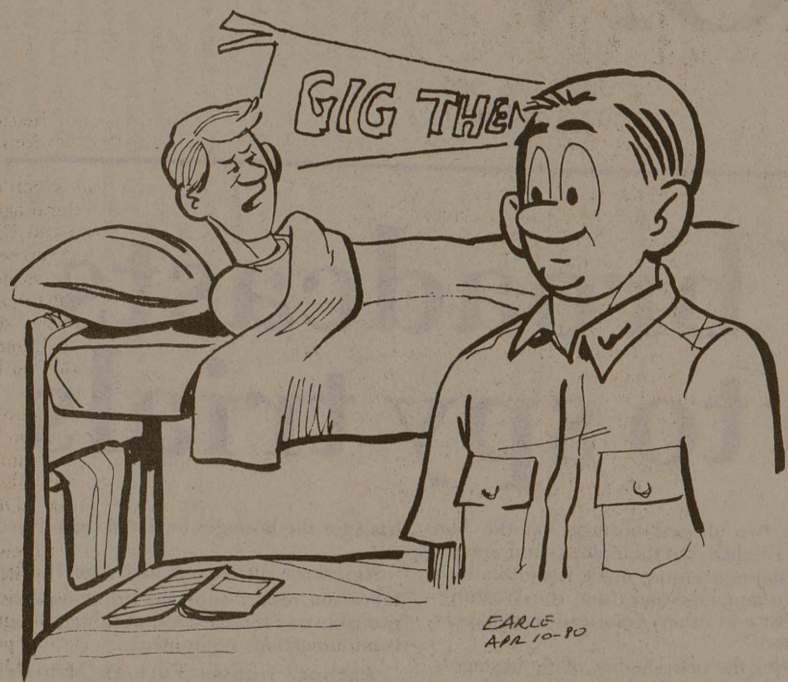


SLOUCH By Jim Earle



"When I stay in bed and take care of myself, I get jumped for cutting class! Now I ask you, are we committed to conserving energy or are we just giving lip service to it?"

OPINION

Mortgages changed by rule

Home mortgages may never be the same again. The Great Squeeze of record interest rates has dried up home sales. It was time to lubricate the whole business, and this week a federal agency moved to do precisely this.

In response to pleas from lending institutions the federal Home Loan Bank Board broke with tradition and decided that thrift institutions (mainly savings and loan institutions) could begin offering variable-rate mortgages. Within limits, the interest charged on such loans henceforth can rise or fall.

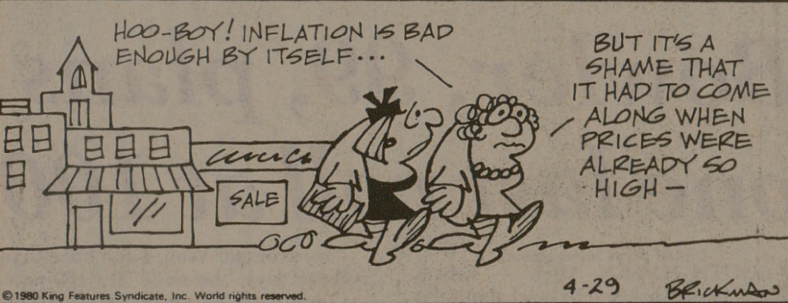
Some consumer groups oppose the board's move, arguing that some homeowners (such as those living on fixed incomes) could be severely hurt if such rates continue to climb. This is a real concern that Congress should monitor closely. It would be disastrous to make home ownership more difficult than it already is, for many people. Yet the new ruling also protects borrowers in several ways. Mortgage rates could go up or down by no more than one-half percent a year. Lenders would have to pass on reductions in interest rates.

The new approach would seem to encourage competition. Some would-be home buyers now may be willing to take out, say, a 16-percent mortgage with some confidence that its rate will decline as interest levels begin to recede from their present peaks.

Providence, R.I., Journal-Bulletin

the small society

by Brickman



THE BATTALION

USPS 045 360

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Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification. Address correspondence to Letters to the Editor, The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

THURSDAY
APRIL 10, 1980

GSA buys expensive furniture for federal wage council's H.Q.

By DONALD LAMBRO

WASHINGTON — When the General Services Administration furnished the office of a high-level White House official last April, money was no object. GSA bought the best in 18th century reproductions.

The Chippendale chairs and end tables, Sheraton pedestal and cocktail tables, and custom covered sofa and chairs, which cost taxpayers \$5,700, was, according to GSA auditors, a waste of money.

The irony — if it can be called one — was that the furniture went into the office of the director of the President's Council on Wage and Price Stability, which is charged with holding down government spending to curb inflation.

Its director, auditors said, shouldn't be blamed for this bit of extravagance. GSA, circumventing agency rules, decided on its own that his office was entitled to something better than ordinary furniture.

This is not an isolated case. It is one of many in an eye-opening internal GSA audit completed in February as part of an inter-agency investigation into the govern-

ment's seemingly unending furniture buying spree that costs taxpayers about \$250 million a year.

The audit found numerous cases in which GSA has engaged in "unnecessary procurement of new furniture for high-level officials" and other federal offices while government warehouses bulge with new and used furniture.

It found "pervasive management problems" in the purchase, use, and storage of furniture, including "lack of understanding of regulatory requirements, disregard for administrative control, (and) the desire to please important people."

For example, the audit said GSA purchased \$672,000 in new furnishings last year just in the Washington region, an expenditure that "could have been avoided," if GSA had complied with its own regulations requiring use of existing new or used furniture.

The auditors said that in most instances GSA "failed to express a demonstrated need for new furniture," noting that \$314,800 in furniture bought to equip one downtown federal building was entirely unnecessary.

"The furniture was procured without authority, without approved funds, and without any method to recover costs expended," the audit said. "Furthermore, there was no determination that the occupants of the building needed furniture and inappropriate types of furniture were procured."

The Council on Wage and Price Stability moved into the building in question, early last year. The White House agency already had adequate furniture in its previous location but left it behind when it moved.

The auditors said they were "unable to determine what happened to the old furniture."

In other cases, they said, instead of just buying basic, useful furniture as needed, GSA is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars solely to "improve appearance, decor or status of offices belonging to high-level GSA officials and their staffs."

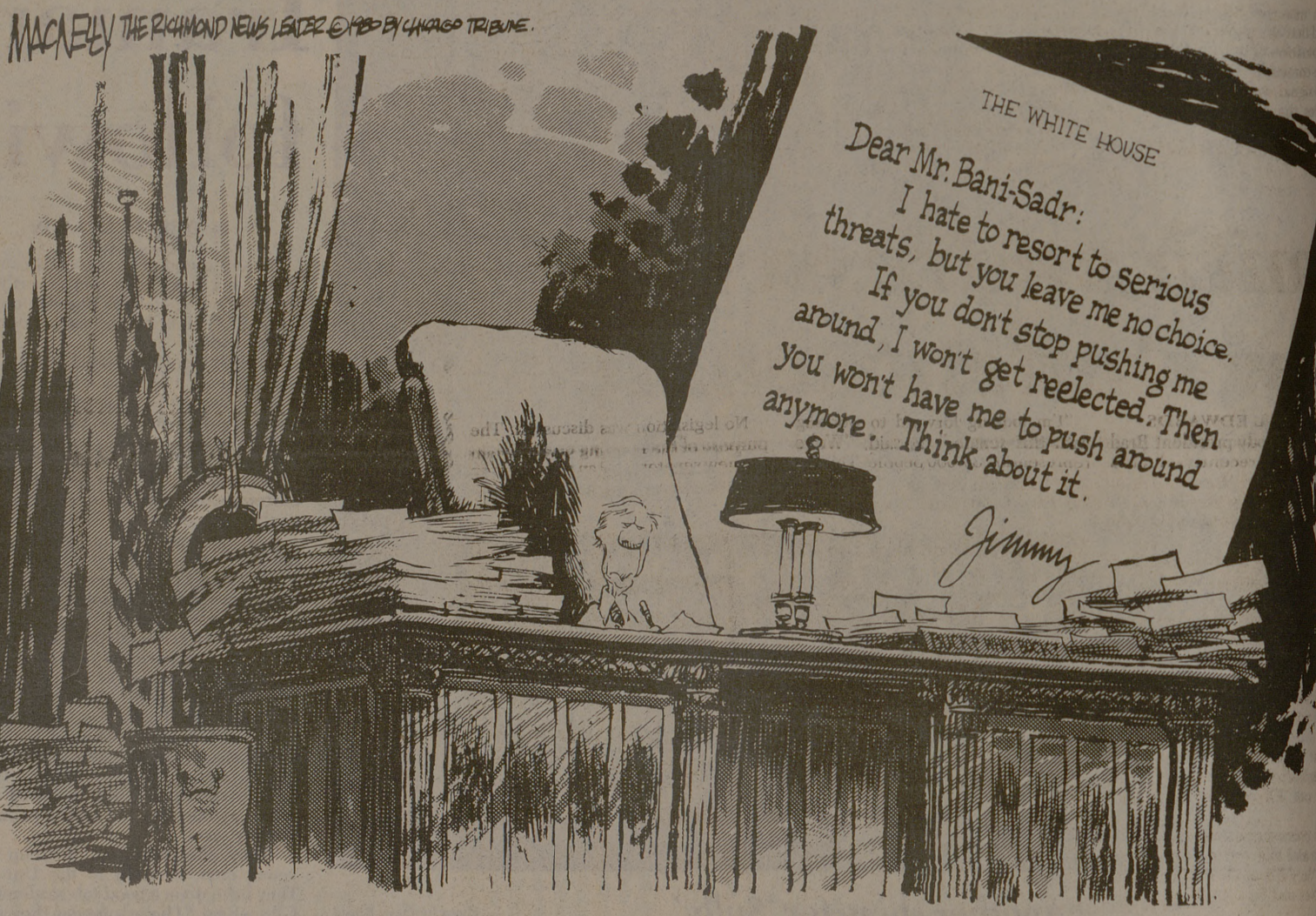
One GSA furnishing project, which cost \$5,100, included decorative "luxury items such as a custom-covered camelback sofa, wing chairs and mahogany reproductions of 18th century furniture" including a Chippendale chest, drop leaf table, butler tray

table, and a Pembroke table. Federal regulations forbid the purchase of furniture procurement to the extent of the lines available. Sadly, they "We found no evidence that alternatives were considered."

Unfortunately, this is only a part of the government's furniture saga.

The audit details other cases, one in which GSA last year spent \$357,000 in furniture for its own use, out fully considering the \$400,000 worth of unused furniture.

GSA Administrator Rowland III — who has recently placed furniture buying — ordered an inventory of all GSA-owned furniture, but auditors say the government still does not know how much furniture it has. Moreover, it does not know how many millions of dollars in furniture that is routinely listed as junked, which auditors suspect is being



CBS reporter still has sense of humor

By RICHARD H. GROWALD

News persons in television talk much of Dan Rafter's gross salary and succession of CBS anchor Walter Cronkite.

More worrage concerns Phil Jones, like the late James Dean, a celebrated rebel from Fairmount, Ind. The straw-haired Jones has won Emmy and other awards for his reporting for CBS news.

But lately there has been howling. A Washington Post critic said Jones is too aggressive. He said Jones is "exhibitionistically scrappy." He said Jones hits politicians with "sneak attacks."

Oh, how awful! Politicians, being so applauded in the republic, should, of course, be shielded from dead cats and eye-gouging.

Jones' great crime is that he fights for access to what our leaders are saying and

doing behind shut doors. Let us zoom in the camera:

— At a 1970 Atlanta meeting of the American Bar Association Chief Justice Warren Burger said no to Jones filming his speech on prison reform. When Jones approached Burger and asked why he was being nixed, the chief justice: 1) tried to take possession of Jones' microphone; 2) asked police if they and not he were going to oust Jones; and 3) said the next day any interview would be given first to ABC and NBC and only then to Jones' CBS. Burger did not make immediately clear why he objected to having his words on prison reform being televised.

And Jones became a television Mr. Nice Guy.

— Later, in Southeast Asia, Jones motored among U.S. Air Force bases in Thailand, filming B-52 bombing mission

takeoffs and other ill-kept features of a not-so-secret war and doing it without benefit of Defense Department permission. He won an Emmy for it. But Air Force public relations officers did not make whoopee.

— There was the time in Delaware, when then-Vice President Gerald Ford was starring in a \$1,000-a-person Republican fund-raising reception and being trailed by Jones. A Delaware GOP field marshal ordered Jones out, for what goes among politicians should not be necessarily seen. Animated discussion followed. The Republican lunged for Jones. CBS camera crewmen held him back. Jones, ever the sweet fellow from James Dean's hometown, remarked the Republican was a "political punk." The Republican struggled. Vainly.

Of course, Jones is sometimes a victim. CBS this season put him much on the trail of presidential candidate Edward Ken-

nedy. One of the things the Massachusetts senator has not lost in his campaign is sense of humor.

One frigid morning in Maine, noticed Jones standing among work reporters, waiting for a word candidate at a factory gate where he was greeting voters. Kennedy had stepped away for a minute.

Kennedy hurried to a Jones' car saw this and ran, reaching Kennedy just as the senator was saying, "I'm all I'm going to say about the President not going to say another word Carter!"

Jones sensed he had lost a prize saw Kennedy turn toward him and Jones laughed. Even Mr. Nixon one occasionally.

By Doug Graham

THOTZ

