

opinion

Slouch By Jim Earle



"Maybe this graph will illustrate how I plan to taper off when the grades for graduating seniors are posted."

Strictly business; nothing personal

by Art Buchwald

Cohen was singing: "Don't cry for me, Saudi Arabia."

"You seem very happy, Cohen," I said. "Would it have anything to do with the price of oil going down?"

"I'm not happy or unhappy," he said. "I just take things as they come. I didn't slash my wrists when the OPEC cartel raised the price to \$34 a barrel, and I'm not going to dance in the streets now that they're cutting their own throats."

"You're the only one I know that doesn't get emotional about oil."

"I never considered what OPEC did a personal thing against me. After all, they had the oil and we didn't, and in a capitalist society anyone should be able to get what he can for his goods. I paid the going rate when petroleum went up and now I'll pay the going rate when it goes down. It's strictly business with me; nothing personal."

"But isn't there the tiniest bit of joy in your heart that the cartel is on the ropes, after what they did to the world for 10 years?"

"I never hated anyone because they had oil in the ground. I'm too big a man for that sort of thing. The cartel gave stability to the energy market during the oil shortage, and now that there is a glut it's every country for itself. In life there are peaks and valleys, even for oil-producing nations."

"That's beautiful, Cohen. I never heard anyone talk about OPEC that way before. Did you feel that way in 1982 when you got your heating bill?"

"Nobody likes a big heating bill. But I'm one of those people who lights candles instead of cursing the darkness. I never even got mad when I stood in line for 45 minutes at the gas station to fill my tank at \$1.95 a gallon."

"What did you do?"

"I said: 'Cohen, the Arab sheiks have nothing personal against you. Without

oil they would still be eating sand. I would do the same thing if I were in their situation. After all, how long is their wealth going to last?"

"And now what do you say when you drive up to a pump?"

"I don't have as much time to talk to myself at a gas station any more. But while I'm filling my tank I say: 'Cohen, you had nothing to do with OPEC falling apart, and if the oil-producing nations want to commit fratricide, it's not your problem.'"

"I wish I could see things so dispassionately," I said.

"I guess it was the way I was brought up. My father was the only person in our neighborhood during the depression that didn't hate John D. Rockefeller because he controlled the Standard Oil Company."

"Everyone says we should be worried if the price of oil goes down too far, because it will wreck the banks."

"The banks are not my worry. They had a good run loaning the oil-producing countries money when they were rolling in petrodollars. Now they have to live with their bad loans. It's nothing personal with me, you understand? But banks are something I don't spend much time fretting about. I guess it was the way I was brought up. My father always felt about banks the way Willy Sutton the bank robber did. They were just a place where the money was."

"My attitude is different, Cohen. I believe OPEC tried to shaft the world, and now that they're being shafted by each other, I feel warm all over. I always react this way when someone else is being shafted. There's nothing that makes me happier than an oil glut, and I chuckle every time the price of oil drops a dollar a barrel. Am I wrong to feel that way?"

"It's not your fault," he said. "It was probably the way you were brought up."

Don't play it again, Sam

by Don Phillips

WASHINGTON — If Humphrey Bogart were alive today, he might sue the postal workers union.

Among the political advertisements the union has produced in its move to prevent future federal workers from being included in Social Security is one in which an actor imitates Bogart from a scene in the classic movie "Casablanca."

In this version of "Casablanca," however, Rick — Bogart — urges everyone to write his congressman asking for a vote against the Social Security bill provision regarding federal workers.

This is one of two major political advertising campaigns now entertaining thousands of Americans. The other is being produced by the banking industry in an attempt to stop the plan to withhold taxes on interest and dividends beginning June 30.

The banking campaign takes a different approach. Few bank statements over the past few weeks have not included inserts proclaiming that the government is trying to rob the poor little saver of his meager interest income. A letterwriting campaign has flooded congressional offices with tons of mail.

The two campaigns have two things in common: both are seriously misleading and both probably are backfiring.

For instance, the Social Security ads claim that including federal workers in the system would "bankrupt" the current Civil Service retirement system, costing

the taxpayers \$185 billion. The ad asserts that backers of the provision claimed it would pump \$20 billion into Social Security, but the latest Congressional Budget Office estimate is only \$6 billion.

Let's take those arguments one by one:

First, "bankrupt" is so misleading as to be wrong. Those now in the Civil Service retirement system will continue to pay into it as they do now, and the federal government will continue to pay the lion's share of the expenses — more than 4-to-1 over the participants.

In other words, the government already is paying billions, and nothing will go bankrupt.

And top congressional leaders have pledged not only that the Civil Service fund will remain sound but that a supplemental fund will be set up for future federal retirees to be certain that the combination of Social Security benefits and supplemental benefits will be the same as they would have received under the current system.

Those last two figures — \$20 billion vs. \$6 billion — are an apples-and-oranges comparison.

No one ever claimed that including federal workers would pump \$20 billion into Social Security; that was the figure for inclusion of both federal and non-profit organization employees. The House Ways and Means Committee estimated that including federal employees would increase Social Security funding by \$9.3 billion.

The banking campaign could be de-

scribed as a scare campaign, but little for the vast number of savers.

To begin with, only 10 percent of interest income would be withheld from the account until the end of the year, making the loss of income meaningless. The loss on a \$1,000 at a 9 percent rate is only about 4 cents per month.

Small savers — those earning four or less in interest — would be empty.

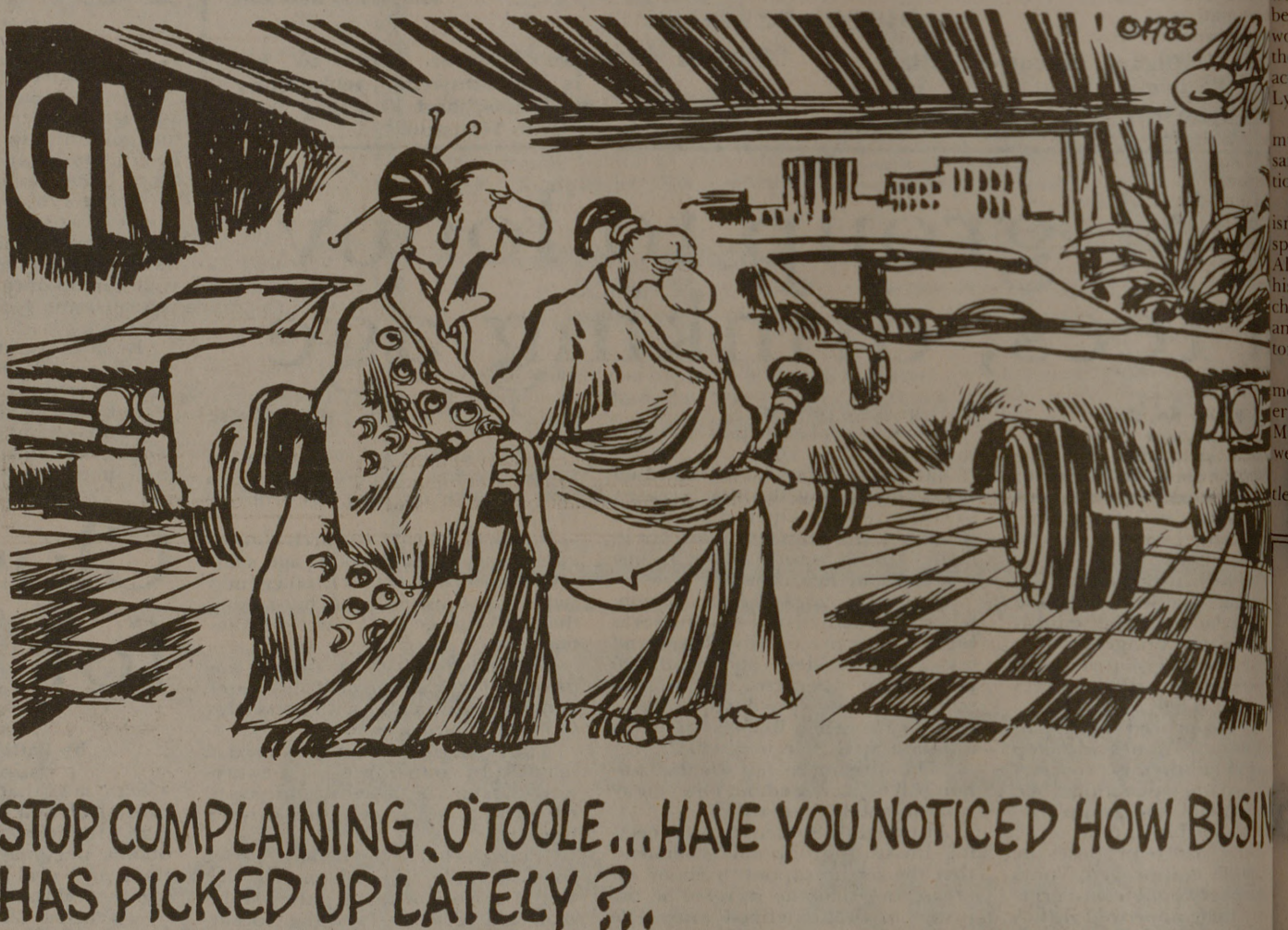
In return for this small loss, honest taxpayers — those who pay their interest and dividends on their tax forms — would have the assurance of knowing that the government would be forced to pay their fair share.

The scofflaws are not small. An estimated 11 percent of savers report to Uncle Sam.

Over five years, the Treasury estimates that more than \$20 billion in taxes will be collected from savers who have no choice because their names already is listed in the IRS computer.

Both of these campaigns have some key people on Capitol Hill. The leaders of both parties in the House and Senate tax-writing committees. Enemies have been named. Warnings have been issued. These campaigns may come back to those who spawned them.

Paraphrasing Bogart, congressional leaders are saying: "Don't play



Letters: Thanks to Corps of Cadets

Editor:

Thank you for your coverage of the Corps of Cadets' sponsorship of children through the Christian Children's Fund. It certainly is noteworthy when so many people work together to rescue young children from the combined suffering of hunger and disease. The Corps' work with CCF is in keeping with their long tradition of helping needy people.

I doubt if there is another organization on any of our nation's campuses so devoted to humanitarian causes, one that raises tens of thousands of dollars each year for the benefit of others. It is no wonder that people like Sally Struthers are pleased to come to our campus.

Each day, five little children are fed and sheltered and taught and loved, thanks to the Corps. By such deeds, the men and women of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets bring credit to themselves and to everyone associated with this university.

Dr. Robert Scott Kellner

Readers says don't judge others

Editor:

Dear Mr. Stevens:

I have one question to ask you: What makes you so moral and/or wise that you feel qualified to judge another's morals? I suggest that you subject yourself to psychic testing. You obviously believe yourself to be psychic enough to tell us Mr. Patti's intent.

I won't try to tell anyone that I know "all the answers," but I am sure of one thing: God did not make me so that I might judge and condemn others.

You seem sure of your beliefs and equally sure that laws should enforce

morality (your morality). Would it not seem logical then, if we believe you, that a law should be passed forcing all people to go to church; or we can take it one step further, we can force everyone to attend your church. Is this morality?

Laws should only protect individuals' rights from infringement. That is why we have laws against murder, rape, theft, etc. Is also why the Constitution includes freedom of religion.

I learned long ago that whenever you have learned men on both sides of an issue, there is no absolute right or wrong, but only varying shades of gray. Goodness knows, there are learned men (and ignorant ones) on both sides of this issue.

May I remind you that it was religious intolerance and closed-mindedness that fed early Christians to the lions and slaughtered millions of Jews forty years ago.

Let us pity, not condemn the 14-year-olds in our society that need sex in order to feel "loved." Neither of your answers (making them "pay the price" or denying them birth control) will solve the problem. This "band-aid" will not cure society's major illness.

Mr. Stevens, you might try working to help the situation instead of simply condemning it. There are many organizations (such as church groups, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Boy and Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.) that try to give children the love that all too many can't find at home. You have shown that you are an expert at avoiding sin, but one can't get into heaven by just not doing wrong, one has to do something good as well.

Kelly McCanlies '86

Political seesaw

Editor:

Did you know that President Reagan addressed the nation on Feb. 26 concern-

ing his Cabinet and the federal government in general? He made the announcement on his Saturday afternoon radio address.

When he finished the Democratic Party promptly sent on one of its politicians. This gentleman, I don't remember his name (not that it makes a difference — they all say the same thing anyway), said the president should concern himself with more pertinent issues. He suggested unemployment.

On March 5, President Reagan addressed the nation (once again) on his Saturday afternoon radio address concerning unemployment. He proposed a method that would get young people back to work and at the same time create late businesses to hire them. Whether a good plan or not remains to be seen.

The Democratic Party promptly sent on one of its shyster politicians to remember his name either, for the reason I stated before. He said the president should concern himself with more pertinent issues. He suggested unemployment.

Very enlightening and informative.

Stephen W.

Lost purse

Editor:

Dear Aggies:

I lost my purse Saturday, March 5, at the Moses-Walton party at Shiloh Park. It's a white clutch purse. It's valuable to me. If anyone has found it, please let me know. I will ask no questions. The person who has it: What good will it do you? Just, please be a "Good Aggie."

USPS 045 360
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Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

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Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

The Battalion is published daily during Texas A&M's fall and spring semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.