

# Opinion/Commentary/Letters

## Ceteris Paribus

### Riding into the sunset legislation

By MARK RANKIN

It is true, I am told, that not so very long ago a man got himself elected to the honorable post of Hide and Animal Inspector for the City of Houston. One cannot help but feel sorry for: a) the City of Houston or, b) the newly appointed Hide and Animal Inspector or, c) those hides and animals summarily due for inspection.

It is also true, I am convinced that the citizens of the City of Houston should: a) move or, b) throw the rascal out or, c) provide him with more hides and animals than he knows what to do with.

In fact, the position is an archaic one, a remnant from times past when hides and animals were left unattended on the streets of the largest city in Texas. The message, however, is far from archaic: the moving legislature, having legislated, moves on and seldom looks back.

There are those of us who would just as soon not have the Hide and Animal Inspectors looking after our hides and animals but this is bureaucracy and our alternatives are limited. After all, what does one do with a bureaucracy after it is no longer functional? One group says that we should legislate it out of existence.

Common Cause, the "citizen's lobby," is pushing the so-called "Sunset" approach to legislating bureaucracy and I am tempted to join them.

The Sunset approach calls for a mandatory time limit in which a newly created agency can operate. This is to say that the consumer protection agency created today will automatically dissolve five years from now unless it is relegislated or allowed to continue by recommendation of a special committee. However, this proposal raises some very interesting questions.

On, how does one determine the relative usefulness of a particular bureau? How much consumer protection is just enough? How much is too little? How much is too much? What about those who are to determine the relative merits of the bureau at its "Sunset," will they be less ignorant than those who regulate bureaucracy today?

It seems to me that the exponents of Sunset legislation may be just a bit on the naive side when it comes to these questions. Today, bureaucracy is evaluated on the basis of both subjective and objective criteria. An agency is doing its job well or it isn't. This is subjective. An agency is worth \$X as allocated by the legislature. This is objective. Sunset laws offer no solution to these vagaries.

Another problem has to do with the nature of bureaucracy itself. The bureaucrat, having been allocated \$X, is obliged to spend it regardless

of the true need. We must remember that bureaucrats are like the rest of us: the urge of self-preservation is a strong one and a bureaucrat who cannot spend his fiscal allotment is a Hide and Animal Inspector who has not been doing his job. The Sunset approach offers us no assurance that bureaucrats will not continue to be inefficient in their spending habits.

On the other hand, the present system provides for a reassessment of state agencies every fiscal period when the pesos are allocated. Is it possible that the apparent inefficiency of bureaucracy is due more to the lack of legislative responsibility than the lack of Sunset legislation?

I am told that Colorado has, or will enact, Sunset laws. Until we can see their real effect on bureaucracy, let's not throw out the baby with the bath water. Wait and see if he drowns first.

### Mondale changing role of VP

WASHINGTON — A half-hour after he got back to his hotel suite in Tokyo from a banquet tendered by Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda, Vice President Walter F. Mondale was having a nightcap with some of the reporters who accompanied him on his round-the-world trip.

He had changed to blue jeans, sneakers, and a flannel shirt, and he was talking about what he'd like to

do to unwind from the taxing 10-day journey.

"I'd like to get home (to Minnesota) and do some ice-fishing," Mondale said, "if Jimmy lets me."

The last four words were uttered without emphasis or irony in Mondale's normal flat, slightly nasal voice. But they say a lot about why this Vice President so far seems to be avoiding the fate of his predecessors and building a significant role for himself in the Carter administration.

They capsulized the attitude of unawed deference that Mondale has developed toward Carter. "If Jimmy lets me" suggests both intimacy and dependency, and it says that Mondale is comfortable with both aspects of the relationship.

It is hard to imagine another Vice President of modern times being quite so relaxed in his attitude toward his President. Try to think of Richard Nixon saying that about "Ike" or Lyndon Johnson about "Jack," and you can see how ludicrous it sounds.

The experience of those two men, and a good many other Vice Presidents, argues against the likelihood of Mondale's chances of building a long-term role for himself as Carter's "chief adviser and chief helper across the board," to quote the phrase Hamilton Jordan used last week in describing him.

But the very fact that Jordan, the de facto White House chief of staff, would use that phrase suggests that a revolution may be in store.

Mondale has made a study of the past problems of Vice Presidents and, as he told reporters during this trip, the conclusions were "very grim." He talked to his predecessor, Nelson Rockefeller, and he talked to his mentor, Hubert Humphrey, and he knew in advance "how wide" the gulf can be down West Executive Avenue, which separates the Oval Office from the Vice President's formal office in the adjoining Executive Office Building.

He concluded from their experience that a Vice President who sought responsibility for a specific area of government policy would confront one of two hazards, or maybe both: a brutal battle with the officials and bureaucrats of the department whose "turf" he was invading, and/or a 20-hour-a-day involvement in chores the President considered too "trivial" for his attention.

The way to avoid that fate, Mondale decided, was to be a generalist, "staying in the loop" of policy making and communications into and out of the Oval Office, and serving as a "general policy adviser" to the President.

Remarkably, that appears to be exactly what he is doing. It is Carter, of course, who deserves most of the credit for creating this useful role for an office regarded as redundant by some scholars of the American system.

When asked if he thinks he may fall victim to staff intrigues or presidential jealousy — the twin banes of past Vice Presidents — Mondale says: "I don't think so. We've talked about that. Carter is a different type of person. I don't think that's going to happen."

Considering the history, one still has to keep fingers crossed. But there's reason to hope that this time, for once, a Vice President is being given a chance to exercise his abilities — and considerable abilities they are — on behalf of his government and his country. (c) 1977, The Washington Post

### Slouch

by Jim Earle



"OF COURSE, I MIGHT BE WRONG, BUT A STRAP-ON TV DOESN'T TURN ME ON!"

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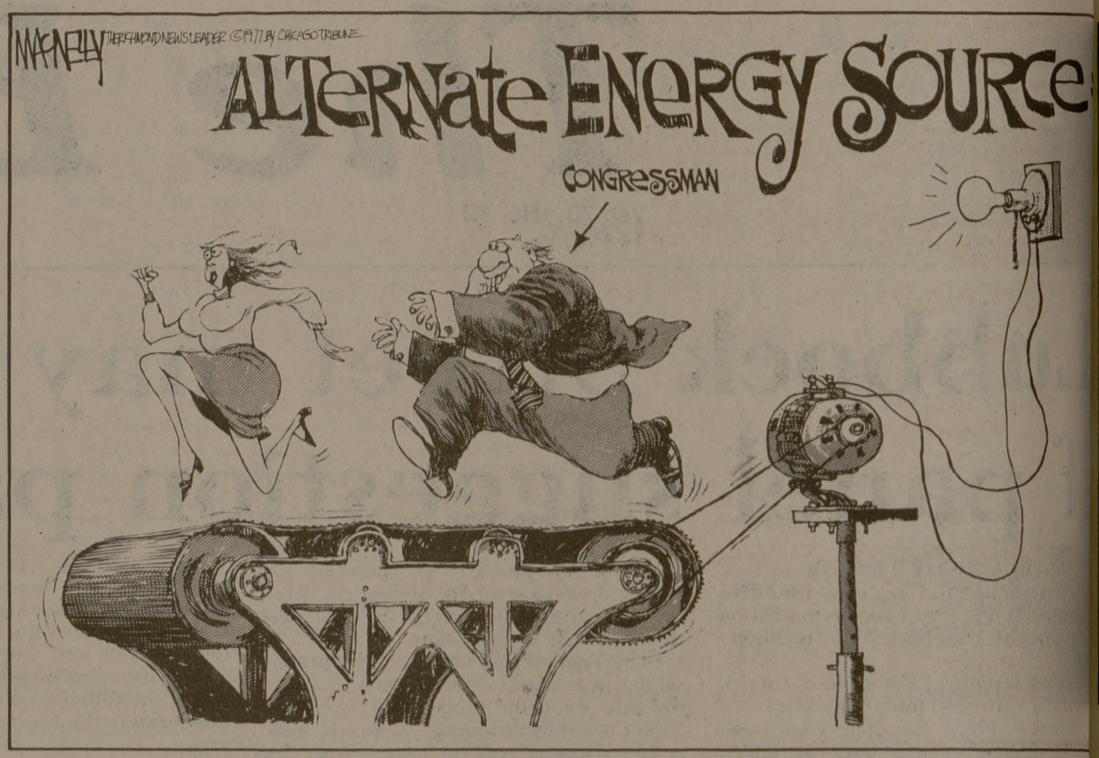
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### University pet policy defended

Editor: In response to Debbie Ingram's letter on allowing pets in the married student housing, I would like to say something in defense of the University's decision.

If they did allow pets in the married student complex, they would in all fairness have to allow pets in the on-campus housing units. This would not be feasible. Living in close quarters would turn the dorm into a zoo.

Another valid complaint is that

not all dogs are as well-mannered as yours. I live in an apartment complex that allows pets if you are willing to put down a \$100 deposit. Starting next year, however, the complex is no longer allowing any animals because in most cases the damage deposit does not cover the repairs that most apartments need after a dog has left it.

It's just too bad that the people who were here before us took advantage of the apartment owners. It has cost many of us the joy of having

our pets here with us. However, you cannot deny the fact that the University and apartment owners have sound reasons for barring animals from their premises.

Please don't think that I'm hard-hearted because I have a dog here who isn't going to have a hard time getting together and trying to persuade these people that they are wrong, hope so.

—Karen Rogers

### 'Shuttle bus service deteriorating

Editor: Shuttle bus service has deteriorated since last fall when the service was efficient and staffed with courteous drivers. This semester the buses, particularly on the north route, are frequently off of the schedule and some drivers are rude.

Waiting for the bus 30 minutes before class should ensure getting there on time since buses are supposed to run the route every 15 minutes. Recently this has not been so. I, and a group of others, have been late to class three consecutive days after waiting in the cold for over half an hour. I did not buy a bus pass to be late for class. I could pocket that \$15 and be late on my own.

On campus, students just released from class many times cannot find a bus and must wait an average of 15 minutes. And too frequently two buses pull into the stop simultaneously when they should be on opposite sides of the route.

At night, waiting 30 minutes is usually the minimum and individual bus stops along the north route are not all well-lit. Recently the cold and dark have been quite intimidating.

Late one afternoon some 50 riders waited at the stop for about 40 minutes. When the bus arrived its driver left in his own car, leaving the motor running in the unattended bus. The night was cold and the bus, finally loaded, was crowded

with people huddled in seats standing in the aisle. We waited about 15 minutes for the driver. When he finally came, I was quite hostile to one rider who inquired about the delay. Temperatures could have flared higher but fortunately the riders practiced self-control.

Lately a few drivers have assumed such a hateful disposition and perhaps with some justification. However, it seems that if they cannot hold to the schedule they are at least be civil to their dissatisfied customers. Having both a late bus and a cantankerous driver changes the shuttle bus from a service to a disservice.

—Sarah E. White

### Crime rarely pays in Japan

By YASUSHI HARA  
Hara is an editor of the Asahi Shimbun, the Japanese daily.

TOKYO — On December 10, 1975, the Tokyo police experienced, the most humiliating moment in their otherwise brilliant history. For on that day, the statute of limitations went into effect that put a daring band of criminals beyond the reach of law.

Seven years earlier, a gang of men on motorcycles had intercepted an armored van carrying cash to a leading Tokyo bank, getting away with the equivalent of \$1 million. Despite the strenuous efforts of a special police investigation unit, the men were never apprehended, much less identified.

On the anniversary of the crime, television reporters and newspaper commentators still recall the incident, reminding the robbers that they can no longer be prosecuted and urging them to reveal themselves.

The annual appeal promises to become a yearly event — and it is bound to become a regular embarrassment to the cops as well.

But it is also an embarrassment to the average Japanese, who has traditionally taken enormous pride in the ability of the Tokyo police to keep the crime rate here down to one of the lowest on earth. So the case of the robbers who eluded arrest, while a failure for the cops, serves to illustrate the rarity of criminal offenses in Japan.

Japan's crime rate, in contrast to that of most other countries in the world, is not only low, but it has been declining within recent years.

The number of homicides, for example, has dropped from 2,738 in 1954 to 1,864 in 1975. As many murders take place every year in New York City, which has a population one-tenth the size of Japan's.

The number of criminal assaults has also gone down. Fewer than 35,000 cases were reported last year — compared to more than 400,000 in the United States.

The performance of the police, meanwhile, has generally been first-rate. In 1974, the last year for which statistics are available, they caught 96 per cent of the suspects allegedly involved in murder cases and 92 per cent of those sought for other criminal assaults.

The police are effective, in large measure, because they are respected and feared by Japanese, who traditionally incline to symbols of authority. As a consequence, cops

can count on help from citizens, who consider cooperation with the police to be part of their obligation to society.

This attitude, in turn, has imbued the Japanese police with a strong sense of duty. Patrolmen normally work 70 hours per week and often put in a good deal of overtime, and the idea of cops striking for high pay, as periodically occurs elsewhere, is regarded as outlandish here.

Another factor contributing to the low rate of crime in Japan is the efficiency of the laws controlling weapons. The only persons allowed to carry hand-guns are government security officials, and shotguns are carefully regulated through a computerized registration system.

As a result, only 171 crimes committed in 1975 involved the use of guns — although knives were employed in some 4,300 offenses.

Yet another element in the picture is the extraordinarily low availability of narcotics in Japan, which means that very few crimes are committed by desperate drug addicts. Here again, narcotics violations have declined from about 1,000 in 1965 to fewer than 300 in 1975, primarily because the police have been able to curb the drug traffic.

With all this, however, probably the most significant reason for the low incidence of crime in Japan lies in the Japanese social structure, which is built around the family.

Here, as in other Asian societies, people are reluctant to commit crimes lest they bring shame and disgrace on their families. Indeed, it is not uncommon in Japan for a

criminal to be persuaded by his mother to surrender to the police.

A key question at the moment, though, is whether this constraint can resist the pressures of social change that are affecting Japan much the same way that they are warping other industrialized countries.

Although the overall crime rate is declining, the number of offenses committed by juveniles is on the increase, and this reflects the gradual erosion of parental authority along with a rise in the urge to acquire material goods, which is symptomatic of Japan's economic success.

Thus the present drop in crime could only be an interlude, as Japan may eventually find itself faced, like the rest of the world, with the challenge to maintain law and order.

### Readers' Forum

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