

THE FAIRYTALE

Peter Coyne, Humboldt State College

There was once a young drummer boy who was very weary. He felt that life was beating the hell out of him. As a result he returned home to talk to his mother. "Take five," she said, "and tell me what your problem is." "It's like this," said the boy, "I like to drum but I can't keep track of everyone's feet." "Well," said his mother, "whom do you drum for?" "That seems to be the problem," he said, "I don't know what I'm drumming for."

"Listen to me, son," said the mother, "you can't drum a waltz for a twist or a twist for a Bartok. The beat you must follow must be the beat of your own feet; the count and the measure must be yours. You can't drum for everyone or for everything."

The boy snared a bit and said, "What a fine kettle of drums, but you're right." So the boy went on and drummed his own count and beat his own measure to success. The moral of this story is: if you drum for everything or for everyone, you drum for no one.

I am not here today to give you drumming lessons or to tell you about Gene Krupa, I am here today to talk to you about something I think is far more important in terms of what we are drumming for. You and I are deeply interested in our well being, our happiness, for the nation and for the world.

Someone down in Washington has been telling you a fairytale. Listen to the first few lines and I think you will be able to fill it in. High diddle diiddle, the cat and the fiddle. And what? And the cow jumped over the moon. Well, the fairytale those fellows down in Washington tell has a few different lines depending on the audience they tell it to, but it is the same tale and its all about the moon. Some of the fellows call it the Appollo fairytale. Years ago it was only that fictitious cow that could jump over the moon, but in 1964 the idea has changed. Now we have progressed to the point where we think it is possible for man to jump over the moon, and to be more specific, land on it. This fairytale is for real and it affects you. The American people are going to the moon at all costs. It is this simple statement that I am going to talk about today. Going to the moon at all costs; this is what the band in Washington is drumming for you. This is what they claim will make you happy. Is this what you are drumming for? Will a trip to the moon make you happy?

We are going to the moon for three reasons and each of us can easily name them: military advantage, world prestige, and curiosity. We, as taxpayers, spent 339 million dollars in 1959 for space. Just five years later we are spending sixteen and one-half times more. We are spending 5.7 billion dollars this year. It is an expensive fairytale to say the least. But expense alone shouldn't determine what we drum for. What is this fantastic sum of money buying you in terms of happiness? In Washington they will tell you its buying you military security because the Russians might get there first. The moon is 240,000 straight miles away. In order for someone to fire missiles from the moon, one has to get the missiles to the moon. The approximate cost of getting a missile to the moon is 1000 times the cost of one here on earth. But suppose you got a missile to the moon. To fire a missile from the moon to the earth, the missile would have to travel in an arc so that it would take more than two days to get to the earth. To drop a missile anywhere on the earth right now merely takes fifteen minutes. Is this the military security that this fairytale is providing for you? I would sooner have a piece of wet tissue paper.

Rather than give us military security, this costly waste constitutes a weakness in our nation's defense posture. First, it diverts crucial scientific and technological manpower away from a truly military program such as anti-missile missiles which our enemies are working on at top speed. Secondly, it gives our enemies, the Soviets, a real opportunity to dominate space, just 100 miles above the earth where they are also concentrating. We, instead, are going whole hog for the moon and plan to have an orbiting station about the moon before we have one around the earth. There is no way Project Apollo or the fairytale can be defended on the grounds that it will provide military security.

Not only does this fairytale provide us with nothing in military advantage, but it is absorbing almost all of the 30,000 scientists that enter research each year, leaving few, if any, for other important sectors of research. But in Washington they tell you this will bring you happiness. They tell you this is what you should be drumming for.

Down in Washington they will also tell you that this trip to the moon at all costs will bring this country prestige. You have been told that we must be the first to the moon. Why first? I don't know. Let us pray that we aren't also

the first to the poor house. You have been told that we must be the first to the moon because if we are not we shall suffer the loss of prestige to the Russians should they get there first. It certainly seems strange that with the evidence we have that we should worry at all. James Webb, National Aeronautics Space Administration Director, admitted in testimony before the House Space Committee that there is no evidence that the Russians are trying to put a man on the moon. Are we spending this vast amount of money to race for the sake of racing against our own shadow? To get to the moon first, Washington men have enlisted your tax dollars to the tune of 30 billion dollars. For prestige? Suppose the Russians were trying to get to the moon first with a man. Do we have any assurance that we could get there first? What a terrible waste of money! But if we are worried so much about prestige, will the fact that we beat the Russians to the moon by three or six months be worth one day's headlines? Will this prestige win over to us the undeveloped nations? Will this prestige be anything but a hollow, meaningless victory if while we gain the moon, we lose the earth? The undeveloped peoples of the world are not impressed with moon shots. They are more impressed with food and aid.

Nobel Prize winner Polycarp Kusch said recently, "Instrument exploration of the moon is cheaper and more effective in the face of pressing national needs." Dr. Peter Delye and Dr. James Franck, also Nobel Prize winners, agreed with him. Dr. Vannevar Bush said that there is nothing a man can do in space that cannot be done more cheaply and better by instruments. British physicist R.L. Boyd said that we could get 90% of the information we are now getting by using men through the use of instruments, at 10% the cost. This means that we are spending between 18 and 128 billion dollars on prestige and not on getting to the moon. This is by far the most expensive fairytale I have ever heard. It is also the most insane cure for the lack of a good world image that has ever been put upon the taxpayers. A simple advertising campaign could get us more prestige than this fairytale. They say in Washington that this is what you want, and this is what we are drumming for.

Down in Washington they will also tell you that this will satisfy your curiosity. I suggest that since it will not protect you better militarily and since it will not create prestige that it had better do a good job of satisfying curiosity. I do not believe that the American people are willing to spend 18 to 28 billion dollars on curiosity.

Don't misunderstand me. I, too, am curious to find out whether the moon is all cheese or only part, or about any of the other things that we want to know. But I'm not curious to the extent that I know that 17 million Americans go to bed hungry each night or that there are 37 million American people living in poverty. I am not that curious when I know that cancer needs to be cured and that it will kill 40 million Americans now living. I am just not that curious to waste huge sums of money to satisfy my curiosity.

I am curious enough to want to get to the moon as soon as possible but at a cost that we can afford and for reasons stronger than curiosity.

The fairytale in this particular case does not have a happy ending. In Washington this fairytale and its tellers win votes and that is what they are drumming for. I think each of you can hold up a serious problem this nation faces and which calls for immediate attention instead of wasting our wealth and energies on something which only satisfies a whim we have. Robert Frost said, "Earth's the right place to love. I don't know where it's likely to go better." This Washington fairytale is a frantic, costly, and disastrous little story. You can believe in it if you want. If you drum for it, well and fine, but remember when it is costing you, remember what it is getting you. Remember that we will live here. Here is still the right place for love.

As Thoreau said, "If a man does not keep pace with his fellow companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer." The drummer I hear says that the present moon rat race will not lead to happiness. What drummer do you hear?