

Closed session

In order to avoid the provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Law, the student senate says it is not a governmental body.

It began last night when the senate abruptly changed its bylaws to allow a closed session on a two-thirds vote. A unanimous vote had been required.

Following the approval of the bylaw change, the senate went into closed session to discuss two bills. The first was a proposal to withdraw from the Texas Student Association, a state-wide lobbying organization for student interests.

The second was a recommendation that student service fees be increased an additional 50 cents. Included in the second bill was a proposal that student service money be given to the Athletic Department to help offset the increased costs in women's athletics due to HEW regulations.

The Battalion reporter covering the meeting and the small audience in attendance were told to leave the meeting.

We feel that that action violated the Texas Open Meetings Law.

According to the law, governmental bodies may only go into closed session to discuss pending litigation, proposed land sales, and personnel matters. In addition, any vote on matters discussed in closed session must occur in open session.

None of the topics discussed by the senate in closed session fits the exemptions allowed by the law. As a matter of fact, the bylaw change that passed last night did not specify any criteria for calling closed session.

The student service fee increase was separated from the Athletic Department allocation, moved to open session and defeated. The fate of the other two bills is known only to senators — they aren't telling anyone else.

The Battalion does not question the propriety of the senate discussing those particular issues. The two issues discussed in the session are worth debating and within the prerogative of the senate to debate — it is the closed session that strikes us as needless and arbitrary.

Senate members contend that student government is not a governmental body according to the law. We disagree.

They claim exemption from the law by the nature of their existence — they do not legislate. They make recommendations to the various administrative branches of the University for possible action.

The burden of proof in this issue is on The Battalion. We have to prove the senate is in fact a governmental body under the law. We are going to request a clarification of the law from the Attorney General's office.

If, in the Attorney General's opinion, the senate is a governmental body as defined by the Open Meetings Law, last night's closed session was illegal, and anything the senate did in the session is void.

But even if it isn't, we feel that the closed session bylaw must be rescinded.

Whatever the nature of the senate's power, we feel that it has a moral obligation to the students it represents to discuss its recommendations in public.

By excluding the public and press from its meeting, the senate in effect has said that it is an elite group of students at Texas A&M, a group of students privileged to discuss and act on matters which other students can't even be told about.

They're telling us that what they recommend to the administration — and, more importantly, why they recommend it — is none of our business.

We put the question to the students of Texas A&M:

Does the student senate have the right to go into closed session to discuss issues that will ultimately affect all Texas A&M students?

We don't think so.

THE BATTALION

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Italian communists defy Moscow and lean towards U.S. capitalism

By MARIO DEAGLIO
International Writers Service

TURIN, Italy — Experts are constantly baffled by Italy, whose behavior defies prediction. As they face the decade ahead, even an Italian commentator like myself has more questions that answers about the future.

In pondering these questions, however, it seems to me that the political shape of the country in the years ahead will depend largely on its economic development. And the economy is likely to be determined by the same problem that confronts other industrial nations — the need for energy.

Thus Italy is going to be sensitive to its internal dynamics as well as to foreign events, especially in the Middle East, the source of its vital oil supplies.

Americans viewing the Italian political scene often tend to assess it in simplistic terms as a struggle by the anti-Communist parties to resist Communism. In Italian eyes, however, the issue is more complicated.

As we see it, the real question is whether the Communists, who are seeking a role in the government as junior partners to the ruling Christian Democrats, will become

increasingly temperate as they approach power.

It is already clear that the Italian Communists, in contrast to their French comrades, have long ceased to be pawns of Moscow. They support Italy's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and, in addition to their other criticism of the Kremlin, they denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

On the domestic front, moreover, they are not much different from the British Labor party. They oppose further nationalization of industry and proclaim the need for private enterprise, albeit within the framework of a planned economy.

In my opinion, their sincerity is reflected in the fact that they have been willing to pay a high price for their position, since it has caused them to be abandoned by the left flank of their movement.

It may be, of course, that they will eventually find the price too high and revert to the toughline they espoused during the 25 years after World War II. For them to shift back would be equally expensive, however, since they would be bucking economic and social trends that have been taking place in Italy within recent years.

After two decades of craving for security and government protection, Italians have

scrapped their reliance on the welfare state and are becoming more and more adventurous. In short, they are returning to a competitive society in which, for the first time in memory, they are beginning to function as aggressive entrepreneurs.

This has been due in part to technological innovation, which has made Italy one of the world's major exporters of engineering and construction expertise. It has also been the result of a breakdown of government attempts to manage the economy.

Largely because of bureaucratic inefficiency, Italians have created a parallel system that, in effect, is nothing more or less than a form of old-fashioned, free-for-all capitalism. The system is attractive as well as a device for tax evasion.

The failure of the post office to deliver mail, for instance, has encouraged private carrier services.

Private schools are prospering because parents are dissatisfied with declining standards in government schools. Private clinics are proliferating as an alternative to decrepit public hospitals. And hundreds of independent radio and television stations have sprung up, providing a lively change from the government broadcasting network.

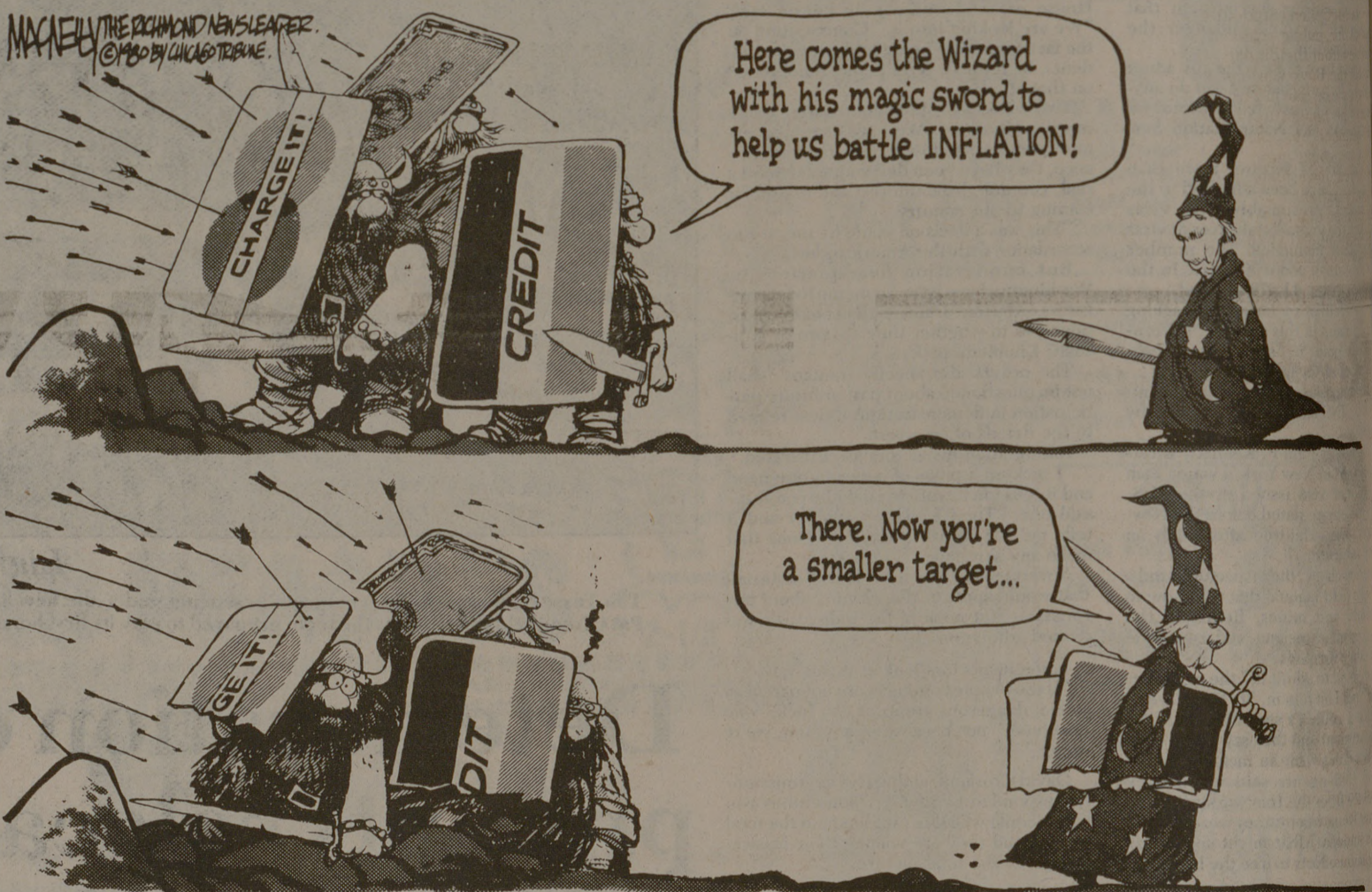
All this has not only dramatized Communist leaders that the taste for Communism is waning, but Communists themselves have adapted to the new methods, often with marked success.

Gradually, too, the government is compelled to relax controls, or else be overtaken by new political parties attuned to the free spirit. This, incidentally, is particularly strong in towns and villages, which foreigners observe.

The unknown factor, though, is whether Italy can continue to meet its energy needs since it imports 85 percent of its oil. Maintaining the oil flow from the East, therefore, is its biggest challenge. By rising incomes, and bigger than that, by rising incomes, and bigger than that, which is limited even though it is in newspaper headlines.

The country's direction points toward increased moderation and stability. Ultimately, its future is contingent on the nation, however. Thus the most unanswered question is universal.

(Deaglio is a political and economic commentator for *Il Sole* 24 Ore, the daily.)



Price index is prime cause of inflation

By DICK WEST

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Heresy, good sir, abounds.

Man and boy, and at numerous points in between, I have heard the federal deficit scourged as economic evil incarnate.

But now that President Carter has proposed a balanced budget, which many of us thought we would never live to see, economists both myriad and sundry are saying the federal deficit really isn't all that inflationary.

Gad! If a man can't believe in the fiscal detriment of the federal deficit, what can he believe in?

Next they'll be telling us that Jack the Ripper's only vice was performing surgery

without getting a second opinion.

Assuming the deficit isn't the prime cause of inflation, then we shall have to look elsewhere for the villain in the piece. I'm thinking of switching to the theory that the main inflationary force is the index used to measure inflation.

This thesis rests on the premise that if we didn't have someone telling us how much and how fast our living cost are rising, chances are our living costs wouldn't be rising so much so fast. Let's examine the nature of inflation psychology a bit further.

Let's say, plucking names and figures out of thin air, that Samuel Goodfringe earns \$20,000 a year working in a swizzle stick factory. The Consumer Price Index rises 10 percent and Goodfringe demands a 10

percent cost-of-living pay increase.

Actually, however, Goodfringe only spends \$15,000 a year on CPI items. His \$2,000 increase is, therefore, \$500 more than necessary to keep pace with inflation. So his pay raise itself is inflationary.

Meanwhile, Goodfringe's employer, the Amalgamated Agitation Corp., noting that its labor costs have risen 10 percent, raises the wholesale price of swizzle sticks by the same percentage.

The company has sales of \$500,000 a year. Its payroll, however, totals \$300,000. The 10 percent price increase brings in \$200,000 more than needed to meet the wage increase. That likewise is inflationary.

The wholesale price increase is, of course, passed along to the retailer, the

Manual Mix Co., which sells \$20,000 of swizzle sticks a year, for which it pays \$15,000.

Does anyone seriously think Manual won't pass along the 10 percent wholesale price increase to its customers in the form of a 10 percent price increase?

By the time the new retail price is compared to the base period 10 years ago, found to have risen 20 percent. That percentage then is figured into the next summer Price Index. And the green grows all around.

The foregoing explains why we need to freeze wages and prices to stop inflation. A better plan would be to freeze wage and price statistics.

THOTZ

