Consumer advocacy vs. common sense

First they postponed the air bags in cars. Now the House of Representatives has defeated plans for a proposed new consumer protection agency. Nader attributed the defeat, by a hefty 227 to 189 vote, to "the corrupting influence of big business campaign contributions.

Actually, it was a modest victory for common

The proposed agency, which has been in the legislative works for years in one form or another, was perceived as yet another layer of bureaucracy with little focus. The plan was to establish a new department of government which would represent the consumer's interests before other government bodies. The consumer advocates would have the power to appeal decisions or take them to the courts if they didn't think the outcome was in the consumer's best interests.

It sounds good, but there are some fundamental problems. First, it's not always obvious what's in the consumer's best interest. Which would you choose - more lawnmower safety devices and higher prices for lawnmowers, or lower prices at greater risk to your toes and feet? Both sides have consumer appeal, but for different reasons.

Second, the consumer agency's function would have been largely superfluous. The federal government is already laden with regulatory agencies which are supposed to take the consumer's point of view into account. Of course, many of them are captives of the industries they regulate. But the solution is not to capitulate by establishing another watchdog agency to watch the watchdogs; it is to appoint more consumer-minded individuals to existing boards and agencies.

Much to the horror of business interests in some cases, this is precisely what President Carter has been doing. Many of Ralph Nader's closest associates are now members of the Carter administration. Some of them have become targets of their former boss's scathing denunciations.

If consumer protection is what they're after, Congress can do better by continuing to pass legislation in specific areas such as money lending and credit policies, auto safety, consumer fraud and the like. It is lobbying for legislation like this much of it valuable, some of it silly — that accounts for Ralph Nader's reputation as the nation's chief consumer advocate.

But we see no reason to enshrine his point of view permanently in yet another costly government agency

The Greensboro N.C. Daily News

Panama: The great canal giveaway

By MICHAEL WARD MILLS

I wish to urge all readers to appeal to their Congressmen and urge them to propose a resolution declaring that all flags be lowered to half-mast to commemorate America's Day of Shame in recognition of one of the most reckless and tragic acts in our nation's history; the ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty; or more fitting, for the Great Giveaway of the American Canal

The confirmation of the treaty, riding the crest of lies and half truths about the proper sovereignty and effectiveness to us has created one fighting mad citizen in me, as it should in most of you, since the overwhelming majority of Americans, according to records of Senators' mail, opposed this sell-out for numerous and sound rea-

In spite of those brow-beating moralists that would have us pick apart and solve our consciences over the issue of our sover-eignty there, which is valid, the facts blow away all arguments that the Canal is not ours and is no longer needed. Consider the fact that 66 percent of all U.S. export shipping last year transitted the Canal. Not only this, but 96 percent of the U.S. fleet can transit the canal, even considering the fact that most supertankers that can't transit the canal don't have routes that bring them

The Maritime Administration has estimated that by the year 2,000, U.S. exports through the Canal will double (wouldn't you rather save three months around South

Readers Forum

America and also save the risk of America being shutoff by Panama because they sud-denly change their attitude or else are unable to maintain it because of ineptitude? However, I guess that the second possibility has already been taken care of since, contrary to what the man "who promised never to lie to us" has told us, we will be paying directly \$20 million in revenues to Panama when the treaty goes into effect in October, 1979. You will be "asked" to give the Reds \$50 million in military assistance over the next 10 years, as well as to finance the training of their Canal operators.

The obvious military importance of the Canal blows away any doubt of the same. The main flaw in the neutrality treaty is that there is no stopping Panama, with United Nations support, from shutting down quick American transits in time of war. While the fact is that 96 percent of our present fleet can transit the canal, the projected growth of the fleet is toward smaller, faster vessels, so that, in essence, the Canal would assume proceeded to give the American people a good, old-fashioned snow job. By the way, wasn't it funny that the Merchant Midland even more importance. What we actually need is a bigger Canal!

Don't be fooled by the everloving, trusting declarations made by our State Department; the typical Communist bargaining position has been, and will continue to be: "What is ours, is ours; what is yours, is negotiable." The result of the Kissingeresque style of shady, clouded diplomacy has been revealed in contradictions, numerous

and serious of what the treaty means.

Escobar Torrijos' official spokesman revealed several of these points in a speech last October: the U.S. will have no defense rights in time of war past the year 2,000, that U.S. ships would get no preferential neutrality treaty would not apply during foreign attack or internal disorder. All of course, in direct contradiction of the propaganda and hurried assurance of our illus-

trious State Department. Americans, particularly represented by the on the issue of the House vote Texans who sent mail opposing the treaty by 99 percent to your good Senator Bentsen, who voted for the damned thing. Carter, under this influence of his advisors of the infamous Trilateral Commission, Mills is a junior geophysics major.

Bank of Chicago, one of whose directors is on the commission, has \$12 million dollars coming to it from Panama by way of direct loans? Makes you wonder if one of the real motivations was to hand the Canal to Panama, so that as the Canal talks were gradually raised, the Panamanians could kick it back to their master's banks.

The fact of the matter is that the old saying, "what you see is what you get," does not apply in this case. Now Carter and his cohorts are trying to circumvent the Constitution which requires that the whole Congress, and not the Senate only, must vote to ratify not any treaty, but specifically that U.S. ships would get no preferential those treaties involving the expropriation transit rights in time of war, and that the of American territory. The big reason, of course, is that it hasn't a ghost of a chance of passing through the House because of close constituent ties. This flagrant violation will not occur if you good people will write to our respective Congressmen and urge The most regrettable part of the mess is them to sign the petition asking for a favorthat despite the overwhelming disfavor of able decision from the Justice Department

In this age of so-called "democratic" ideals and lip service pertaining to such let's show Washington who still runs this

Senators get old too

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — Of the 33 senators whose terms were scheduled to expire this year, two have died since the beginning of the current Congress and eight others have announced their retirements.

The retirees include three relatively

young men — James Abourezk (D-S.D.), 47; Dewey F. Bartlett (R-Okla.), 58; and James B. Pearson (R-Kan.), 57. The other five are at, or past, what is generally considered normal retirement age

But, as pollster Peter Hart has pointed out, there are three other senators, all in their 70s, who have decided to try for one ore term. And all three of them appear to be in trouble.

One is Sen. Jennings Randolph, D-W.Va., 76, the only member of the current Congress who served in the Capitol when Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated. Randolph was elected to the House He is up against ex-Gov. Arch A. Moore

(R), and a recent Republican poll shows him with less than 50 percent support and than positive from the cross-section of votages. only an 8-point lead - not a comfortable position for an incumbent. Moore, a celebrated political infighter, is not making age

an overt issue. But he rarely fails to mention that Randolph "has given almost a half-century of service to the state." The second Senate elder who appears to be having his problems is Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., 75. No one would accuse Thurmond of infirmity. A physical fitness

fanatic, he remarried ten years ago and has four young children. Yet the latest poll taken for Thurmond's challenger, Charles D. (Pug) Ravenal (D), shows the incumbent with only a shaky

48-to-44 percent lead.

The third example is Sen. Clifford P.
Case, R-N.J., 73, who has both a Republican primary opponent and several eager Democratic challengers. A recent Eagleton Institute poll showed Case with suprisingly

small name recognition, despite his four

terms. He drew more negative comments

Hart is convinced that there is more than coincidence in the fact that the only over-70 senators who have decided to seek reelection are in trouble. While Congress has repealed the mandatory retirement age for federal employees, the voters appear to think there is a time when it is appropriate for their elected officials to step down.

Increasingly, senators have been getting the message. Three other senators in their 70s are retiring this year — John J. Sparkman, D-Ala.; James O. Eastland, D-Miss.; and Carl T. Curtis, R-Neb. So are Sens. Clifford P. Hansen, R-Wyo.; and William L. Scott, R-Va., who would reach

70 before the end of another term.

That was also the pattern in 1976, when such senior senators as Mike Mansfield, Hugh D. Scott, Stuart Symington, John O. Pastore, Roman L. Hruska, Hiram L. Fong and Paul Fannin decided to end their legis-

There is no iron rule on retirement — and probably shouldn't be. Senators who have been as well respected in their states as Randolph, Case and Thurmond may be able to persuade the voters that time has not yet run out for them.

But Hart is right, I think, in pointing to the "age issue" as the key factor in these races. More than ideology, more than party label, more than positions on Panama, Social Security or other controversial issues what will probably determine the fate of these three senators is the public judgment about the wisdom of their decision to pro-

It has never been easy for stars in any field — and especially in show business sports and politics — to know when to take their final bows. Increasingly the voters are ready to make that decision for the politicians who don't know how to make it for themselves.

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Letters to the editor

New wall makes fortress out of city hall

Just a few words to lodge my opinion against the very ugly wall the city of College Station erected in front of C.S. City

It makes an otherwise adequate structure look uninviting, forbidding, secretive, and downright fortess-like. It is very unfortunate that so little taste and ingenuity was used to allocate the public monies with the consequence of destroying the esthetic quality of the building.

-B.E. Aguirre

Panama 'insight'

The following is a short comment on Lee Roy Leschper's editorial, "Panama's Puppy Bares His Teeth.

The editorial showed a definite lack of knowledge of and insight into Latin American political affairs. Contrary to the editorial, Torrijos' comments were not directed at the United States, but to a national audience of Panamanians. In other words, the comments were for home consumption to appease Panama's radical dissidents.

This may also account for the lack of interest or "shrug of the shoulders" of the Administration and the State Department.

In any case, the editorial was a good example of how a lack of political insight can bias American's perception of what are often another country's internal politics. Sounds like the hook-line-and-sinker syn-

-Stan Stanfield, '78

Everybody pays

Imagine this: A fire is put out on the third floor of a dorm at Texas A&M University. After the damage done to the building was estimated, the residents of the third floor

were asked to pay for the damages since the fire occurred on their floor.

Although this is a hypothetical example. its similarities are more than just a coincidence to the actions recently committed at Utay Hall. Residents of the third floor of Utay have been asked to pay for acts of vandalism committed on their floor irto try to force other residents to pay for regardless of their purported involvement someone else's sadistic behavior. in these destructive actions.

It is our belief that the people who committed these acts of vandalism should pay

"I get a lot of help from politicians in Washington who unknowingly contribute to the humor of my

work," Jeff MacNelly has said in ac-

cepting awards for his editorial car-

MacNelly, 30, whose cartoons ap-

pear regularly in the Battalion, has

won his Pulitzer Prize for editorial

cartooning this year.

MacNelly calls himself a conservative — "a small 'm' mugwump with Whiggish tendencies," he says —

but his overriding view is that edito-

-Tom Gowan, '80, Howard Yancy, '79, Billy Waddell, '79

Cartoonist wins second Pulitzer



rial cartoons should be funny. "These days there are an awful lot of reasons for readers to be full of gloom and doom," he says. "Editorial cartoons should not contribute to that mood. In a desert nearly devoid of humor, editorial cartoons should allow a reader to pause and get a few









LETTERS POLICY

Finnish border.

Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester; \$33.25 per school year; \$35.00 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Address: The Battalion, Room 216, Reed

TOP OF THE NEWS 7

CAMPUS

Pre-registration begins Monday

Pre-registration for the fall semester at Texas A&M Universi began at 8 a.m. today and will continue through Friday afternoon. Fall class schedules are available at Heaton Hall (the old Exchange Store and at the Rudder Tower information center. Only students currently enrolled for the 1978 spring semester will be allowed to pre-register.

Battalion staff receive awards

The Battalion received a total of 11 awards from two regional journalism conferences Saturday. Two of these were second and third

Rusty Cawley, former city editor, won first place in editorial writ-

ing at the Sigma Delta Chi convention in Oklahoma City for h

comments on the "speediness" of the Walter Joe Coleman trial.

Liz Newlin, campus editor, placed second in spot news reporting for her article on possible budget cuts at the KAMU-FM radio sta-

The Battalion received second place among regional schools for best student newspaper. The Daily Texan, University of Texas,

At the Southwestern Journalism Congress in Denton, the Battalion placed first in editorial page layout and third in the competition for

The Daily Texan again placed first followed by the North Texas State newspaper, the North Texas Daily.

Glenna Whitley, former assistant managing editor, received a second place award at the SWIC for her series on gay lifestyles at Texas

Rusty Cawley received second place in critical writing for his col-

umn on Woody Allen's paranoia.

Sports writer Mark Patterson received third place for best game story for his story on Mike Mosley's "heroic" game against the University of Houston last December.

The Battalion was also given first place recognition for newspaper advertisements and best series of ads by Steve Korte and for best

STATE

Freight trains derail in Cibolo

Two Southern Pacific freight trains collided in Cibolo, Texas, during

a thunderstorm Saturday resulting in a derailment, several injuries, a

diesel spill and heavy damage to both trains. Emergency vehicles were

dispatched to the site in southwest Guadalupe County about 35 miles

northeast of San Antonio. Several persons received minor injuries and

were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment. A spokesman for Southern Pacific said several boxcars had derailed and the cause of the

LULAC will file federal lawsuit

A spokesman for the League of United Latin American Citizens said Saturday in Houston that the group will file a federal court suit Monday against the Texas Employment Commission, LULAC Attorney David

Lopez said the group will charge the TEC with discrimination against

Spanish citizens in employment, recruitment and assignment of persons already employed. The LULAC suit will name Susan Banda as a plantiff, he said. Lopez said she worked for the commission for 15 years and failed to get a promotion she felt she had earned. Lopez also said

the TEC had been contacted by the federal government and warned if

its officials did not change the agency's policies, the U.S. Justice

NATION

Indians' trek protests legislation

A group of about 250 Indians on a cross-country trek from California to Washington to protest "anti-Indian" legislation before Congress

called time out Saturday and announced they would spend the week

camping at a northeast Kansas reservoir to reorganize their ranks. David Hill, a member of the Choctaw tribe who joined the group in

Utah, said the purpose of the "Longest Walk" was to bring public attention to legislation that would force Indians to give up renewable

WORLD

A Pan American plane on a mercy mission from Murmansk arrived

in Helsinki, Finland early Sunday with the 106 surviving passengers of a South Korean Airlines jetliner forced to crash-land. The plane

crashed on a frozen lake in a remote northwest corner of the Soviet Union when Soviet jetfighters attacked and opened fire on it. Also on board the Pan Am Boeing 727 were the bodies of two passengers, a Japanese and a Korean. Passengers said the two were killed by bullets

fired from the Soviet interceptors that scrambled to meet the South Korean Airlines Boeing 707 when it strayed over sensitive Soviet

territory Thursday while flying the Polar route from Paris to Seoul.

Another 16 passengers were injured but it was not immediately clear

whether any had been wounded or whether they suffered injuries

when the MIGs forced the South Korean plane to crash-land near the

WEATHER

Mostly cloudy this morning becoming partly cloudy and warm later this afternoon. Fair and cool tonight. Sunny and

warm on Tuesday. High today upper 80s, low tonight low

50s. High tomorrow upper 80s. Winds from the south at

THE BATTALION

10-15 mph becoming northerly tonight at 5-8 mph.

natural resources and rights guaranteed them under treaties.

Korean plane survivors aided

Department would file its own suit.

Classes for the fall semester begin Aug. 28

place recognition for best student newspaper

best student newspaper.

MEMBER