

Topics

Royal to a T

Even before Mrs. Trollope rocketed through America in the early 19th century, people had been defining the difference between us and the English. (Mrs. Trollope said it was "want of refinement.") Language, it's been said, separates us. So does warm beer. And so, it appears, do T-shirts.

The British textile industry is being asked by the Lord Chamberlain to refrain from featuring Prince Charles and his fiancée on souvenir T-shirts, lest the couple be perceived as pressing their subjects' flesh.

Call it a want of refinement on our part, but we can't see why the L.C. is being so fussy. To Americans, who use T-shirts to celebrate rock concerts, ethnicity, heroes, heroines, affectional preference, bowling teams and pregnancy, a T-shirt that commemorates a wedding is only natural. And surely the country that is giving us Prince of Wales pencil sharpeners and Charles and Diana dish towels wouldn't be

Out of Uniform

guilty of lèse-majesté if it's also put to work on bride-n'-groom T's.

Brass

Do the huge cuts in Federal support for the arts suggest that culture has a low priority in Washington? Of course not. In an era of guns over butter, the Reagan Administration is simply putting its arts money where it belongs: in the defense budget.

It proposes to spend \$89.7 million on military bands. That would be \$1.7 million more than the \$88 million proposed for the National Endowment for the Arts. What if the country's symphony orchestras tried marching? Or administering.

It seems that in cutting the arts programs by 50 percent, the Administration will still have to increase the budget for managing the program by \$500,000. That's to process the applications and rejection slips for all those non-marching bands.

Redress

The Reagan team pledges to get Washington off everybody's back. Now Education Secretary Bell proposes to do so literally. He wants to stop overseeing public school dress codes.

That would end one of the sillier excesses of bureaucracy. Six years ago, Federal authorities ruled that school districts risk losing Government funds if they discriminate against students in the application of appearance codes. Unequal treatment was considered demeaning enough to warrant Federal intervention.

Couching dress code disputes in civil rights terms clouded the practical question of what Washington would actually do about violations. As Secretary Bell says, the regulation obligated the department to send investigators about the country checking on girls' see-through blouses. It is civil rights problems, not student appearance, that require Federal redress.