

the small society by Brickman



OPINION

Criminalize deficit spending

The test of any anti-inflation program is whether people believe it will work. President Carter announced a tough program that seems to have a good chance of working. The program appears designed to deal with today's economic distortions. In no way did politics seem to intrude upon it.

Indeed, Carter took steps certain to be unpopular. But they are necessary.

(Carter) plans to fight inflation by taking money out of the economy in three ways: a new "gasoline conservation fee," or tax; a balanced federal budget in 1981; and restraints on the growth of credit that boosts the money supply.

The balanced budget will require cuts in "good and worthwhile programs," Carter said. But that is an essential price that must be paid for inflation control.

Carter announced a freeze in federal employment, which clearly is warranted.

The President appears to have found the balance between restricting excessive credit and stopping credit needed for growth. His restraints will be applied to credit cards and unsecured loans.

There is considerable doubt that the new 10-cents-a-gallon gasoline fee will have a dramatic effect on driving. But the fee will have a beneficial economic effect. It will take those dollars out of the economy.

It also took some political courage by the president, who is fully aware that former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark lost an election after he proposed an 18-cents gasoline tax increase and that Ronald Reagan is catering to the same give-me attitude by proposing an inflationary 30 percent tax reduction.

Finally inflation will not truly be controlled until the trends of declining productivity and savings are reversed. Carter recognizes that fundamental fact about the economy, which is reassuring.

It will help people believe his program has a chance to work.

St. Petersburg, Fla., Times

Carter takes unpopular steps

Given the political realities, President Carter's moves to fight inflation are commendable.

The President outlined a 1981 budget with the largest surplus in 30 years; he backed mild credit controls and he reinforced his support of the Federal Reserve Board, where the real anti-inflation fight is being waged.

Above all, the President finally is telling the public what it needs to hear from the the President: inflation is not just an annoyance, it threatens the economic and social fabric of the nation, and its cure will require time and pain.

What is badly needed is a means to shelter politicians from special interest groups who exert fierce pressure for new spending before steady, deliberate policies begin to pay off in economic growth, new jobs and more income to government.

The only long-term, attainable solution available to a democracy is to make excess spending illegal. The President and Congress should take advantage of the present crisis to do just that.

Tulsa World

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Carter's 'bitter' budget cuts will be hard for some to swallow

By HELEN THOMAS

United Press International
WASHINGTON — President Carter plans to cut the 1981 federal budget by \$13 billion dollars to fight raging inflation. How to do it is another story.

Everyone is for motherhood, apple pie and balancing the budget, but when it comes time for Carter to announce specific reductions there will be squawks aplenty, especially from special interest groups.

The president and his cohorts know that slashing the budget is a political quagmire, particularly in an election year when they go out of their way to avoid any friction with their constituencies, diverse as they may be.

Within a couple of weeks, Carter is expected to have made his final decisions on the revised budget. And he is using the words "painful process" and "bitter medicine" more and more to describe things to come.

The cities, labor, the built in bureaucracy of the federal government itself and other segments of society are all vulnerable and not happy with the prospect of huge cuts in their operating funds.

The bitter medicine was indeed hard to take for the thousands of delegates who attended the National League of Cities Congressional-City Conference when Carter gave them the word in an address earlier this week. They applauded him when he walked into the ballroom, and sat silent on their hands throughout his address.

No one wants to hear that "discipline" is the new order of the day and that belt tightening may become a way of life for a long time.

Nor is it particularly enticing to the average citizen to realize that to battle inflation, Carter style, he will have to pay more at the gas pump as a result of new oil import fees.

Some believe Carter's answer to inflation is too little and too late. Others believe it is too stringent. The general feeling that is

shared by the multitudes is that he had to do something.

Carter said he examined a wide range of options. Certainly his voluntary anti-inflation program of the past three years got failing marks. Now, he says there is "no sugar coating this pill. It is strong medicine."

Carter's aides are saying the days of inexpensive gasoline are gone forever. American society is changing in many ways, and the energy crunch is hitting all aspects of daily living.

In many ways, Carter has not suffered politically from skyrocketing inflation. There has been widespread sympathy that the problem is insoluble and that he is not at fault.

It is a habit with presidents to point out that there is no "magic wand" to wave in such economic crises. Nevertheless, Carter and his advisers have been consistently wrong in their predictions — the last of

which was that there would be a recession to cool the economy. If Carter were to be faulted, certainly he has not read the writing on the wall. For that matter, he has tried to awaken Congress — particularly concerning the energy crisis — past three years — the law stalled and refused to act.

But now the president believes the message, and will support a balanced budget. In spirit, that is reality, that's another question.

There is, however, a growing concern that uncontrolled inflation can have a heavy price on the country. It also has taken a terrible toll on the times.

In his appeal for support of the individual sacrifice, Carter Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote a lesson of life is to believe what the centuries say against the

Taxes pay for Pentagon dining

By DONALD LAMBRO

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Despite the ravages of double-digit inflation, there are five restaurants in Washington where you can still get a complete breakfast of eggs, sausage, toast, juice and all the coffee you want for \$1.25, or lunch elegantly on London broil for \$2.75.

But don't bother trying to make reservations the next time you are in town, because these restaurants are in the Pentagon and are restricted to top military and civilian brass who earn between \$45,000 and \$70,000 a year.

How can they do it in these times of high inflation? The answer is simple. The restaurants are subsidized by the taxpayers to the tune of \$1.2 million a year.

The subsidized meals, ranging from broiled Delmonico steaks to filet of sole, are being provided for about 400 admirals, generals, and other top-ranked military and civilian Defense Department officials

in five tastefully decorated private dining rooms.

In the wood-paneled "Gold Room," for example, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and his staff dine on a broiled-to-order steak for \$2.65, baked file of flounder for \$1.60, a chopped sirloin steak or ham omelette for \$1.70, or a tossed green salad for 50 cents.

Officials say Brown, who is paid \$69,630 a year, often has his meals brought to his desk, but occasionally eats in his private dining room along with his senior staff and benefits from the reduced prices.

In the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's paneled, red-carpeted dining room, Gen. David Jones, who earns \$51,000, and his senior staff pay \$1.75 for file of sole or perch, \$1.85 for a generous chef's salad, and 40 cents for "chilled fresh strawberries."

In Navy Secretary Edward Hidalgo's dining room, he and his staff dine on grilled steak, vegetables, french fries and rolls for \$3, "Steak a la Ritz" topped with an egg and

vegetables for \$2.50 and broiled file of fish with fruit for \$2.25.

Hidalgo, who earns \$60,662, and his associates eat from gold-rimmed china and are served by blue-jacketed military waiters. Fresh flowers adorn each crisply starched table cloth.

Air Force Secretary Hans Mark and his lieutenants are eligible for chopped sirloin steak with onion rings or file of sole for \$1.65, or fresh fruit with cheese for 65 cents.

Army Secretary Clifford Alexander Jr. and top Army officials pay \$2.75 for London broil, \$2 for eggs benedict, and 35 cents for soup.

Alexander's breakfasts are also untouched by spiraling inflation. Two eggs any style cost 50 cents. Toast is 15 cents. Pancakes cost 60 cents.

Breakfast is cheaper still in the chairman's dining room. Eggs are 35 cents. Waffles or pancakes, 50 cents. Coffee, 15 cents.

A check of moderately priced family restaurants in the area found that comparable

meals are substantially higher. The family steak house.

Pentagon officials say the prices in these five dining facilities cover part of the food and other supplies. Payors must foot the bill for the cooks, waiters, maintenance personnel and other overhead expenses that the food is sold at cheaper-than-market prices.

Officials say the dining rooms are necessary to provide a "secure" place for top officials can talk about military operations Committee sharply criticized dining salons, saying their cost was "excessive" and "should be substantially reduced."

The panel said at the time that it saw any reason why the dining rooms not be consolidated for use by the services rather than each service have its own facilities.

