and a promise that he will, as the next congressman, have a little more respect for the money that we citizens put into the federal coffer.

Travis Moon is a Nexus columnist.

