

# The Report of the "Gracie Commission"

With all the attention being given to the deficit-reducing recommendations of the Grace Commission, the more imaginative suggestions of another advisory body have been completely ignored.

I'm speaking, of course, of the Gracie Commission, a group formed to apply to our unbalanced budget the non-sequiturial problem-solving abilities of George Burns' late wife.

How did the Gracie Commission determine what Gracie would have suggested?

First, they listened to tapes of old Burns and Allen radio programs. Then they watched tapes of the old Burns and Allen television programs. After that, they called George Burns himself to testify before the Commission. Finally, with the aid of a medium, the Commission was able to establish contact with Gracie herself, who responded to her husband's inquiries in her usual manner:

GEORGE: Gracie, how would you balance the budget — by raising taxes or by reducing expenditures?

GRACIE: No.

GEORGE: No? No to which one? No, you wouldn't raise taxes, or no, you wouldn't reduce expenditures?

GRACIE: No. I wouldn't do either.

GEORGE: How would you do it then?

GRACIE: Just like Aunt Esther.

GEORGE: Aunt Esther?

GRACIE: You know, Aunt Esther with the candelabra made out of moose antlers?

GEORGE: How could I forget?

GRACIE: And the combination refrigerator/Murphy bed. It was so hard to get to sleep in that thing —

GEORGE: Because the little light never went off. Now wait a minute, Gracie. What do Aunt Esther's candelabra and sleeper-freezer have to do with balancing the budget?

GRACIE: She sold them.

GEORGE: To the U.S. government?

GRACIE: No, silly. She sold the candelabra to Melvin Schwartz and the refrigerator bed to Mrs. Wilson.

GEORGE: And she donated the money to the government?

GRACIE: No, George, she kept the money.

GEORGE: How does that help the government balance the budget?

GRACIE: It didn't help the government balance the budget; it helped Aunt Esther balance her budget.

GEORGE: And how does that help the government?

GRACIE: They could do the same thing.

GEORGE: Where is the government going to get a candelabra made out of moose antlers and a combination refrigerator/Murphy bed?

GRACIE: No, George, they wouldn't sell those things; they would sell other things. They could have a great big garage sale.

GEORGE: And what would they sell?

GRACIE: Well, first they could sell all those old phonograph albums.

GEORGE: The Congressional Records?

GRACIE: I'm not sure they'd be in very good shape, though, what with the way those politicians treat them —

GEORGE: Running on their records?

GRACIE: Right. But they *could* sell all those pharmaceutical statues they confiscate every year. It's a shame to destroy them!

GEORGE: Pharmaceutical statues?

GRACIE: You know, the drug busts.

GEORGE: Of course. And who would they sell these confiscated drugs to?

GRACIE: They could sell them to the people they took them from.

GEORGE: Wouldn't that be a bad idea to let all those drugs back out on the street?

GRACIE: No, George. As soon as the drug dealers bought the drugs, they would be arrested and the drugs would be confiscated again. It's illegal to buy illegal drugs, you know.

GEORGE: Good point.

GRACIE: And then they could sell all our military secrets to the Communists. Of course, they would classify everything as top secret to get the best price.

GEORGE: Of course, but wouldn't that jeopardize national security?

GRACIE: No, silly, they'd only be selling them the same secrets they're already getting from other sources — you know, traitors, spies, journalists. They'd just be cutting out the middleman.

GEORGE: Let them buy wholesale, right?

GRACIE: Right. Then they could sell all the FBI's scandal files.

GEORGE: Who would they sell those to?

GRACIE: To newspapers, television

networks, publishers. Oh, wouldn't you just love to know which congressmen are cheating on their wives, which ones are alcoholics, which ones take bribes, which ones knew Marilyn Monroe —

GEORGE: But don't you think some of those congressmen would be pretty upset about having their privacy invaded like that?

GRACIE: Then *they* could buy the files.

GEORGE: Fair enough.

GRACIE: And then they could sell all 535 seats in Congress.

GEORGE: And where would the 535 congressmen sit?

GRACIE: In the seats. But they would have to pay for them first.

GEORGE: But, Gracie, this is America: we can't sell political offices.

GRACIE: But we wouldn't be selling the offices, just the seats. They can have their offices for free. Besides, the congressmen already spend millions of dollars getting elected, but the money goes to advertising agencies and television stations. Why shouldn't some of it go to the government instead?

GEORGE: Why, indeed? But supposing for a moment, Gracie, that the sale of drugs and military secrets and FBI files and congressional seats doesn't generate enough revenue to balance the budget?

GRACIE: Well, then, they would just have to sell the whole government.

GEORGE: To?

GRACIE: The highest bidder, of course.

GEORGE: Special interest groups, the Russians, third world countries with guaranteed loans?

GRACIE: No, they already get everything they want out of America.

GEORGE: Who then?

GRACIE: How about the American people?

GEORGE: Sell the government to the American people?

GRACIE: Sure, why not? It belonged to them in the first place.

GEORGE: Do you think they would want to buy it?

GRACIE: It does have sentimental value, George. But if they do buy it —

GEORGE: Yes?

GRACIE: This time they'd better get a receipt.

GEORGE: Say goodnight, Gracie. ■

*The author just joined The New American as an associate editor.*