

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Still no faith in 'unequal' taxation

Editor: A letter of mine was printed some time ago (Feb. 23) and when I skimmed through it then I discovered a missing phrase. Since the absence of that phrase reduced a sentence to nonsense I was rather upset, but not upset enough to make the effort to complain. However over the holidays I reread what I thought I had written and discovered a more subtle and an even more devastating error. The word unequal had been changed to equal. This rather effectively reduced my position to gibberish. I am now quite sufficiently incensed and will now complain about your shoddy editing, proofreading, printing or whatever it was that ambushed my letter.

More importantly I wish to make clear what I intended to say. First these sentences, "This is the situation in America today. The poor pay

half their income in taxes (mostly in regressive state and local taxes) and the rich pay half of theirs (mostly in Federal income taxes)," became nonsense with the inept omission of the phrase "The poor pay half their income in taxes." Secondly changing the word equal (the word that appeared in print) to unequal (the word that I wrote) produces the sentence "I contend that some thought on her part would have eliminated both her confusion and her stary-eyed faith in unequal taxation." Since I was complaining about an editorial that called for more progressive taxation it would have been quite impossible for me to take the writer of that editorial to task for faith in equal taxation which is what your misprint had me doing. Progressive taxes are inherently unequal since they insist upon taxing one class of people more than other classes.

With these corrections made I

will restate the points I wished to make taxation. 1) The people who are taxed the heaviest in America are the poor who cannot afford it and the rich whose incentive to put their money to productive use is stifled. 2) It is unjust to tax one man more than another. 3) "Reformers" who insist upon piling layer upon layer of reform on the existing tax structure have created a legal miscreant with unnecessarily complex deformities.

There is much more to be said

about this subject but I will limit myself to restating these points and hoping that they are not garbled once again.

—H. Ed. Mendieta, '80

Editor's note: Any omissions or shoddy editing in the letter was your fault and not the fault of The Battalion. The letter was published exactly as it was submitted except for one minor spelling correction. Your original letter is available for your inspection in the editor's office, Reed McDonald 222.

Why does Japan's postal system work?

By YASUSHI HARA

TOKYO — Postal systems in most countries are troubled by delays and deficits. But the Japanese mail service claims to be the most efficient in the world, and there is much to substantiate that boast.

The postal network reaching out across Japan's islands handles some 35 million pieces of mail daily, and a good many envelopes bear foreign languages. In contrast to Western nations, there are no street addresses in Japanese cities and towns.

Yet most of this mail is delivered on the same day — or, at worst, overnight. And this year, as the result of a recent boost in rates, the system expects to match its expenditures of \$2.8 billion with an equal sum in revenues.

Like so much else in Japan, the postal system functions effectively because the Japanese, who tend to view their society in family terms, eagerly and often voluntarily cooperate in its operations.

Although hired and paid by the government, nearly half of the country's 134,000 postal employees are selected from among the residents of the zones in which they work. Many of those who manage district post offices are prominent in local cultural and welfare organizations, or belong to neighborhood associations.

Thus their jobs, while a form of patronage, are considered to be a public service, and they generally enjoy the confidence and respect of their neighbors, who pitch in to make the postal system run smoothly.

The Japanese further contribute to the smoothness of the system by rigorously observing post office regulations designed to speed mail through automated devices now being installed throughout the country.

The Japanese postal system is meanwhile becoming increasingly sophisticated with the addition of machinery to read and sort mail as well as cancel stamps. These machines are mainly concentrated

at present in big cities like Tokyo and Osaka.

To facilitate rapid delivery in large cities, where skyscrapers have mushroomed, the government rebates the occupants of buildings who make arrangements to accept bulk mail and distribute it among themselves. The occupants of buildings over three stories high that lack elevators are required by law to have ground floor mail boxes.

With all this, the Japanese system is not without problems, especially in the arena of relations between the government and the most militant of the two postal employees unions.

Strikes by public service employees in Japan are illegal. But unionized postal workers occasionally do strike, usually to complain that the government discriminates against union members. Some of these strikes can be bitter, with the government retaliating by docking employees a part of their wages.

The strikes rarely last long, however, and it is exceptional when a labor conflict in the postal system holds up mail for more than three days.

Compared to the United States, in which postage is still a bargain, Japanese rates are expensive. At the beginning of last year, the basic cost of a first-class letter was more than doubled to the equivalent of 17 cents. This rate increase should bring the postal budget into balance.

Last year, the postal system here ran at a deficit of some \$430 million, the difference made up by government loans. In the United States, where first-class postage is 13 cents, the operating deficit of the postal service was nearly \$1.2 billion.

The Japanese system, however, has one thing in common with the American and other postal services. Dogs bark at mailmen — and occasionally bite them.

(Hara is an editor of the Asahi Shimbun, the Japanese daily.)



Race on for Young's seat

ATLANTA — In the almost 50 years since Rep. Oscar DePriest of Chicago became the first black elected to Congress since Reconstruction days, there has been one unbroken rule. Once a district sent a black Member to the House, the seat could be considered safely black.



David S. Broder

Slow as the progress of blacks has been in their struggle for a voice in the national government — even now, they have only 16 House members and one senator — there at least has been no slipping backward.

But that record may be broken here on April 5 when a runoff election is held for the seat of former Fifth District Rep. Andrew Young. He resigned to become the American ambassador to the United Nations.

The opponents in that contest — the survivors of a 12-person donnybrook held last Tuesday — are Wyche Fowler the white president of the Atlanta city council, and John Lewis, the black civil rights worker endorsed by Young as his successor.

Fowler is the early favorite for the April 5 runoff, which tests the voting strength of two liberal Democrats with few visible differences on the issues.

The council president led Lewis by 8,000 votes in the first round. Even if Lewis picked up all the votes that went to the other black candidates, while Fowler got only his own votes again on April 5, Fowler would still win.

But Fowler is expected to get the backing of most of those who supported the third-place finisher, Republican State Sen. Paul Coverdell, or at least of those who bother to return to the polls for the runoff.

Fowler is the better-known of the two survivors and raised three times as much money as did Lewis for the first stage of the race. He boasts the

biggest volunteer campaign organization in the city.

For all these reasons — and more — Fowler is the betting favorite in the runoff. And if he wins, it would be the first time in modern history that a white has succeeded a black in the House of Representatives.

Fowler argues, with great plausibility, that Atlanta no longer needs to prove its racial tolerance by sending a black to Congress. And since the district is estimated to be about 60 percent white in its population — Young having won only because he was able to gain substantial white support against white opponents — Fowler is certainly as "representative" of the district as is Lewis.

To an outsider, at least, both men possess enough leadership potential to make themselves valuable in the House. Despite frequent clashes with Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, Fowler has been regarded as a progressive force in the city government. And Lewis, though lacking Young's elegance and style, has done a solid, important job as the director of the Voter Education Project, which has registered thousands of blacks across the South.

If there is any one factor that weighs in the balance, it is the claim that there is a special interest — perhaps even a national interest — in preserving whatever small footholds blacks have gained in the Congress.

That consideration should have weighed in Young's own mind,

when he gave up his elected post to accept an appointment from President Carter; this reporter made the observation at the time.

But there is still force in the argument that Atlanta voters may give some thought to the fact that east of Memphis and south of Philadelphia, there is no other House district that has been represented by a black.

When he was here before the election, plugging for Lewis, Young said: "I happen to believe that the Fifth Congressional District is the only national district. I was forced to represent 2 1/2 million blacks who had been denied representation by reapportionment, by disenfranchisement, by literacy tests, and long history of denials. I was not the congressman from this district but from the southeast region."

The argument is open to rebuttal. Blacks in other districts may be well-represented by their black congressmen as whites in Atlanta were by Young. Our system of representation, fortunately, is not as rigidly religious, racial or ethnic.

But, as Young pointed out, even one black congressman can have an important effect on the overall representation for his whole region. "We were able to help good white candidates across the South be elected," Young said, "because he could go to the black community (of their districts) and say, 'This is a good man; you may not know him but I work alongside him day by day, and on the tough issues we count on him.'"

In that sense at least, the hands of black Representatives are a precious asset to the country, not just to their own districts. And that is why the Atlanta runoff, testing the no-retreat principle, is of unusual importance.

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Slouch by Jim Earle



"HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT IT'S THE SAME ONES WHOSE RIDES LEAVE EARLY WHOSE RIDES LEAVE LATE FOR COMING BACK?"

The Battalion

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THE CRAFTS AND ARTS COMMITTEE, an MSC Committee, is looking for interested and enthusiastic committee members. There will be an organizational meeting Thursday, March 24, at 7:30 p.m. in the Arts and Crafts Center in the MSC. We will discuss upcoming events and new programs and we would like your ideas.

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