

Slouch By Jim Earle



"What I'll miss most about coming back to school is 'Dialing for Dollars,' 'As the World Turns,' and 'The Edge of Night.'"

Robbing Peter to pay the piper

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Here's the way it was supposed to work:

The new "all-savers" accounts, with tax-free interest up to \$2,000, would attract fresh capital into the mortgage market, thereby stimulating home buying and giving the housing industry a boost.

As we now know, the cash flow has not been as copious as anticipated. For reasons why, I refer you to my investment adviser, Sigmund Waterstock.

I asked Waterstock if he advised acquiring an all-savers certificate from a friendly neighborhood savings and loan association. "It depends," he replied. "From whence do you plan to get the money with which to purchase the certificate?"

(Investment counselors, at least the better ones, habitually use words like "whence." That is why when investment advisers speak, everybody listens.)

I told Waterstock I had a "money market" certificate that could be converted to

an all-savers certificate as soon as it matured.

"Swapping a money market certificate for an all-savers certificate does nothing to increase the amount of capital available for home loans," Waterstock pointed out. "In effect, you are only taking money out of one pocket and putting it into another pocket. We'll never break out of the housing slump that way."

"Very well," I said, conceding the point. "I'll withdraw enough money from my checking account to cover the all-savers certificate."

Waterstock smote his forehead in consternation.

"You can't do that!" he protested. "Banks use the funds in checking accounts to make loans for car purchases. If those funds shrink, it will make things worse for the auto industry, which already is hard hit by sagging sales."

I said, "How about if I refinanced my house and invested that money in an all-savers certificate?"

"Bad, bad, bad," Waterstock admonished. "By entering the credit market, you tighten the squeeze on the money supply, thus driving up interest rates which provides fuel for inflation."

"I certainly wouldn't want to do that," I said. "Would it be OK if I sold one of my children to a passing Gypsy for the price of an all-savers certificate?"

"I wouldn't recommend a transaction of that type," Waterstock counseled. "By living in wagons, nomadic tribes tend to weaken the demand for housing."

I said, "Is there no way I can invest in an all-savers certificate without weakening some other segment of the economy?"

"Have you tried the Irish Sweepstakes?" he asked. "Should you hit a winning number, the proceeds can be invested in all-savers certificates with no ill effects on employment, foreign trade deficits or the cost-of-living index."

The problem now is raising enough money to buy a sweepstakes ticket. I'm still waiting to hear from Waterstock on that.

Reagan's lobbying techniques praised

By WESLEY G. PIPPERT
United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan's congressional lobbying team has drawn wide praise for effectiveness in getting Reagan almost everything he wanted on Capitol Hill in 1981.

"It is necessary to go back to Lyndon Johnson to find a president who received similar support for his major legislative proposals during his first year," said George Washington University political scientist Stephen J. Wayne.

Wayne, a specialist on the presidency, presented a paper on the White House's congressional liaison at the conservative American Enterprise Institute's conference assessing Reagan's first year.

One of the main reasons Reagan's team succeeded, in Wayne's view, was "agenda control" — focusing attention of Congress and the news media on a very few legislative items. This was one of the mistakes made by President Jimmy Carter that Reagan sought to avoid.

"By promoting a wide range of social and economic policies, Carter had difficulty controlling the congressional calendar, focusing the media and mobilizing support," Wayne said.

"The lesson was clear — the fewer the initiatives, the easier the coordination and the greater the time that could be spent on building congressional majorities."

Thus Reagan's campaign rhetoric that government was too large and costly, taxes were too high, defense was too weak and regulations were too numerous, was pinpointed into two basic legislative initiatives — budget and tax cuts.

Wayne believes Reagan's style also contributed to his effectiveness.

"He used a soft sell. Citing basic arguments and illustrating them with a few statistics, he would ask for support and then answer questions. He was always affable; his demeanor was presidential," Wayne said.

Wayne said the only persistent criticism of Reagan the lobbyist has been on the depth of his knowledge about the issues, but even this lack of specificity may be part of the White House's strategy.

Said Wayne: "In addition to being consistent with Reagan's personal style, it reduces his burden and most importantly, his risk. Verbal blunders, poor judgments, costly errors can be and have been blamed on subordinates. The president avoids responsibility and ridicule by not having been informed or involved in the details."

"One has to go back to Kennedy to find another chief executive with a similar combination of lucidity and charisma and to Eisenhower to find as commanding a presence in the White House," Wayne said.

The combination of all this was to produce near Republican unanimity for Reagan's programs both in the GOP Senate and Democratic House.

Rep. Richard Cheney, R-Wyo., chairman of the House Republican Conference and chief of staff in the Ford White House, emphasized the importance of the GOP unity.

He said that even more impressive than Reagan's getting the conservative House "boll weevil" Southern Democrats to vote for his programs was getting moderate House "gypsy moth" Republicans from the Northeast to go along with him.

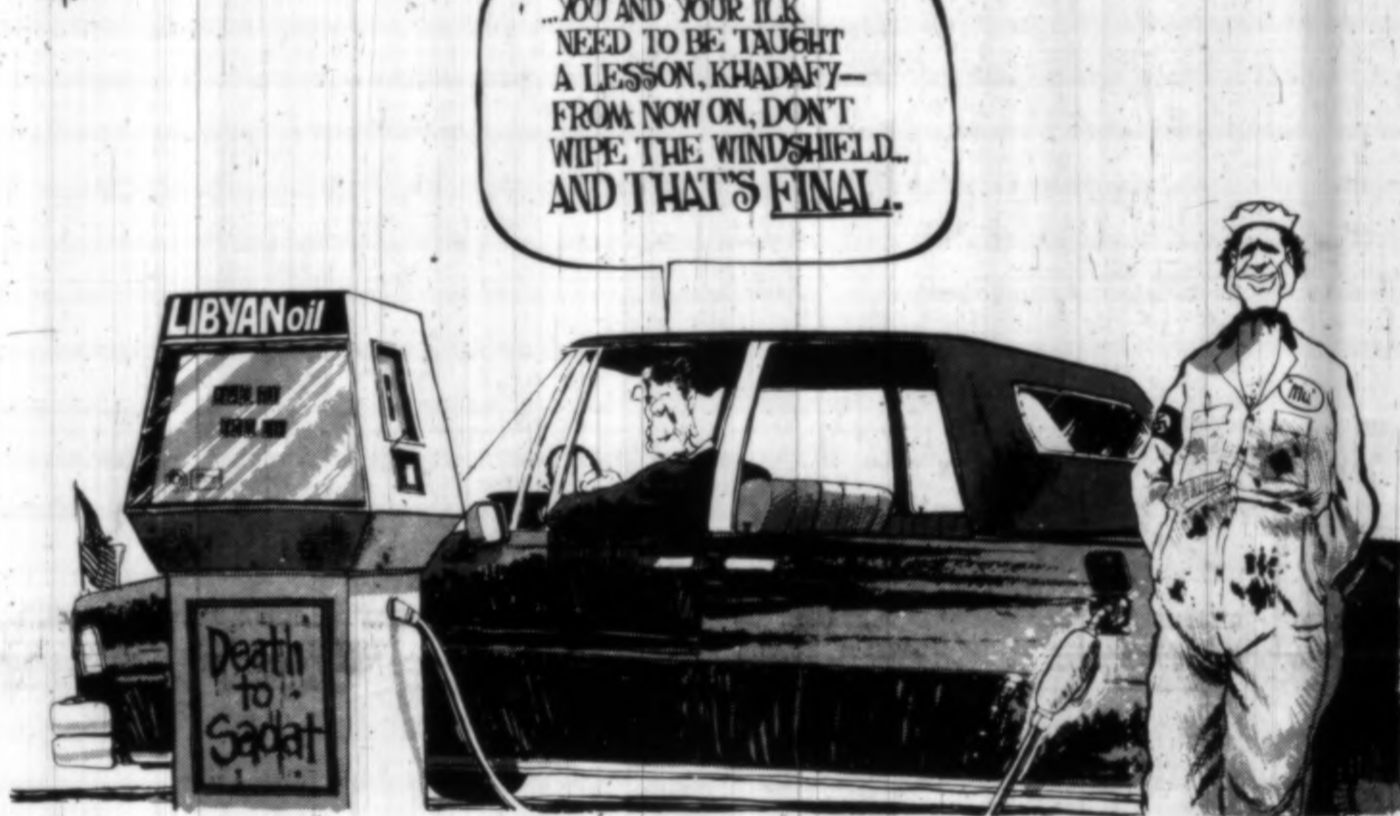
But Wayne held out the prospect of hard times for Reagan on Capitol Hill: He will find it increasingly harder to control the legislative agenda, and already lack of coordination is apparent in the White House.

"If White House lines of authority continue to be blurred, if interagency coordination is not systematically extended into the legislative area, if turnover increases among liaison aides, if the senior staff become preoccupied with nonlegislative matters, the administration may be in for trouble, big trouble in the days ahead," Wayne said.

Bill Cable, a Washington lawyer and Carter's House lobbyist, agreed that Reagan's lobbying effort had been extraordinarily effective.

Cable explained in part his own administration's problem in that Carter believed what a president can accomplish in four years is determined by what he lays out the first year — and so he had completed sending his long list of proposals to Capitol Hill by August 1977.

THE COLLINGWOOD PHOTO BY FOR IN GROUP TOBES NEWS/SHOOTER



Parliamentary drama in the House keeps bill from going to president

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Sometimes the news media strains so hard to explain parliamentary procedure in simple terms that it confuses more than enlightens.

Too bad, because parliamentary procedure sometimes can be intriguing.

Sports writers and sportscasters make careers of talking endlessly about parliamentary procedure, but they don't call it that. They call it strategy, or signals or any one of a thousand quiet little things that go on behind the scenes in any game.

So why not occasionally be specific about what goes on behind the scenes in Congress?

Take for example the Alaska natural gas bill that passed Congress, which would give several valuable new rights to the builders of the Alaska natural gas pipeline, including the right to charge consumers higher prices to cover costs, even before the pipeline is completed.

Probably no one outside Washington inner circles knows it, but a young Republican congressman from Illinois — Rep. Tom Corcoran — became the new darling of the consumer movement and rubbed the noses of the mossbound House leadership in its own rules by discovering a new parliamentary trick.

Corcoran actually forced the House to vote again on the Alaska gas bill, embarrassing Democratic leaders and giving the consumer movement two extra days to lobby against it, after the lawmakers had already passed a bill that was identical to a bill that passed the Senate.

Every school child knows that when the House and the Senate pass exactly the same bill, it goes to the president for his signature. Right?

Not so, at least not in this case.

The parliamentary procedure — or inside baseball — enters the scene at this point.

Even if the House and Senate bills are identical in every way, they must have the same number at the top. In this case, the House bill was numbered H.J. Res. 341, and the Senate bill was numbered S.J. Res. 115. Under the usual routine procedure, after the House bill passed Rep. Morris Udall, D-Ariz., the floor manager, asked unanimous consent to place the House bill under the Senate number.

For decades, such unanimous consent requests have been mumbled through the House with hardly any notice, sort of like placing the period at the end of the sentence.

Not this time.

Corcoran objected. Udall stood flustered, slowly realizing he had been had. With Corcoran's objection, there was no unanimous consent.

The next step was simply to go to the Senate and let them put their bill under the House number.

But Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D-Ohio, took up the cause at that point, threatening to filibuster any attempt to change the bill's number. With final adjournment rushing closer, the Senate had no time for a filibuster.

Meanwhile, the consumer movement was turning up the heat, making every move on the bill a new embarrassment.

There was no choice for Udall. He had to ask the Rules Committee to allow a vote on the Senate bill, meaning that the whole issue was thrown back before the House and the consumer movement had yet another chance to defeat it.

The bill passed again, but by a more narrow margin. And the added political damage to Democratic leaders, including former Vice President Walter Mondale — a consultant to the pipeline builders — is hard to calculate.

However, no one listening to a broadcast or reading a newspaper would know about this moment of high drama that created new alliances, broke old ones and may have political consequences for years.

Instead, almost every media outlet, including UPI, attempted to find some simple key word to explain this crafty move — "parliamentary move," or "parliamentary tangle," or some such.

Some even said — incorrectly — that the bills had slightly different language.

Nothing was different about the bill's language.

What was different was that a young congressman had propelled himself to the forefront of the consumer movement, and some old "friends" of the movement had been written off.

Now that's real "parliamentary procedure."

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By Scott McCullar