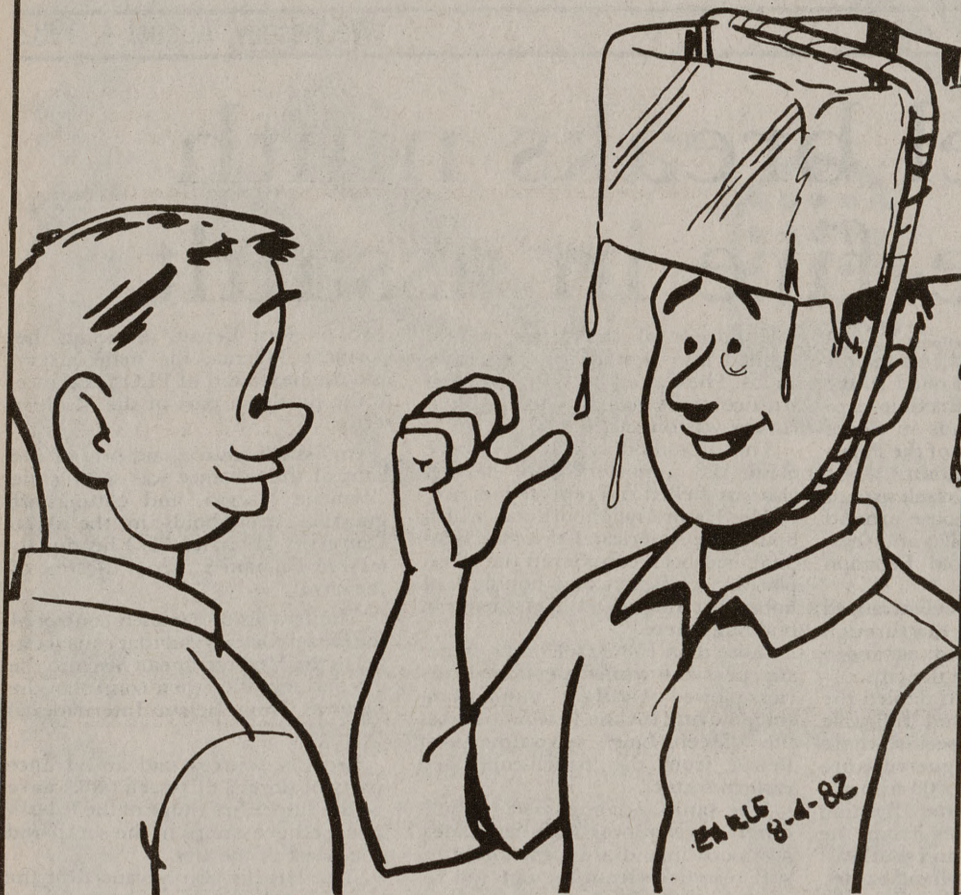


Slouch

By Jim Earle



"It's the coolest idea I've had, but frankly, they make ice too heavy."

The perfect page — fixing the program

by Steve Gerstel
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The perfect congressional page is a swift, silent runner, hustling everything from important documents to candy bars for sweet-toothed senators.

He, or in more recent times she, is also a youngster between 14 and 18, free and loose in one of the nation's not-so-very-wicked cities.

Most of the time these teenage gofers, identically dressed in white shirts and deep blue trousers, escape notice — a state accepted by the congressmen and senators and almost certainly preferred by the pages.

From time to time, concerns have been raised about the living habits and academic pursuits of the pages, but very little has changed since the system began in 1814.

That is certain to change now — under unfortunate circumstances.

Allegations have been made that some members of Congress and some pages are into cocaine and homosexual sex.

The FBI, a grand jury and the House ethics committee are all investigating the allegations.

Even if accurate, the allegations seem to involve no more than a handful of congressmen and even fewer pages. Given the large population of Capitol Hill, the percentages may not even be unusual in relation to society as a whole.

In the process, however, a lot of congressmen and pages have been put under suspicion and, if no indictments are returned and no charges pressed by the ethics committee, no one probably will ever know.

If nothing else the scandal — if there is a scandal — has given new life to the page reform movement.

The focus seems to center on supervised housing for the pages that would end a lifestyle that many other teenagers

might envy.

Girl pages live under one roof but boy pages have to fend for themselves, sometimes getting together to share an apartment.

The Senate Management Board, which began a study "some months ago" is in with its recommendations.

One of them is that Senate should provide a single supervised housing unit for its 30 pages until Congress approves money for a page dormitory.

But the board, as have others before, indicated concern that the pages are not getting the academic education they need.

The page school now has to accommodate 100 pages, ranging in age from 14 to 18, grades 9 through 12.

The classes have to be crammed into a tight schedule — 6:15 a.m. until an hour before the Senate or House convenes. It is not unusual for the Senate to meet as early as 9 a.m.

There is no gym. There are no laboratories and the library is considered poor although the school is located in the Library of Congress.

To ease the situation, the board has recommended the appointment of only 11th graders who would take an "innovative academic program."

This would retain the "essential" 11th grade courses but add others emphasizing Congress and the legislative process, social and policy sciences, budgeting and management, writing and the media.

To cope with that load in the limited time available every day, the board also recommended that senators appoint only students with "outstanding academic credentials" as pages.

But tradition dies hard on Capitol Hill. For instance, only in recent times have girls and blacks been named as pages.

And once the furor over the drugs-sex allegations fade away, the page program may well continue as it always has.

Who will supervise Congress

by Art Buchwald

The latest publicity concerning rumors of congressional shenanigans with Capitol Hill pages and drugs has caused some serious soul searching in Washington. There has been an outcry for greater supervision of young pages in their off hours. Right now these 15- and 16-year-olds are more or less off on their own, when they are not working, and nobody seems responsible for them. They live where they want to and do what they want, which can get them in all kinds of trouble.

While Congress is prepared to change the rules concerning supervision of the pages, no one has gotten to the real root of the problem — and that is who will supervise the legislators? It's quite clear that if you transplant 535 middle-aged congressmen and women to a big city like Washington, and give \$60,000 a year to spend, and don't oversee their leisure time, some of them are bound to get into trouble.

There are several solutions to the problem that will guarantee that these

people will not be left to their own devices after work hours.

One suggestion is that Congress build male and female dormitories on the mall where they would have to live while they are in session. The dormitories would provide television, game rooms, lectures and other recreational activities to keep the congressmen's and -women's minds busy during their off hours. House-mothers would be hired to run the dorms and make sure they made their beds and did their homework.

Dating would be permitted, but only in the public rooms downstairs.

On weekdays all legislators would have to be in bed by 10 o'clock with lights out by 10:30, except during filibusters and special occasions such as the State of the Union Address by the President.

Those missing a bed check would have to appear in front of the House Ethics Committee, who would have the authority to hand out punishment which could be anything from forbidding them to go on "Meet the Press" for a month, to not allowing them to fly home on weekends

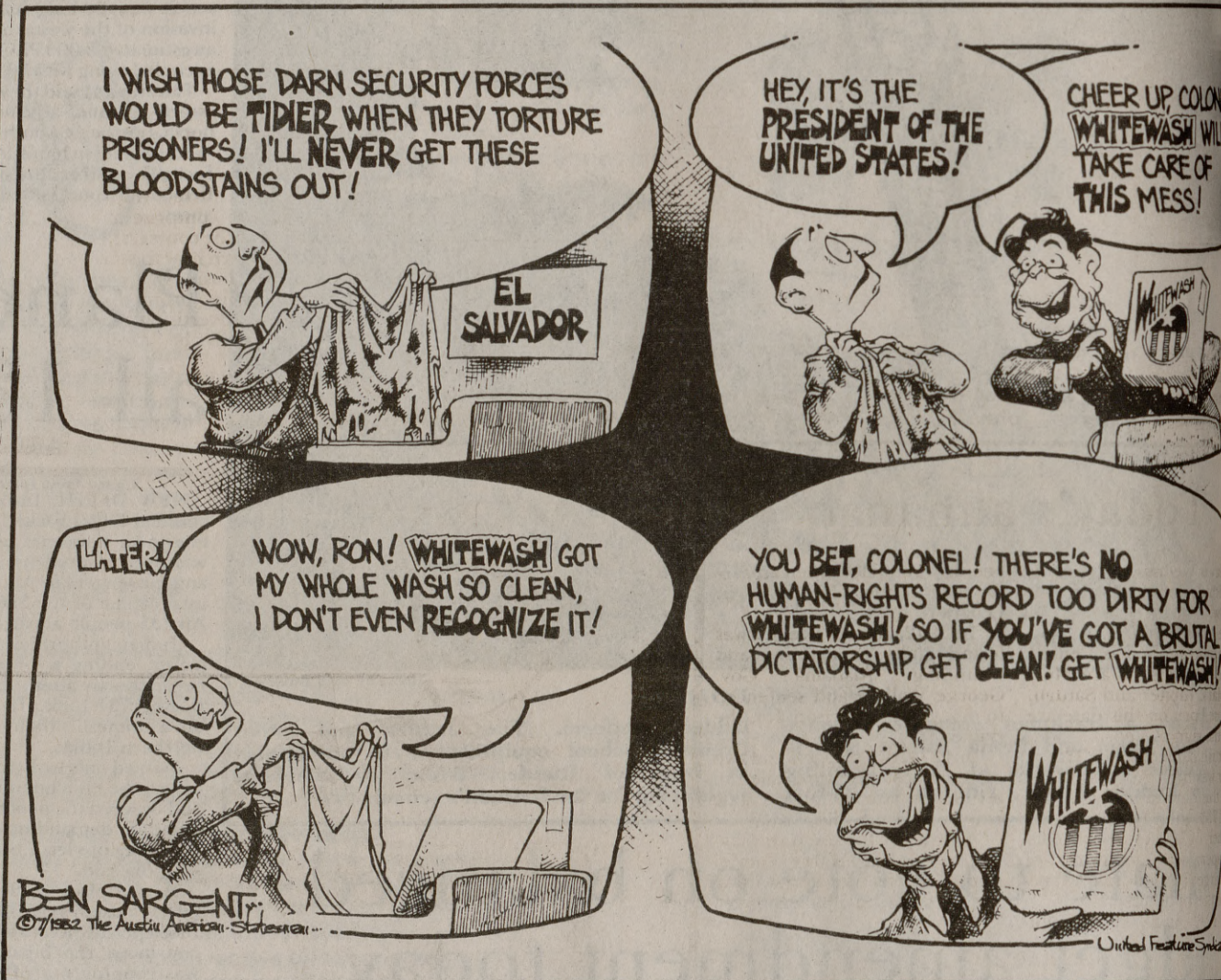
to campaign for reelection.

Anyone caught having alcohol in the dorms would lose his first privileges for a month. If the offense repeated, he would be suspended from Congress, until he brought a note from his constituents saying he would do it again.

So life will not get boring in Washington, chaperoned dances in the dining room will be held on Saturdays with dates from the National Organization of Women's Rights Bureau from the Maryland and Virginia states.

If we are to have congressmen and congresswomen (and there is some question whether they could provide what others couldn't do much more cheaply), we have to see that while from home, they live in a healthy, supervised environment.

They may squawk at the restriction at the beginning. But in the long run, be grateful that we kept them all from temptations Washington dangles in front of those who make the laws of the



That ol' balanced budget feeling

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Basically, there are two ways to go about getting things done in this town. One way is to create a commission to study a problem. The other way is to introduce a Constitutional amendment.

Look back over the 26 amendments that have been ratified to date and you will find that the bulk of them dealt with emotional issues — visceral rather than cerebral.

Freedom of speech, the right to bear arms, slavery, the income tax, prohibition, repeal of prohibition ... all controversies that aroused intense feelings. And still do for that matter.

Study commissions, on the other hand, have mainly delved into subjects more challenging to the intellect than the heart.

Right now, rising phoenix-like from the ashes of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), is the Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA).

If approved by two-thirds of both houses of Congress and ratified by three-fourths of the states, BBA would prevent lawgivers from approving spending deficits except by a three-fifths vote. Or some such percentage.

It is difficult to quarrel with the ostensible objectives of either amendment. No fairminded person endorses sexual discrimination and fiscal prudence belongs right up there on the all-time list of All-American virtues.

The big question is whether BBA can avoid the fate of ERA, which failed to win enough support to become part of the Constitution.

The principles embodied in ERA essentially stimulate thinking. Nearly everyone approaches the problem of sexism in our society with reason and logic. This may explain why the amendment was rejected.

Creation of a commission to study sexual discrimination might have been a more effective method of dealing with that problem.

By contrast, the procedure being following in the case of mandatory balanced budgets seems entirely fitting.

Fiscal policy always stirs our primitive emotions. We can, of course, apply reason in deciding whether certain spending reductions and tax cuts are in the public interest. But mostly we go with our gut reactions.

You could sense the emotional pull at this week's BBA rally on the Capitol steps where not long ago the intellectual backers of ERA were rallying.

The thousands of BBA ralliers who gathered to hear President Reagan extol the amendment were there primarily be-

cause deficit spending makes them red.

But just as ERA was done in by fear would lead to unisex restrooms, so BBA appear vulnerable to tangential arguments.

Already there is talk that unbalanced budgets benefit wellheeled citizens to detriment of those out at the heels.

If that view prevails, it may be wise to switch to a thinking man's approach: appointment of a commission to study the feasibility of maintaining separate budgets, one for poor people and one for the rich.

Berry's World



"Whatever happened to the good old-fashioned heterosexual-type scandals they used to have in London and Washington?"

The Battalion

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