

opinion/editorial

Subscriptions needed to keep PBS above water

A plan to form a television subscription network in hopes of rescuing the floundering Public Broadcasting Service may be just the life preserver needed to keep public television afloat.

The proposed Public Subscriber Network, already approved by the PBS board, would be initiated to be a money-making network. Subscribers would be provided a certain hourly amount of programming each day for a monthly subscription fee. These programs then would be broadcast at a later date over PBS stations for nonsubscribers.

Obviously, the subscription characteristic goes against some of the basic attributes many PBS

viewers and contributors have found appealing about public television.

But viewers who enjoy the unique, entertaining and informative programming of noncommercial television may be forced to compromise to keep it alive even if that means sustaining public television in an amended form.

A variety of difficulties is causing PBS to thrash desperately for support if it is to keep the head of public television above water.

The livelihood of public broadcasting currently is being endangered by Reagan administration threats to severely reduce federal assistance for public television.

Compounding the problem even further is an increase in competition caused by the recent growth of cable broadcasting companies and rapidly rising operating costs. These dismal conditions facing public television service proves changes of some kind are necessary to save the television service.

The Public Subscriber Network would provide PBS with a steady income, which would make its existence more stable since it wouldn't have to rely just on the unpredictable financial support of individual contributors and the federal government.

Although it would be ideal to maintain PBS as it now exists; that is, as a true public broadcasting system, viewers also must be realistic.

Since the president's budget-cutters in Washington already have chosen to make PBS a public sacrifice, efforts should now be channeled toward keeping the badly needed and much-appreciated television service from going under all together.

Tinkerbell's theory of voodoo economics saves Ronnie Pan

Michael, John and Wendy Darling were just settling down to sleep when the window blew open and in flew a handsome figure in pea-green tunic, matching tights and boots.

"Hi, I'm Ronnie Pan," he said, striking a pose. "Come fly away with me to Never-Never Land, where I will cut your taxes 27 percent and thereby defeat Captain Hook, his evil pirate band and double-digit inflation."

arthur hoppe

"Oh, how wonderful, Ronnie," said Wendy, clapping her hands. "But how will cutting our taxes do all that?"

"By giving you more money to spend, of course," said Ronnie. "Anyone can see that."

Michael frowned. "But Ronnie," he said, "if we have more money to spend, we'll buy more things and prices will go up and inflation will only get worse. Won't it?"

Ronnie scowled and scuffed the toe of his boot on the carpet. "I hate details," he said. "Where is that Tinkerbell Stockman, my voodoo economist, when I need him?"

As though in answer to a prayer, a little glowing figure with a \$25 haircut and a bone in its nose flitted in the window, darted about the room and settled on the bedpost.

"Explain my plan, Tinkerbell," commanded Ronnie, retiring to a corner, folding his arms, standing on his head and closing his eyes. "But not too loudly."

"Oh, it's really quite simple, children," said Tinkerbell. "You won't spend the money Ronnie's going to give you. You'll put it in the bank."

"But we *always* spend our money," protested Little John.

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L. Salvador is our kind of guy

(The scene: The White House Bar and Grill in Washington, D.C. It is St. Patrick's Day, so the place is filled to capacity with beer-guzzling merrymakers. There is a long line outside the bar.)

"Hey bartender, let's have a refill over here," says a voice at one end of the bar. The bartender, an elderly, smiling chap named Ronald Reagan, saunters down the length of the bar to the man from whom the voice came.

clark

"Don't believe I've seen you in this bar before," says Reagan. "What'll you have?"

"Oh, I'm not picky on a holiday like this," says the man. "I'll have whatever everyone else is having."

Reagan makes a couple of swipes at the bar with a rag. "Not everybody in here is drinking the same thing," says Reagan, looking at the man suspiciously.

"In that case, I'll just have whatever is on tap then," says the man, starting to sweat a little.

"Let me get back to you in a minute," says Reagan. Reagan glides out from behind the bar, and goes to one of the corner tables.

"Hey Al," says Reagan. "Al Haig." The man at the table looks up. "What can I do for you Ronnie?" he says.

"See that man at the bar?" says Reagan, indicating the man he had just abandoned.

"I see him, but I sure don't know anything about him."

"Neither do I. Listen, there's a couple of free drinks in it for you if you'll go over and start a conversation with him. Find out who he is, what he is like . . . you know, see if he's one of us."

"Gotcha," says Haig, standing up to shove through the crowd to get to the stranger at the bar.

An hour passes as Haig plies the visitor with alcoholic beverages and happy conversation. Reagan supplies the drinks, free of charge. At one point Haig leaves his new-found friend, ostensibly to go the bathroom. Reagan follows after a one-minute delay.

"What do you have on the guy?" says Reagan. "Last name is Salvador. L. Salvador. Won't give me his whole first name," says Haig.

"Is that all?" asks Reagan. "That's not worth any free drinks."

"Oh, there's plenty more. The guy is kind of down on his luck. But he's our kind of guy, though."

Reagan looked hesitant. "How can he be our kind of guy if he's down on his luck? We don't like anybody else who is down on their luck."

Haig waves his arms to quiet Reagan down. "Listen, listen, maybe I got ahead of myself there a little. It seems this guy is from south of here, and he wants to open a franchise in your name. He says that if you'll supply him with enough capital to get started, he can put Castro's Tavern out of business in a year and he'll split the profits with you. Labor is real cheap down there, he says."

"How is he going to put Castro's out of business?" "Well, let me put it this way. We are not dealing with the most scrupulous of businessmen. Like I said, he's . . . our kind of guy," says Reagan, finishing Haig's thought.

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