

apparatus in the most exquisite balance.

The ironies are gorgeous: Mills of course is the author of most of the tax loopholes written in the last decade. And McGovern people have been passing the word to terrified businessmen that they need not worry about the Senator's radical tax programme because 'Congress would never even consider it, let alone pass it.' McGovern has already climbed off his proposal of 100 per cent tax on inheritances over half a million dollars.

Meanwhile, it does not take a mind reader to see where the President's campaign will head – a Republican spokesman, commenting on the California primary, has already warned that 'McGovern's programme will scare the country half to death'. He added that that was a recent observation of Hubert Humphrey, so . . . In recent months the country has witnessed the President in his ceremonial robes. Peking . . . Moscow . . . Iran . . . Poland. It has witnessed its 'first professional President' bringing a generation of peace, while pounding North Vietnam to rubble. He has mined Haiphong harbour and has got away with it. He has organised 400 air sorties a day north of the DMZ and has got away with that too. He has signed the SALT agreement validating the principle of nuclear parity, and only Senators Jackson and Goldwater complained. The economy is out of control but he will argue, with justice, that that is the direct result of Johnson's guns and butter strategy of 1965-68.

Those disappointed Justinians Haynsworth and Carswell are still a vivid memory in Washington, a town which takes the Supreme Court seriously; but in the rest of the country, less so. The squalid and hilarious revelation of the administration's dealings with ITT collapsed in farce, and while Richard Kleindienst may be denied confirmation as Attorney General, one's guess is that – stacked up against Peking, Moscow, SALT and the rest of it – the President will not come out of it badly. He will try to balance his foreign policy, which has been in his terms extraordinarily successful, against his domestic policy, which has been in anyone's terms near disaster. On the latter he can argue, to some effect, that he has been hampered by a Democratic Congress. About a year ago, one of the most creative of the Republican pollster managers was invited to the White House to make his bid for the Nixon account in 1972. He was asked for his campaign proposals, and he told the White House politicians that the key to a Nixon victory was to avoid television at all costs. This pollster cited the well-known and documented Nixon failure in 1968 down the stretch. The plan, he said, should be to present Nixon as the working President. Let the public see him on the evening news, fulfilling the duties of his office. Instead of spending their money on television advertising, the President's managers should stick to print – and direct mail. Literally tens of millions of letters on creamy white stationery with 'The White House' in deep blue, upper left. Lists are for sale 'and you can send the letter to every goddam voter in the country. By race, region, occupation, or inclination. Personalised. Signed.'

One's understanding is that the White

House turned down this idea, probably on the same theory that led an earlier administration to commence the bombing of North Vietnam. With its enormous – really gross – campaign kitty the White House could well afford to do anything it wants, and television is hypnotic to politicians. As with the Seventh Air Force, if you have it you use it, whether it will work or not.

But that is in the future: this moment belongs to George McGovern. His victories this week (he won primaries in New Jersey, New Mexico and South Dakota, along with California, a near perfect bracketing of the continental United States) demonstrate the virtues of energy and tenacity within the historical resilience of the American political system. McGovern was almost broke

and standing at five per cent of the polls less than five months ago. The press had written him off as too liberal and too stubborn, but he continued to soldier on, listening apparently to some inner voice, and wound up in June at the head of the parade with no one else in sight. 'Very gratified,' he told his cheering supporters on Tuesday night. He now has about 900 of the 1509 convention votes needed to nominate. In a fortnight, following the New York primary, he will have nearly 1300. The remaining 200 should be easy to collect, from Muskie delegates and from the uncommitted. To those who are appalled at the prospect there is a single decisive answer: if not McGovern then who?

Washington

James Fox

A Tale of Two Soldiers

The Mekong Delta, with its stubborn unwillingness to be pacified, must have mystified and infuriated the American military more than any other region of Vietnam. The province senior adviser of Choung Thien, Colonel John Meese, a seasoned pessimist of the delta war, made the personal discovery recently that all the houses in the village of Vinh Vien had between three and five bunkers built under them. They had been there, he reckons, for 20 years. 'Why must I discover this,' he says, 'Why must I go down to the 415 battalion which has worked in the delta all its life and tell them?'

The colonel, seeing his work going to waste, has come to the conclusion that the war in the delta will never end. 'The only way things will ever be solved is that the VC and the GVN just live and let live, and everyone go back to raising their crops.' That surely is an index of US exasperation. At 39 Meese is the youngest province senior adviser in Vietnam and he has been in the 'counter-insurgency business' for 15 years. Every once in a while he entertains Sir Robert Thompson in the officers' mess at Vi Thanh and they go over the ground together. He was in the special forces – 'We had a lot of animals with us, and animals are hard to keep in tow.' He has worked for the CIA and he has been a regular soldier. His counter-insurgency beat was South America, and he studied Chuong Thien province with State Department papers flown from Washington, while he was putting down rebellion in Venezuela. 'I wanted the most difficult and challenging province to end my career', he said, 'I must confess I'm terribly disappointed.'

Meese came to the delta with a cross to bear. 'When you get into the business of special forces and you do the kind of things that had to be done you're not sure what you've done is right or wrong. I felt I hadn't really contributed to pacification because I've been in the destruction business. So I came here to right some wrongs I feel I might have done before.

'I always argued', said Meese, 'against large scale US involvement. The US as a community don't understand counter-insurgency at all. In Venezuela we cleared the problem up in 18 months, but then we were using local forces. The US army knows nothing about solving or eliminating urban insurgency. We destroy the city and we build them a new one. Okay. That's how we handled it in Santo Domingo, although the trouble there was they didn't tell us the good guys from the bad guys and when we went down there we didn't know whose side we were on.

'But I'm a different breed of cat to the normal US type you see down here. I never expected results. A lot of the things I accomplished in the first eight months have gone down the tubes as far as expanding a secure environment is concerned. But I never believed, in all honesty, that we had a secure environment. I predicted that a dark cloud of gloom, an impending disaster hung over the province. And it came true. Goddamit we should have had small ranger type companies, train 'em in Malaysia, pick the best, pay them enough to make it worthwhile. Then get US types, the dregs from the bottom of the barrel who love this type of work and you throw them out in the briar patch with 100 tough guys and you could have plugged this infiltration. Now you can't even begin to address the VC infrastructure here because you have such a bad security situation.

'Pacification was never as good as people said it was. There were a lot of false illusions. Nobody had really weighed the ability of the guerrilla or the VCI. Apart from the main force we've got 1500 documented VCI in this province. That's a lot of influence. And we've got some 700 guerrillas who've never been touched or bothered. So you're talking about 2000 hard core guys who have always been involved in the conflict. Pacification has not taken hold in this province, nor in many other areas in the delta. It was the US syndrome that no-one wanted to go home from here and admit they

hadn't achieved anything. When General Desobry left in 1968 he wrote, "I've pacified the delta". Well that's the biggest bunch of bullshit I've ever heard in my life. The delta was no more pacified when he left than it will be when I leave.'

The showplace for reporters, the few that venture into the delta, is the town of Mo Kay in Kien Hoa province - the province was 75 per cent occupied by the VC in 1968 - and the neighbouring village of An Thanh where the VC had their headquarters, their 'international capital', from 1963 until 1969. The district senior adviser at Mo Cay is a young fresh-faced American major called Brian Reed, imbued with purpose and optimism to an extent that makes you wonder how the State Department can keep turning them out.

He spent several months in the US in a class with 12 other majors, studying every detail of the district. 'When 12 majors can con an address from the Secretary of the Army, you know it's pretty important,' he says of his graduation day, 'I'm Vietnamese except for the eyes. We had 12 weeks of language, Vietnamese culture, Vietnamese government. The US is making a tremendous effort to bridge the cultural gap and the advisers are well-oriented. To a man they believe in what they're doing.'

'Up till 1969, the VC influence was very very strong. But with long hard pacification we've got access to anywhere in the district. What I see now is a gut reaction. The people are supporting the GVN.'

On his last tour in Vietnam, Reed was a missile officer. The biggest problem he saw then, he said, was apathy among the leaders. 'But this district chief', he says, 'is aggressive beyond what I ever imagined. They're not 20th-century executives, but they are unbelievably aggressive.' Before Reed, the previous US adviser had also found the district chief aggressive, and violently anti-American. Towards the end of the adviser's tour, the district chief had cut off the adviser's water supply and the adviser had cut off the district chief's electricity supply. The district chief bought a generator and the adviser had his water shipped in by the army. It was Reed's arrival which broke the stalemate.

We paid a visit on the village chief at An Thanh and on the way met a motorised cyclo bouncing over the stones, 'See that,' said Reed, 'Transportation is a priority commodity for the Vietnamese. They just love running around.'

The delta around Chuong Thien and Kien Giang is a place of awe-inspiring beauty. Its meadows, which produce two rice crops a year, and its waterways on which everyone can travel to every remote corner of almost any province with their outboard motors would be a paradise in peacetime. It has always defied the might of the US in its own special way. But it has been scarred in the process.

Flying low level in a helicopter over the paddy fields one day, there was a sudden explosion of automatic weapon fire, and I thought we were under attack. The pilot had stuck his M-16 out through the canopy and was shooting up the rice paddys for amusement. On his helmet was the inscription, 'Help Mend America'.

Can Tho, Vietnam

Donald Gould

The Case of the Caernarvon Boy

Last March, at the Chester Crown Court, a boy of 16 was sentenced to be detained for ten years 'in such place as the Home Secretary might decide' for an offence which Mr Justice Brabin described as 'more grievous' than any other he had known. The boy, Barry Watkinson, had attacked and then robbed a girl called Sandra Williams - two years his senior and a total stranger. He hit her over the head with a stick and fractured her skull. For two nights and a day she lay unconscious in a field near the Welsh town of Caernarvon until she was found by a man out walking his dog; she then lay unconscious in a hospital bed for eight days. She is remarkably lucky to be alive, and even luckier to be left with permanent damage no worse than a loss of smell, a dulled sense of taste, and some small defect in the vision of one eye.

In the customary judicial peroration which ends the grisly business of a trial, Mr Justice Brabin said to Barry 'what a catalogue of injuries you have caused to this girl . . . Eventually careful and thorough detection, and perhaps your own stupidity, resulted in your arrest. Having attacked your victim in this way, you robbed her. Anyone hearing of this act would say, in ordinary language, "He must be mad," or, to put it in another way, "He must have some medical disability that requires medical help". But you have been examined medically, and there is no medical explanation for your conduct, and nor can it be suggested that I should prescribe some kind of mental treatment.'

Barry went from Chester Crown Court to Risley, and thence to Walton Jail, but as I write, he is in the Borstal Allocation Centre in Manchester, awaiting more permanent lodgings 'in such place as the Home Secretary might decide'. Here is the story of the boyhood of the normally gentle lad whose outburst of senseless savagery apparently defies 'medical explanation'.

He is the son of a couple of alcoholics. His father died three years ago, probably - in part at least - as a result of his addiction. But not before he had turned Barry's mother out of the house. The boy went to live with his maternal aunt who, with her husband, became his foster parents. But he would constantly 'go missing' at nights from his foster home because his mother had taken to sleeping rough in the park. He would go out in order to find her and often did. He would then sleep alongside her in an effort to keep her warm.

He has a close relative in Caernarvon who underwent a leucotomy operation some while ago. For many years now this brain-slicing operation has only been practised in Britain for patients whose mental illness produces the kind of disruption which seems otherwise beyond control. Sometimes it works, to the extent that it makes an agonized patient a calm and contented member of a still effective family

group, but sometimes it doesn't; it can easily replace violence, or agitation, or obsessional behaviour, with a spiritless indifference. Barry's relative now walks the Caernarvon streets like, in the words of somebody who sees him there, 'a zombie'.

Schizophrenia is far and away the most socially disruptive of the common mental illnesses, and the chances that Barry's brain-sliced Caernarvon relative is a schizophrenic are high. There is good evidence that at least some half of all alcoholics are schizophrenics - and both Barry's parents were alcoholics. There is good evidence that schizophrenia is inherited.

Barry was caught after his attack on Sandra because he made several telephone calls to the police from public kiosks, telling them that he was the person they were after. On the fourth such occasion he was kept talking until the call could be traced, and a detective could reach the box and arrest the boy. This telephoning was presumably the 'stupidity' to which Mr Justice Brabin referred when sentencing the child. In a statement after his arrest; Barry made no attempt to deny the charge, but said 'Something came over me to kill', and then described how he quickly found his victim.

Schizophrenia is characterized by the pattern of bouts of acute disturbance, interspersed by periods of complete normality. There are no physical or chemical abnormalities whereby a schizophrenic can be identified during a 'normal' period. It is therefore not surprising that whatever doctor examined Barry before his trial found no immediate signs of mental illness. Indeed, Barry was clearly reacting to events in a wholly normal fashion at that time since, after sentence, he was led down the steps from the dock weeping bitterly.

Mrs Gwynneth Hemmings, who is the secretary of the Schizophrenia Association of Great Britain, happens to live in Caernarvon and so became aware of the case of Barry Watkinson, and concluded (rightly, I am certain) that the boy was mentally ill, and not responsible for his actions, when he made that senseless attack on the unhappy Sandra Williams. She wrote to her MP, Goronwy Roberts, who, in turn, wrote to the Home Secretary. Mr Maudling has now replied to Goronwy Roberts' claim that Barry needed 'proper treatment'. Maudling says 'As you say, Barry Watkinson will be able to get all the medical treatment he needs while he is in custody, but I am grateful for Mrs Hemmings' interest, and will see that copies of her letter are sent to the doctors in whose care he will be.'

Perhaps we cannot reasonably expect either judges or politicians to have any understanding of mental illness. We must hope that by great good fortune Barry finds, at the Borstal Allocation Centre in Manchester, somebody who does. But I wouldn't bet on it.