

Topics

Directions, New and Old

Prohibition

Ayatollah Khomeini is at it again. Now he wants to ban ideological or political discussion in Iranian schools. Reuters reports that parents have to pledge that their children — as young as 7 — will not participate in such discussion or activities. It's hard to imagine being a teacher or child in such circumstances. What should the exemplary teacher do when a child asks "Who was the Shah?" Is that political? Or "Is the Earth round?" Is that ideological?

And beyond specific topics, is no one concerned about the questions that will go unasked, the curiosity that will go unsatisfied and the educations that will be stunted as a consequence of inevitable fear and self-censorship among students and teachers?

None of this, evidently, worries the Ayatollah. How could it? This is, after all, the man who banned music.

Wallowing

Time has been kind to Richard Nixon. Many people find it hard to remain unforgiving indefinitely, and in any case it is awkward to stay surly to an ex-President, no matter how ex. Others, perhaps affected by his own version of history, are disposed to minimize his offenses, seeing in Watergate only a reflection of American values. Fawn Brodie's new study of the Nixon character recalls a New Yorker cartoon: "Look, Nixon's no dope; if the people really wanted

moral leadership, he'd give them moral leadership."

The Nixon-Haldeman transcript in *The Times* yesterday brought all this revisionism up short. It was almost like a reunion. The suspense and anger were gone; the end of the story is known this time around. But as we read how, as President, Richard Nixon sanctioned the idea of using murderous "thugs" to beat up anti-war demonstrators in Washington, setting an example "for universities, for other cities," it brought back the incredulity, and disgust, that went with reading through all those columns of Watergate transcripts.

Maybe Mr. Nixon had a point when he accused the public of wallowing in Watergate. But as this transcript reminds us, the Watergate tapes were not something cooked up on "Saturday Night Live." They were by the President, and from the White House.

The Maps Get Better . .

The M.T.A. has followed its excellent bus and subway maps with a new Commuter Rail Map, completing an exemplary set of pocket guides to New York's transit systems. The maps are a model of clarity.

Like its predecessors, the rail map is based on the radical notion that it helps to know where you are, and where you're going. Thus they all reflect the true geography of the metropolitan area. All lines and branches are color-coded, and the rail map shows the roads to the stations.

The maps are a reminder that the New York rail, bus and subway lines still form one of the best transit systems in the world for accessibility and reach. The trouble is that, for all their clarity, the maps explain the routing of trains that run unreliably, offend sensibilities with graffiti and filth and harbor crime. Perhaps the M.T.A. should give the people who publish the maps larger responsibility.

Who

Anyone with the price and a proper sense of symbolism can buy a Leather-smith appointment book. Its gilt-edged, pale blue pages have become standard equipment for busy over-achievers. But the status of a Leather-smith is being challenged by a new designer line. The man, or woman, with everything can now aspire to his or her own "Who's Who" appointment book, address book or wallet, with instantly recognizable burgundy leather and logo and the owner's name or initials stamped on the cover. What better off-hand way to indicate rank and prestige?

There is just one hitch. This guarantee of impeccable standing is being offered only to "Who's Who" biographees. But exclusivity, of course, only adds points to the status score and makes a product more desirable. Here, at last, is the definitive, discreet self-advertisement. In a world that measures success by fashionable labels, this could be the ultimate name brand.