

Tidbits and Outrages

The Big Dipper

Readers of these pages will be aware of our continuing interest in the government's "double-dippers"—those who receive a military pension while holding another government job. Sid Taylor of the National Taxpayers Union recently wrote Barry Goldwater suggesting that he set an example for fellow double dippers in Congress by giving up the \$6,650 per year he receives as a retired Air Force Major General. Here's the Senator's answer:

What you suggest in your letter is great, but in my case it is not so easily done. You see, I came up for retirement from the Air Force Reserve in 1967 which was the year before I was reelected to the Senate, and it was during a time when I was unemployed. I accepted my retirement even though I have often said that had I been in the Congress when this was suggested I would have voted against it, because I don't believe Reserve officers, unless they serve out a full span with the regulars, are entitled to retirement.

When I first became a Reserve officer it took two days to earn one bogie, but now it is day for day and I don't think that's correct. If I wrote to the Reserve Command and told them I did not want my check any more, this would never get through the computer. What would happen is that my check would come out regularly each month and then, even if I might refuse them, they would be piling up, and some day either I would have to take the accumulation and then tremendous taxes would have to be paid.

To be honest with you, I at one time felt that it was perfectly all right for a reservist to serve in the Congress, and I was ready for immediate call. The only understanding I had was that my governor had 10 days in which to appoint a successor. However, since looking into it, I realize that many of the colonels and flag rank officers in the Congress and the Pentagon and around Washington if called to active duty would actually be doing a lesser job for their country than they are doing now. Also, at that time the question of double dipping or double service was very muddled up and it was felt then, as it had been felt throughout our history, that a reservist could serve in the Congress. In fact, the law is pretty clear that he can accept a retirement check and still be legal, even though there is a question of morality about it.

You are mistaken when you consider me a millionaire; I'm not. I'm not exactly poor, but I'm a long way from hitting that big figure, and I don't see any chance of it ever happening in my present employment. I'm glad you wrote me as you did. I suggest you write others in a similar situation. It might do some good if all of us, for example, insisted that no more checks be sent, but I don't think, really, that it's going to amount to anything.

Everything makes sense once you get a clear explanation.

Dam Shame

In a hollow near the town of Wharton in Boone County, West Virginia, there is a dam built of dirt and debris used to hold back sludge from the mines. It is the same type of dam as the one that broke and destroyed Buffalo Creek in early 1972, killing 150 people in one of the worst tragedies in coal mine history. Since shortly after the disaster, the Department of Interior has been trying to get Eastern Associated Fuel Corporation to stop using the dam. The company refuses, contending that it is safe. The government inspectors say the dam is moving down the hollow at the rate of 70 feet a year. It is 500 feet high, and has more water behind it than the one at Buffalo Creek.

A Success Story

The government is fighting inflation. According to John Cramer of the *Washington Star-News*, the Secretary of the Army's Mess offered the generals on October 1: vichysoisse and baked half young chicken bordelaise for just \$1.00. If the senior officers preferred, they could have gone on the same day to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's dining room and had minestrone, baked lasagna, broccoli polonaise, Caesar salad, garlic bread, and beverage for \$1.40. For those who need an alcoholic beverage, the Army Material Command in Alexandria offers cocktail and lunch at the Commanding General's Mess for \$1.80. His secretary can get the same thing downstairs for \$3.67.



From the Ellicott City, Maryland, 12-25-73

CHARLES A. BAKER, Jr. is congratulated by Colonel Allan J. English, Jr., commander, U.S. Army First Recruiting District, during a recent award ceremony. Mr. Baker, of Taylor Park Road, Sykesville, received a certificate of Recognition for not taking sick leave for a one year period.

Tactful Restraint at the CIA

The *Washington Post* has had so much good Watergate material that occasional gems get buried deep in the back pages like these illuminating paragraphs on the new head of the CIA, William Colby. They describe Colby's testimony before a House committee investigating the CIA and Watergate.

Colby also acknowledged that he sought unsuccessfully to conceal from former Watergate prosecutor Earl Silbert at an interview on Nov. 27, 1972, that it was White House domestic affairs adviser John C. Ehrlichman who requested CIA assistance for Howard Hunt Jr. in July, 1971, in connection with the break-in of the offices of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist.

In a "memorandum for the record" on the interview with Silbert, Colby said he "danced around the room several times for 10 minutes to try to avoid becoming specific on this, finally naming the White House, and was then pinned by Silbert with a demand for the name, at which point the name of the individual was given."

The name was Ehrlichman. Colby recited his efforts to withhold Ehrlichman's name in a White House meeting on Dec. 15, 1972, with Ehrlichman and then White House counsel John W. Dean III in the presence of Helms.

This was some six months after Helms and Walters realized, according to their subsequent testimony, that Ehrlichman and Dean were trying to implicate the CIA in the Watergate case.

Colby said he had hoped to withhold Ehrlichman's name from federal prosecutor Silbert because "there was a reluctance to drop somewhat inflammatory names into the kind of atmosphere that was around us at that time."

Another Success Story

The Congress that has lost one veto fight after another to President Nixon finally defeated him in late September. The issue of crucial national importance that brought forth their first successful effort to stand up to the President was a dispute over the effective date of a pay raise for federal employees. The President wanted to delay it as an anti-inflationary measure, but the vigorous lobbying of the government employee unions won out. The result, among other things, is that we now have 72,669 civilian government employees making over \$24,000 a year. By 1977, their salaries will be at least \$36,000. A year ago we ran an article giving another illustration of these unions' power. It was called "Stealing from the Blind" and showed how the government employee associations had been destroying one of the few government programs that worked—vending stands operated by the blind in federal buildings. The General Accounting Office has just completed another investigation showing that the trend continues. Sixty per cent of the blind vendors reported a net income of less than \$3,000 because of the vending machines operated by employee associations. At six military installations in the Washington area the blind had a net income of \$38,000; the employee associations, a net income of \$2,500,000.

more tidbits and outrages

Attorneys Still at Law

Unfortunately, the Ervin Committee seems to have lost interest in the legal profession's role in Watergate. But we continue to be curious, not only about the more prominent players such as Ehrlichman and Mitchell, but about the Herb Kalmbachs as well. Take William O. Bittman, who seemed to find nothing untoward about picking up his fees in a phone booth. This man, who may well have been the grand paymaster of the conspiracy, continues to practice law as a partner in one of Washington's more prestigious firms, Hogan and Hartson. Or Gerald Alch, who still practices law in Boston despite evidence that he tried to make James McCord plead guilty as a favor to the Nixon Administration. Or Judge Matthew Byrne, who twice discussed the FBI directorship with Ehrlichman while presiding over the Ellsberg trial. Or Judge Charles Richey, who managed to prevent any damaging evidence in the Democratic National Committee's Watergate civil suit from coming out before the election.

A Tale of a Tub

Public indignation about government spending on presidential retreats has properly focused on San Clemente and Key Biscayne, where public funds are being spent on private property. Camp David is less scandalous because the public money is at least being spent on public property. We were intrigued nonetheless by this report from Maxine Cheshire of *The Washington Post*:

Almost \$2.4 million has been spent on Camp David since President Nixon took office five years

ago—more than the facility cost under all three of his most recent predecessors combined. Although no breakdown on the 1969-73 expenditures has yet been made available by the Defense Department, \$150,000 went for a swimming pool built beside the presidential lodge in the summer of 1969.

Previous Presidents used an existing pool, located a quarter-mile away and reached by golf cart. . . . The new swimming pool, a figure-eight design with interlocking circles which measure 40 feet and 25 feet in diameter, was kept a secret until earlier this year.

One reason the pool

cost so much was its location, according to the superintendent on the job at the time, John Hughes. The President wanted it right outside his door. But the presidential lodge is located on a hillside, atop an underground bomb shelter. The Navy could permit no blasting or earth-moving.

So the pool was set above ground, like a giant bathtub built of wood and steel and concrete. Then a concrete slab was suspended around it like a deck. Because the terrain slopes away there, the camouflaged terrace makes the pool appear to be in the ground and a few steps down from the house. . . .

Good Noise and Bad Noise

Those who live near airports seemed to have new reason to delay suicide. On October 25 the Federal Aviation Administration announced that "stringent noise certification standards" would apply to certain airplanes that were previously unregulated. "The new rule reflects FAA's determination to quiet the skies as rapidly as advancing technology permits," said FAA Administrator Alexander Butterfield.

Those who read the fine print in *The Federal Register*, as Neil McBride of the Aviation Consumer Action Project did, may not be so encouraged. In explaining why it had not bothered to file an environmental impact statement on the rule, the FAA said it "believes that the amount of noise reductions involved and the limited number of affected aircraft require the conclusion that this amendment will not cause a 'significant' reduction in the community impact of overall fleet noise."

Not My Department

The National Observer reports that an underground fire has been burning on federal land in Alaska since 1969. It seems that the Bureau of Land Management won't put it out because it only has jurisdiction to fight surface fires. The Bureau of Mines can fight underground fires, but only if they're burning coal. Unfortunately, the Alaska fire is burning shale.

What Makes Congress Run?

by Norman Ornstein

Senator William Proxmire is not the only one jogging on Capitol Hill these days. On sunny afternoons tourists are apt to see half the House of Representatives chugging across Independence Avenue toward the House floor for a roll-call vote. Meanwhile, their colleagues are plugging along labyrinthine underground passages toward the subway that links the Rayburn House Office Building with the Capitol. All this haste is decidedly uncongressional and most closely resembles a class change on a busy college campus.

It wasn't always this way. Until 1973 voting in the House of Representatives was one of the more leisurely activities in the entire federal government, an institution never known for its frenetic pace. Generally, it took the House clerks 35 minutes to read through the roster of 435 members and then record the absentees. And if this wasn't long enough for procrastinating members, understanding clerks could always stretch the process out another five minutes to accommodate latecomers.

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These good old days are now fondly remembered. As one veteran Democrat recalls, "I used to have the old system down pat. They would ring the bells, call the roll once, then the bells rang again, and they called the names of the non-responding members. I had about 12 minutes after that point, and if I left my office five minutes after the second bells, I made it to the floor easily." Now congressmen must bolt their bean soup in the House dining room and head for the Capitol as soon as the bells ring for a vote.

The big change in the pace of congressional life occurred last February, when an electronic voting system was installed in the House of Representatives. No longer do the clerks drone through an alphabetical list of 435 names. Instead, congressmen now have just 15 minutes to register their votes on computer consoles triggered by the insertion of individualized plastic cards. Instantly, their vote is flashed on a tote board which is mounted over the Speaker's head and which resembles nothing so much as the latest advance in basketball scoreboards.