

The First Four Years

This is the first month of President Nixon's second term—and of *The Washington Monthly's*. While most people mark anniversaries by the decade, the political world counts by fours. And we most emphatically belong to that world. *The Washington Monthly* doesn't give its readers travel articles or film critiques; the diet is strictly politics and government. And the politics and government come with a point of view. We don't publish articles just because we think they are interesting. We must believe that on the whole they are right. We want them to have impact, to help change things for the better.

Take our first year, for example. Our second issue contained Tom Bethell's definitive article on the United Mine Workers. "Conspiracy in Coal." It led to five other articles in *The Washington Monthly*, and, we hope, contributed to Tony Boyle's defeat by Arnold Miller last December. In this, as in our other causes, we have had many allies, often with much more influence than our own. Still, it's good to play a part. For instance, another article in our second issue, Robert Benson's "How the Pentagon Can Save Nine Billion Dollars," cited the Air Force's Manned Orbiting Laboratory as the most obvious of possible cuts in the Defense budget. Within six months the program was dropped. Within two months of the appearance of then-Congressman

Richard McCarthy's article on chemical and biological warfare, the Administration canceled the germ bombs.

Another first-year article, David Haggood's "The Highwaymen," a very funny attack on the road lobby, was used by anti-highway forces in the successful fights against New York's Lower Manhattan Expressway and New Orleans' Riverfront-Elysian Fields Expressway. Hugh Sidey's February, 1969, interview with Bill Moyers predicted that the Nixon who was then saying he would rely primarily on his Cabinet would end up giving more power to the White House staff.

And the last issue of our first year brought Christopher Pyle's startling revelation of Army spying on civilian politics. The impact seemed immediate. The Army said it was sorry and would stop. But bureaucratic momentum was such that it took many more articles by Pyle as well as other writers and extensive hearings by Senator Sam Ervin to bring the scandal under control.

Some of our first-year predictions turned out to be embarrassingly wrong—Mayor Kevin White has not risen to national political prominence, the Model Cities program has been far from central to the Nixon Administration's urban strategy.

In terms of impact—or more precisely, the lack of it—our most

depressing first-year failure was an editorial on Vietnam in October, 1969. It read in part:

This is the editorial we never thought we would have to write, because this war was lost in 1954. The fact of its loss had been extraordinarily difficult for Americans to face—from Cardinal Spellman, the first villain of American Involvement... to Lyndon Johnson, so pathetically striving to be the Churchill-Roosevelt of the 1960s.

Now Richard Nixon has dreams of a peace that will justify the lost American lives.

One can understand him—as one can understand all the American Presidents who have sent men to die in Vietnam—you can't tell their families they died for nothing.

But to save other men from dying, we have to admit that those who have died have not died for nothing, but to bring America to its senses.

It's time to get out... not with saving of face but with saving of life, for their people and ours.

The primary emotion behind that editorial was incredulity. How could the peace movement be taking so long to stop the war?

I arrived in Washington in 1961. During most of the time since then, most of the people I have known here have been against any large-scale American air or ground involvement in Vietnam. I think the same has been true of the country as a whole. Yet peace will have taken at least 11 years to attain. This failure of the anti-war movement has become a central preoccupation of *The Washington Monthly* as part of our general interest in why the right things don't get done in government.

In an early article on the subject, "The Politics of Peace," author Sam Brown pointed out that the primary tactic of the peace movement—the mass demonstration, with its inevitable fringe of violence—was uniquely suited to turning off large segments of the potential anti-war constituency. He also noted in the April, 1970, article:

Through the entire history of the peace politics congressional doves had very seldom spent a full day's effort on the war. They

gave speeches on occasion. But within the Senate there was no organization, no regular meetings, no commitment to get together and sublimate their egos to produce a piece of legislation, no serious intention to debate on the floor of the Congress, no effort to raise money to use television in response to the President. This was particularly galling right after the Carswell vote in April, [1970,] when these same Senators had come from nowhere to beat him with hard work and internal organization.

John Rothchild, in a later article on "The Senate's Lame Doves," described the legislators' reluctance to vote against defense appropriations:

There is that vision of a battlefield with a few brave, young Americans surrounded by a closing knot of North Vietnamese, while a credit adjuster slips through the enemy lines to repossess our guns and declares "Senator X wouldn't pay for these..."

The Senators have shown a bit more spine recently, but over and over again as we have looked at why the peace movement failed, at why those good things haven't happened in government, it boils down, in Suzannah Lessard's words, "to cowardice where courage is needed, people entrenched in their bureaucracies afraid to risk their security for the very purpose they supposedly hold their jobs."

So, as we put together this fourth anniversary supplement, we decided we wanted to emphasize our exploration of the theme of cowardice and fear. Fear not only of losing one's job, but of losing the special privileges and exemptions—the tax breaks and the draft deferments—that seem to distinguish the governors from the governed. Fear of losing the status, the identity of General Motors executive, Air Force officer, or White House staff member.

The price of our failure to overcome these fears is not just something vague, such as bad government or poor public administration. It is terrible things happening to specific human beings. That is why we close this group of excerpts and articles with "The Burn Ward." ■

The Editor

I do not contend that the true path to good government lies in everyone's threatening to resign publicly, although I am convinced that there should have been more such resignations in recent years. What I do contend is that this government needs more men who are psychologically ready to resign—who, when vital issues are at stake will stand up to their superiors and fight to the point of losing their jobs. Of all the wrong decisions I have seen made in government, wrong ideas and information have played no greater role than the failure of men with the right ideas and information to press their case courageously.
—from “More on Courage and Cowardice” by Charles Peters in the August, 1969, issue of *The Washington Monthly*.

■ In 1966, when the commitment of American ground forces in Vietnam took its greatest leap forward, criticism of U. S. policy became widespread among Foreign Service Officers, or at least among those stationed in Washington. A number of young officers, some of whom had been expressing their misgivings in private conversation, were called together at the State Department for a briefing before setting out on campus recruiting trips. One of them asked the recruitment director what they should say to students who were interested in the Foreign Service but had qualms about the American role in Vietnam. The answer—in no uncertain terms—was that there was no place in the Foreign Service for persons who do not support this war. No one spoke.

■ At the beginning of the Dominican rebellion in 1965, U. S. Ambassador W. Tapley Bennett declined a request to moderate the rapidly growing dispute at a time when moderate leftists were still in control of the “constitutionalist” forces. Bennett’s predecessor, John Bartlow Martin, states in his book, *Overtaken by Events*, that Bennett, having missed this chance at conciliation, probably

had little choice but to bring in the Marines.

The book fails to relate, however, a scene in which Bennett summoned a large portion of his staff and told them that he was planning to call for help. After briefly describing the situation as he saw it, Bennett made it clear that U. S. military forces, if summoned, would be ordered to thwart the attempted revolution, not just “protect U. S. lives and property.” He then asked his staff if there were any alternate views or proposals. No one spoke.

■ When John Bowling, a stimulating lecturer at State’s Foreign Service Institute, suggested that flag desecrators were philosophically identical to the bomb-throwing anarchists of previous decades and that draft resisters were unmanly and cowardly, not one of the Foreign Service Officers in his audience challenged the statement, despite Bowling’s invitation to do so. After several moments of silence, Bowling himself finally felt constrained to express the other side of both positions.

If such examples lead to doubt as to whether Foreign Service Officers are capable of speaking out in a group

situation, even when there is a clear invitation to do so, one can easily imagine the prevailing timidity in one-to-one conversations where there is a disparity in rank or bureaucratic authority. FSOs may proudly relate the vehemence with which they have rebuffed officers of other agencies—notably USIA and AID—but direct argument with one’s superiors in State is not a generally accepted mode of conduct. Former Undersecretary of State George Ball enjoyed a reputation as a courageous devil’s advocate

on the subject of Vietnam, but anyone who opposed Ball’s hard line vis-a-vis General de Gaulle had to be wary of the consequences. At least one senior officer with the temerity to play devil’s advocate on this issue received word that the Undersecretary no longer desired to share the same room with him during policy discussions. ■

From “The Cost of Cowardice: Silence in the Foreign Service” by William Bell in the July, 1969, issue of The Washington Monthly.

Patrick J. McGarvey

Intelligence to Please

From 1964-65, when U. S. involvement in Vietnam began to be considerable, until late 1966 or early 1967, the generals in Saigon worked to build up U. S. troop strength. Therefore, they wanted every bit of evidence brought to the fore that could show that infiltration was increasing. The Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) obliged and also emphasized in all reports the enemy’s capability to recruit forces from the South Vietnamese population. In 1967 a second period began. The high priests of Saigon decided that we were “winning.” Then the paramount interest became to show the enemy’s reduced capability to recruit and a slowdown in infiltration due to our bombing. The tune and emphasis of

reports from the field changed radically, and so did those put out by DIA.

It should not be concluded that any one person suppressed evidence. No one did. The military in Saigon sent all the facts back to Washington eventually. During the build-up period, infiltration data and recruitment data came in via General Westmoreland’s daily cablegram. Data from field contact with enemy units came amid the more mundane cables or by courier up to five weeks later. Cables from Westmoreland, of course, were given higher priority in Washington. When we started “winning,” detailed reports highlighting “body counts” and statistics on how many villages were pacified were cabled with Westmoreland’s signature; recruitment studies were pouched or cabled with the reports on the fluctuating price of rice. It was all

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