

## Slouch By Jim Earle



"We're in favor of students having the opportunity to select their teachers. We only hope that the student are agreeable when the profs ask permission to select our students."

## Congress should learn by experience

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The membership of the Congress of the United States is almost certainly smarter and better educated today than it was a decade ago. The investment in education that began with the GI Bill and continued with Sputnik and federal aid to higher education — to say nothing of the increasing competitiveness of electoral politics — has had a marked effect in reducing the number of hacks in the House and Senate.

This conundrum has been gnawing at me ever since the Senate decided, in a rather offhand way, to throw into the tax bill a provision that would index future tax rates and deductions for inflation, starting in 1985, when the last of the scheduled Reagan-suggested cuts go into effect.

The political appeal of indexing is obvious. It ends bracket creep — the unlegislated increase in an individual's tax burden that comes when a cost-of-living pay raise moves you in to a higher bracket. It ends the situation, in the words of Sen. Dave Durenberger (R-Minn.), one of its proponents, where the "government, one of the primary causes of inflation, is also the main beneficiary of inflation."

Hooray. But indexing — especially when mandated four years in advance by people who can have no real idea what the economic climate will be — is also the most hazardous form of revenue-roulette. It is a classic example of the Congress of 1981 hog-tieing and hampering the reasoned choice of the Congress that will be sitting in 1985.

Now, the discouraging thing is that if there are any men and women in America who ought to know that fact, it is the 57 senators who voted for indexing last week and the 218 representatives who have signed on as co-sponsors of a similar provision in the House.

Why should they know it? Because much of the agony they have been going through this year on the budget and reconciliation bills is the direct by-product of their predecessors' past embrace of indexing for Social Security, government and military pensions and a variety of other programs.

The folks who indexed all those benefits

were operating off what they considered a fine ringing principle. If Durenberger and Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) and Sen. Bill Armstrong (R-Colo.) can see the wickedness of government "profiting" from inflation, their worthy predecessors in the 1970s could see that it was equally iniquitous to make retirees the victims of inflation.

When then-Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho) put the cost-of-living indexing for Social Security into the law back in 1972, the principle of equity seemed so obvious that it passed 82-4. What 82 senators could not foresee was that indexing would become so expensive within a decade that it could threaten the system with bankruptcy and could force Congress to such desperate expedients as eliminating the minimum Social Security benefits for a couple million 70- and 80-year-olds, living on the ragged edge of poverty.

It is a double folly. Inflation is not a scourge that affects particular groups. It clobbers everybody, and it can be cured only when everyone understands that discipline and sacrifice are involved. To "index" anyone — taxpayer or beneficiary — fully against the impact of inflation is to reduce the odds that everyone will see the need for joint action against the common enemy.

Second, it is demonstrably dangerous to lock the government into a long-term fiscal policy that restricts future room for maneuver.

We are not talking about trivial sums. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that in its first two years, tax-indexing would cost the government \$50 billion. No one now sitting in Congress can possibly know whether those \$50 billion will be needed to balance the budget in 1986 or whether returning them to the taxpayers in that year will stimulate a lagging economy or just feed the fires of inflation.

A government in which benefits are indexed to rise with inflation while taxes are indexed to resist inflation would be a government on the way to bankruptcy, of course.

It boggles the mind that these smart folks we've got in Congress now can't see that for themselves. Maybe we need to send them to summer school.

## It's your turn

## 'Radical's' actions applauded

Editor:

I like WARPED. I enjoy it, I find it amusing. I accept the art work on it. As for some of the less "intellectual" strips, neither I nor my friends are intellectual all the time. We are silly and occasionally say rather dumb things when we are perfectly sober. This is a normal reaction for normal people; everyone has a lax moment occasionally. Therefore, I find the strip believable. Certainly close friends and/or roommates can let loose with each other — this aspect of the strip is also, I feel accurate.

Everyone is certainly free to have their own stupid opinion, as long as they don't try to shove it down anyone else's throat. I like WARPED!

P.S. I like the art work, too.

Kathe Barber  
Graduate student  
P.O. Box 1244, CS

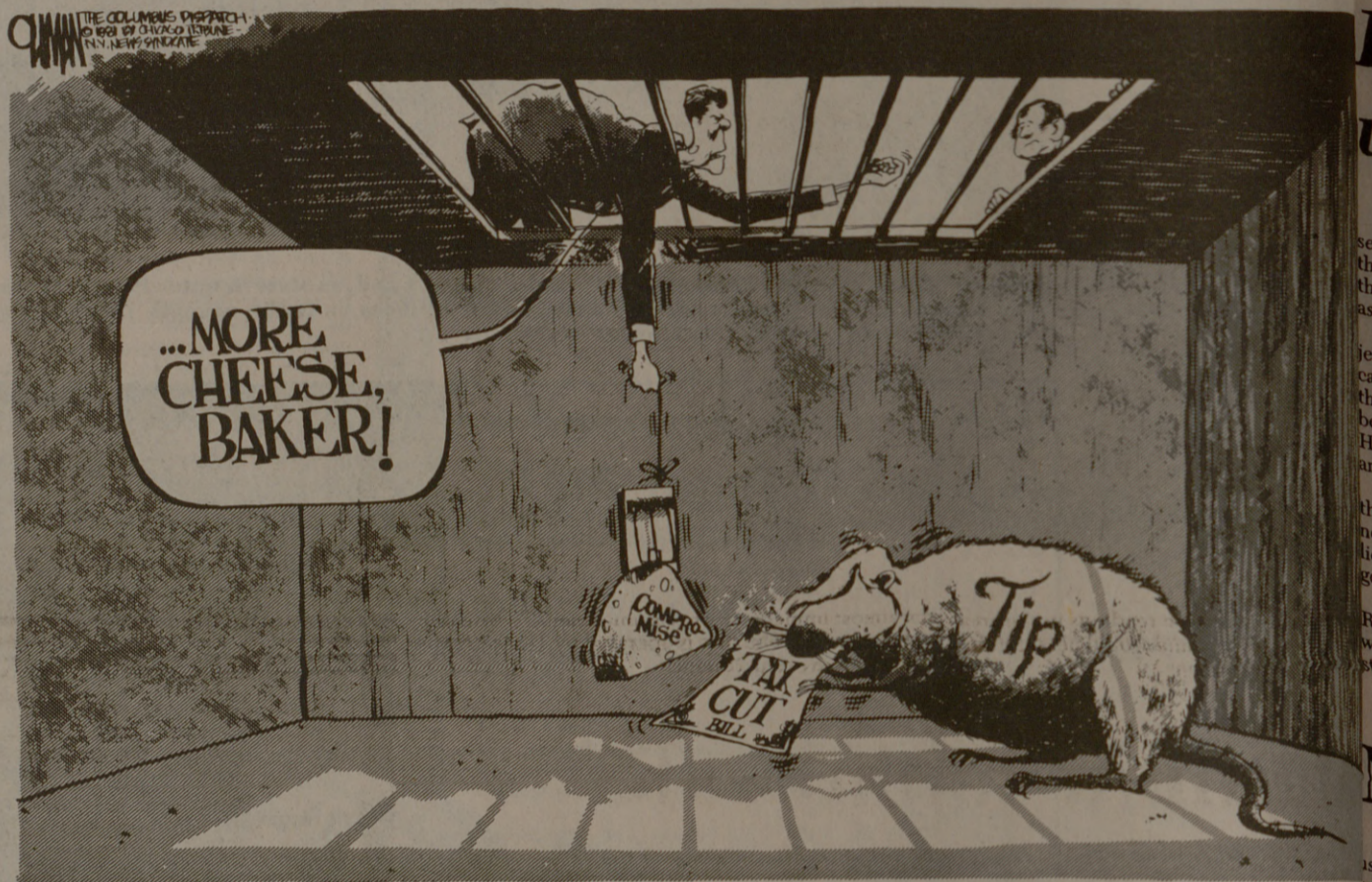
## Comic debate goes on

Editor:

Radicals and terrorists are not always committed to destructive causes. The actions and plans of Captain Paul Watson, (as stated in a Battalion article, July 14, 1981, p.7) which are certainly in violation of international and admiralty law conventions, and which parallel those of fanatics committed to destruction of life, have however, a

higher purpose. Captain Watson is growing number of individuals realizing that definitive, individual may have a beneficial affect on environment. I heartily applaud Captain's efforts, and hope the Russia Zevedny can be stopped or sun loss of life. Henry David Thoreau that no man is an island. We must realize, and soon, that no special land. Man alone does not make Captain Watson's actions in an safeguard marine mammalian undertaken in behalf of all men whom are undeserving of the eff

David D...  
1507B Oak...



## Mediation solves money squabbles

By DREW VON BERGEN  
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Despite the impact of President Reagan's new federalism, an innovative mediation approach to financial disputes among federal, state, and local governments may have greater use in the 1980s.

The concept of using mediation to solve such intergovernmental problems — called Negotiated Investment Strategy — has been advanced by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation to deal with problems inherent in federal categorical grants that are being virtually eliminated by the new administration.

At a recent conference on Capitol Hill, officials of the nonprofit research-oriented foundation joined researchers and city and state officials to discuss what effect the administration's move toward block grants to states will have on the process.

A 10-page paper by Charles R. Warren, senior research associate of the National Academy of Public Administration, concluded that while the concept will operate differently under strong state control of funds, it will still be necessary to solve increasing state-local conflicts.

The process, tried in Columbus, Ohio, St. Paul, Minn., and Gary, Ind., last year, brings together officials from all three levels

of government, along with a mediator, to hammer out an agreement that, while it may not make any participants happy, will at least be satisfactory to all parties.

Results of pilot negotiations last year showed:

— Agreement in Gary for \$250 million in financial commitment, with 63 percent from the public sector and remaining from private areas for downtown development, transportation, recreation, housing, industrial and commercial development, health care and public safety.

— In St. Paul, an agreement committed all sides to support four major development projects for which the federal negotiators pledged more than \$40 million, including \$32 million for land acquisition and development of a 250-acre energy park.

— In Columbus, consensus was reached on eight broad areas, including specific projects to promote downtown and neighborhood revitalization and building restoration, with the federal government supplying \$330 million of the \$480 million cost of physical improvements.

In his report, Warren indicated the new Reagan federalism may just be the beginning of more problems for states and cities.

"The already evident reductions in federal aid programs will place a far greater burden on the states and localities to meet their

own needs and resolve their own problems," he said. "Yet, the policy changes at the federal level are placing tremendous strains on intergovernmental relations."

"States and localities are being forced to become adversaries, and at the same time mutual dependence is increasing," he added.

Warren said if some taxing power were turned to the states and energy-rich states are able to derive considerable income from mineral resources, many states in a far superior position to finance activities than the federal government.

"This would not hold true for states in the Northeast and Midwest, where less economic conditions improve, typically, will remain in a fiscal strait," he said.

Warren added that states have more involved in levying controls on governments, noting substantial reduction in previously defined local government issues surrounding financial problems New York City and Cleveland.

Columbus Mayor Thomas M. Worsham said the mediating strategy remains valid with decreasing federal aid.

"It's more important that the burden from the federal government be shifted to the community," M...

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## Warped

