

Shortgrass Country
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This is written from a motel room in San Angelo, and it seems that bringing my typewriter to town could turn out to be a big mistake. The Wool Capital's county unit is on a gigantic property revaluation binge. Getting caught packing portable office equipment into a motel room could mean becoming part of the new tax target.

However, ranchers and farmers have the commissioner's court so distracted that chances are good that I won't be apprehended. At breakfast this morning, seven waitresses were able to serve six dozen eggs and a double-deck load of pancakes without ever discovering that my wife and I had a center table in the coffee shop. If the county tax harvesters are as blind as those girls were, a man could slip a complete printing press into town without being taxed.

You can safely bet that the guests around here wouldn't make good tax squealers, either. They spend the day lying in the hot July sun. Out at the ranch, cowhands have to be choused from the shade, but at these classy joints the customers demand air conditioning and then fight each other for the sunny side of the pool.

From what I've seen thus far, it looks like the tax officers should be specializing in a toll on suntan lotions and wrinkle-free bathing suits instead of doubling up on the ranchers. The principal pastime in the motel area is rubbing on creams and lapping up high calorie refreshments.

Revenue agents wouldn't have such a hard time fleecing these swimmers as they would an old boy wearing a pair of baggy britches stuck in the top of his boots. Modern swim apparel is so scanty, a molecule of sand in the seams would break the lines. The slickest tax evader in the country couldn't hide a four-bit piece in the whole stack of bikinis.

The morning paper says ranchers and farmers are going to have a meeting in front of the courthouse. Committees are going to be forced to see, I suppose, if the new double and triple rises in land taxes can be brought into focus by the great observatory out in the Davis Mountains.

I am not planning to go sunbathing or tax-protesting. Too much sunshine will give you sun colic, and too much battling losing causes will give you an inferiority complex. Shortgrass ranching gives a fellow enough pains and complexes without having to go looking for trouble.

Ranchers and farmers ought to know better than to question values drawn by foreign-based land appraisers backed by such august bodies as the commissioner's court. Show me one herder or tiller who has ever been called upon to evaluate, say, the true worth of the Philadelphia Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, and I can list four dozen agents and agencies that, without ever having seen a cow track or a straight furrow, know more about agriculture than Lord Chesterfield knew about frock coats.

The instigators of this fracas are going to mighty ashamed of themselves when the San Angelo area is known as the Inland Ad Valorem Capital of the World.