

SLOUCH By Jim Earle



"Jogging is not what it's cracked up to be. I tried it once last year and look at me."

OPINION

USOC's vote encouraging

The United States Olympic Committee's vote not to send a team to the Summer Olympics is the kind of patriotism we need to see more of in this country.

All during the debate on the issue, the USOC and the athletes themselves have been using the same arguments to justify going to the Games against the President's wishes.

One of the most used arguments is that the Games should be kept clear from politics.

This argument does not make sense. The games have always been political. Teams and individuals have always competed as nations — groups divided by political boundaries. If the games were not political, there would be no need for a U.S. team; there would be no need to play the national anthem of a medal winner's country.

Another argument — and a better one, too — is that American Olympic hopefuls in this country have trained for years to go to the Games.

This is almost a good point because it attacks the heart. One is supposed to picture some guy running in the dead of winter, dreaming of one day getting a gold medal.

The trouble is that most of the people using this argument have forgotten that these people are Americans first and athletes second. Going to Moscow against the wishes of the President — when it's obvious that the boycott is for a legitimate reason — is like going to Canada to evade the draft.

the small society

by Brickman



THE BATTALION

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VIEWPOINT

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British plan will lower mortgage costs in government housing

By RUDOLF KLEIN
International Writers Service

Britain's Conservative government is currently unveiling a radical new housing policy designed to transform this country into a nation of property owners. But the plan may create as many problems as it solves.

The scheme, which is the fulfillment of a campaign pledge made by the Conservatives during last year's election, would offer the 7 million tenants now living in public housing projects here the right to buy their dwelling at bargain prices.

Under the proposed arrangement, those who have occupied their accommodations for more than 20 years will be given discounts of 50 percent off the market price, while those who have been in their public houses or apartments for over three years can get a one-third discount.

Buyers are also entitled to 100 percent mortgages financed by the government. If they lack money to meet the mortgage payments, they can put down a returnable deposit of \$225 for an option to purchase

their unit at present prices within two years.

Among its other advantages, the scheme will also furnish former tenants with the opportunity to acquire a capital asset whose value is rising. And there are added benefits to the plan as well.

Many tenants have been subjected to onerous restrictions, such as bans against pets and requirements that their public buildings be painted a uniform color. Now, as owners, they will be liberated from these stifling rules and regulations.

As owners of their property, moreover, they will no longer be compelled to seek permission from government bureaucrats to repair or improve their homes. Indeed, they will henceforth have an incentive to do so in order to profit from any consequent increase in value.

Significantly, too, the plan should contribute to labor mobility, since many workers have been discouraged from switching jobs because of the difficulties involved in exchanging government houses or apartments.

With all this, however, it would be

wrong to view the innovation as an undiluted gain, since the plan is likely to encounter a number of obstacles.

In the past, when cities and towns controlled by the Conservatives offered tenants the right to buy public property, the response has been less than enthusiastic. In fact, sales of municipal housing have declined since their 1972 peak of 45,000.

One reason for this relative lack of interest is that a large proportion of tenants in government housing projects are both old and poor, and they simply cannot afford to take advantage of the plan, generous though it may be.

In addition, many of the buildings being put on sale are ghastly high-rise structures without modern facilities. Many have been vandalized or allowed to fall into neglect, and tenants are more likely to want to move than buy such places.

Thus it is quite possible that privileged elements will purchase the more attractive government property, leaving the others in a ghetto. This could create a new sort of social division.

Labor party critics who denounce the plan may be motivated by political considerations. But in a country where subsidized rents are extremely low, critics do have a point when they claim that continued tenancy by the time-elapsed few will become a social stigma.

One of these Labor spokesmen, Hill, contends that the plan is a "piece of economics," since it can "make people believe that you are if you own property."

These changes will certainly carry through what they call a "historical import."

The apparent shortcomings of the plan do suggest, however, that it has not yet completed its search for a policy that combines fairness with the neediest level of the community.

(Klein, professor of social policy at the University of Bath, writes on issues in Britain.)

Japanese life expectancy tops in world

By ATSUKO CHIBA
International Writers Service

Japan has just surpassed Sweden as the global record-holder for life expectancy. But while that phenomenon reflects the many qualities of this society, it also poses potential problems for the future.

On the one hand, it mirrors the fact that the Japanese lead relatively healthy lives, both physically and psychologically. Their diets have improved dramatically over the past generation, and, despite their relentless drive for economic success, they are probably less tense than peoples in industrial countries elsewhere.

At the same time, however, Japan will soon have the world's largest proportion of senior citizens, which will demand serious adjustments for its institutions. In particular, the development may threaten the traditional family structure which is already eroding under the pressure of change.

So the enormous progress that has been made in extending the life span of the Japanese is also sowing the seeds of difficulties here.

According to statistics recently issued by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the average life expectancy in Japan is now 72.69 years for men and 77.95 years for women. Four years ago, on the eve of WWII, the average Japanese did not expect to live beyond the age of 50.

By the end of this century, experts forecast, 14 percent of the Japanese population will be above the age of 65 — compared to only 8 percent now.

Specialists explain that the increased longevity is largely due to better medical care and sanitary conditions here now than

in the past. This explanation is inadequate, however, since other countries with equally modern facilities have lower life expectancies. The answer, in my view, is twofold.

In the first place, the Japanese have predictably managed to borrow some of the best Western nutrition without abandoning their own eating habits. As a consequence, they have achieved a balance in their diets, and it is evident in their longevity figures.

For example, the average Japanese currently consumes twice as much animal protein and three times more fat than he did 25 years ago. This has greatly decreased the chance of death by stroke, once a major killer here.

But the Japanese on the average consume less than one-third as much fat as do Americans. As a result, they are less vulnerable to cholesterol and heart disease than are Americans.

Besides, the Japanese diet still focuses largely on fish and vegetables, which are low in calories and do not lead to the weight problems that afflict so many Americans and Europeans. And the Japanese method of cooking, unlike the Western method of overcooking, preserves vitamins and particularly iodine.

Another factor that may be even more important in assuring long life is the working style of the Japanese, who operate under much less stress than is generally supposed.

This is not to deny that competition is keen in Japan, especially in business. Companies, stores, banks and other enterprises rival each other with a ferocity that is hard to match in the West.

But the key to this competition is that it involves organizations rather than individuals. Teams rather than persons are pitted against each other. Thus, except for a few ambitious exceptions, the Japanese gets ahead by cooperating with his colleagues and obeying his boss, not by displaying aggressivity or striving to appear superior.

In other words, his aim is to attain harmony within his group, knowing that he will gain respect and strengthen his influence as he grows older.

A man's destiny, therefore, is usually determined by the firm in which he spends his life. And a wife's destiny is determined by that of her husband. It is not very exciting, but it is a formula for equanimity.

Sensitive to this, Japanese corporations make an effort to retain older workers, even after retirement age, which is officially 55. The practice is reflected in the term "mado-giwa-zoku," or "window-seat people," which refers to aged employees who are kept on the payroll but spend their time staring out the window.

The government encourages this practice, contending that it costs no more than an expensive welfare system, for which corporations would have to pay through higher taxes. More significantly perhaps, old workers maintain the dignity they would lose if laid off their jobs.

One company, Teijin Mihara Kosan, was actually created by its parent corporation in order to employ older workers. A manufacturer of synthetic fibers, its production record has been impressive.

Not all Japanese firms are so generous. More than 41 percent insist that workers pack up at 55, and 39 percent set 60 as the

retirement age. As the proportion of people grows in Japan, dealing with the elderly will become a serious problem.

Japan's relatively early retirement was introduced at the end of the 19th century, when people died young and thought to deserve a rest after labor. During those days, too, it was expected that families would care for older members.

In fact, the criminal code in effect in 1907 prescribed prison terms for those who failed to support needy parents or death penalty in the event that they died from neglect.

The sense of family responsibility in Japan is still strong. Roughly 90 percent of people here live with relatives, compared to less than 30 percent in the United States. But this is likely to change.

Urbanization, primarily a result of Japan's industrial growth, has eroded family solidarity. It is, for instance, for three generations into a small city apartment.

With an increase in the number of elderly, Japan will also be called upon to make larger investments in hospitals, convalescent centers and such facilities.

For the moment, though, Japanese citizens are probably treated better than their counterparts in other countries.

How long this situation can last depends on how long family traditions are held up well despite the menace of further modernization.

(Ms. Chiba, a Japanese journalist, specializes in social issues in Japan.)

Washington Window

Political truisms born in newsrooms

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Daniel Patrick Moynihan used to be fond of saying, "It's not what people don't know that gets them into trouble; it's what they do know that is wrong."

The New York senator didn't make that up, but he brought it to Washington long enough ago to justify establishing an award in his name for best items of conventional wisdom that turn out to be totally false.

These occur in every field, but nothing stands out in more painful detail in a presidential election year than the clinkers, blunders and dumb conclusions passed off as political expertise by those of us who are supposed to know what is going on.

Herewith, some early nominations in the political category for the Pat Moynihan Myths, Misapprehensions and Freestyle Fantasies Trophy:

— The grain embargo will kill Carter in the Iowa caucuses.

(Iowa has the nation's largest farm population, and the experts assumed Carter would lose the farm vote and with it the state. Actually, Iowa's farm population is less than 20 percent of the state total. Overlooked was the appeal to patriotism, anti-communism and national unity inherent in the embargo and Carter's pledge to help farmers caught short by the embargo.)

— George Bush had momentum after the Iowa caucuses.

(This notion seized much of the media and has been traced to a common environmental causative — sitting in a newsroom for 10 to 14 hours reading through an avalanche of numbers, slurping acidic coffee, choking down stale sandwiches and trying to think of something new to say or write.)

— Recent heavy migration from Massachusetts to New Hampshire will give

Sen. Edward Kennedy a big boost in the presidential primary.

(The assumption was that everyone who ever lived in Massachusetts was a Kennedy fan. This overlooked the possibility that many who left Massachusetts for New Hampshire may have done so to escape the kind of government and taxes they associated with Kennedy.)

— John Connally will win in South Carolina because Strom Thurmond is for him.

(Strom Thurmond can have just about anything he wants in South Carolina, but he is not Jim Jones and South Carolinians are not members of the Peoples' Temple.)

— John Anderson had momentum after the Vermont and Massachusetts primaries. (See: Bush had momentum.)

— The mayor of Chicago decides who is going to win elections in Chicago.

(The experts assumed that Jane Byrne became Richard Daley when she was

elected mayor. They made the mistake about Michael Bilandic. The same basic error as assuming that premiers are Josef Stalin.)

— Wisconsin is too liberal for Ronald Reagan or Jimmy Carter. (This is not a new phony fact demonstrated for Morris Udall four years ago. Wisconsin does have its Gaylord and Les Aspens, but to call it liberal basis would be like assuming that fornicians like to tap dance and sleep because Sen. Hayakawa does.)

— Ted Kennedy had momentum in the New York and Connecticut primaries.

(See also: Ancient Arab prophecy amended — "If a man makes a promise, shame on him. If a man makes of you twice, shame on you. If a man makes of you three times, you must be a messiah.")

THOTZ



By Doug Green