

EDITORIAL

Last Car

It's frustrating to sit in a line at a gas station for an hour, only to be told after moving up to third in line, that the station has run out of gas.

It's also aggravating to sit in a line for half an hour, waiting for attendants to arrive and begin pumping gas, only to learn that no one is going to come to work that day because the station is out of gas.

A little consideration by station operators could easily remedy the two situations. Station operators who put "last car" signs on the rear of the car which they decide will be the last to be served, save drivers from a long and senseless wait. In return operators could save themselves from part of the ill-will or downright fury generated from those turned away after such a wait.

An "out of gas" sign or one denoting pumping hours, whether they are using the "Shapp" or "Peters" ration plan, can eliminate part of the confusion gas customers are experiencing these gas-short days.

A little consideration toward gas station operators by customers will come easier if customers aren't totally disappointed following a frustrating wait for the hard-to-come-by fuel.

Censorship is Obscene

We view with alarm an "anti-pornography" bill adopted last week by the State Legislature. In this election year it demonstrates that what is popular is not necessarily right, and what is right is not necessarily popular.

The bill contains some provisions, which, if carried to their logical conclusions, could have some horrifying consequences.

Many self-righteous American citizens and politicians have denounced the Soviet Union, and rightly so, for banishing author Alexander Solzhenitsyn from his country because he wrote things which a select panel (in this case the Communist Politburo) deemed unacceptable. In essence there is little difference between this action by the Soviets and the decision by the legislature. The "Big Brother" mentality is the same in both instances.

We hope Gov. Shapp vetoes the anti-pornography bill. —Larry Hertz

Too Little, Too Late

As motorists inch their way closer to gasoline pumps, not knowing which station will remain open how long, they must wonder what happened to their free enterprise system to cause such exhaustive lines of thirsty autos backed up alongside the highways. They must wonder why suddenly the entire region appeared to be almost out of gas just a few days ago. And those few motorists who ventured outside the region must wonder even more when they discovered that in almost any direction gas became more plentiful than it was here.

The reasons are complex and vague at best, though two major points stand out: not only have local officials been derelict in informing state and federal agencies, but the entire federal allocation system operates on the premise that the major oil companies want to sell their gasoline as quickly as it is refined, the remarks of the President Monday night notwithstanding.

Why is it any more the duty of Joe McDade or Dan Flood to inform FEO and State officials than it is the duty of the local mayor or councilman, or even the county commissioners?

And why would a major oil company want to sell off its gasoline right now when it's obvious the price is going to climb still higher?

Local residents and public officials are quick to turn to their congressman when they have a problem. And our congressmen, both Mr. McDade and Mr. Flood, are usually prompt in assurances that they will do what they can to help. But sometimes that system breaks down, as it did in the current gasoline crisis.

As FEO regional administrator Joseph Lasala said last week, his 10-week-old office is accustomed to "serious problems." It takes crisis more to heart. And from all indications, it wasn't until Feb. 15, a good two weeks after the long lines at local gas stations began, that Mr. Lasala and state allocation officer William Wilcox were properly informed.

Without debating the long list of concessions the international oil cartel is after in all this, the local crisis was summed up well by a spokesman in the state energy office: "Let's face it, the majors are in the driver's seat, and no matter what the feds do, the majors are going to get what they want."

J.R. Freeman

Conservative View

by James J. Kilpatrick

The first stories last week on the arrest of Alexander Solzhenitsyn said that the Russian police sent seven men to pick him up. Seven men! If laughter can be found in this affair, let us find laughter here.

Seven men! The masters of the Kremlin might as well have sent a battalion, or two divisions, or a thousand armored cars. In making this arrest, the many would have been as helpless as the few.

How do you arrest an idea? How do you put truth in irons? They came too late for Solzhenitsyn. They should have seized him 50 years ago, before the boy learned to write.

The story speaks at two levels of time and truth. The first has to do with the Soviet Union in this century. The second has to do with man past and man future.

Nothing could more clearly reveal the fundamental weakness of communism—the rotten core at the heart of the ideology—than the story of Solzhenitsyn. A vast deal of nonsense has been written in recent years to the effect that the Communist revolution has "matured," or "come of age." Specialists in Kremlinology have found "cracks in the Iron Curtain." The cheery watchword is "detente."

Yet nothing has changed, nothing at all. Communism is as fearful, as suspicious, as paranoid as it was in the bloody days of Stalin. The party cannot rule by reason; it can rule by force alone. In Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, on Gorky Street last week, it is always the same: Dissent is equated with heresy, and public criticism with darkest treason. The Soviet Union has the mightiest army on earth, the greatest navy and the deadliest missiles. And the Soviet Union is afraid—afraid of a novelist, afraid of a man's ideas.

But the encouraging thing—the part of the story that lifts us up—is that man endures. For 50 years the Communist masters have labored to put out the fires of human freedom. They have made the press an instrument of propaganda. They have herded their children into state nurseries. They have purged their libraries and monopolized the book stalls. They have jammed the air waves and stopped the people's ears. They have banned travel in the free world. They have corrupted law

TRB

from Washington

by Richard Strout

To my amazement I found myself defending Richard Nixon the other day. For one who thinks he ought to be impeached this was a strange experience. (I almost caught myself looking round to see who was doing it.) Things are becoming so topsy-turvy in this city that anything can happen. A Harris Poll, for example, says Mr. Nixon's popularity is down to 30 percent, his lowest point. But it also says that the rating of the Democratic Congress is even lower; it's down to 21 percent. A good many things are breaking loose from their moorings here in all sorts of places.

In this case the assault on the President came from a supporter of Sen. Henry (Scoop) Jackson, the Democrat from Washington who is the favorite Republican candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. Sen. Jackson is a short, energetic, likeable man. There is a direct, disarming, folksy quality about him which is quite attractive. He's no great shakes as an orator and may put you to sleep. And he's running hard for the Democratic nomination a couple of years ahead of time which just shows how we stretch out our election campaigns.

What Scoop says, in brief, is that Richard Nixon is soft on Communism. Crazy? All right. I said things were getting daft. Sen. Jackson thinks Moscow is pulling the wool over the President's eyes. And Sen. Jackson is also 100 percent for Israel and thinks the Arab pressure is just a Moscow plot. Now there may be some truth in that. But, to Scoop, things are either black or white. He gave 100 percent support for the South Vietnam war. Today he wants a full military

Capitol Notes

by William Eckenbarger

You can tell a lot about an institution by the thing it reveres. Visitors to Capitol Park in Harrisburg are greeted by Boies Penrose, glowering down imperiously from a granite perch.

Mr. Penrose—state legislator, U.S. Senator, glutton, vulgarian, leader of one of the most corrupt political machines in American history—has been immortalized by statue.

It is an imposing likeness, but purists sometimes complain that Penrose has his hand in his own pocket—an unheard-of posture for the flesh-and-blood Penrose.

Walk into the Capitol Rotunda, look up to the state Senate chamber, and there's Matthew Stanley Quay, who taught Penrose everything he knew about practical politics.

Mr. Quay, also a state legislator, U.S. senator and political boss, used to gamble state funds on the stock market and collect for himself the interest on state funds deposited in Philadelphia banks.

It is in this moral atmosphere that the current Pennsylvania General Assembly is weighing a wide-ranging series of bills de-

and perverted education.

Solzhenitsyn is fifty-five. He was reared in this darkness, punished by imprisonment, denied access to every tool that might sharpen his intellect. But the fires cannot be wholly extinguished. The spark never quite goes out. It is a lesson that tyrants learn in time: Something in the soul of stubborn man goes on. They could pave Red Square with granite blocks and cover the blocks with thick concrete. One day, in some distant spring, a seed would still come up.

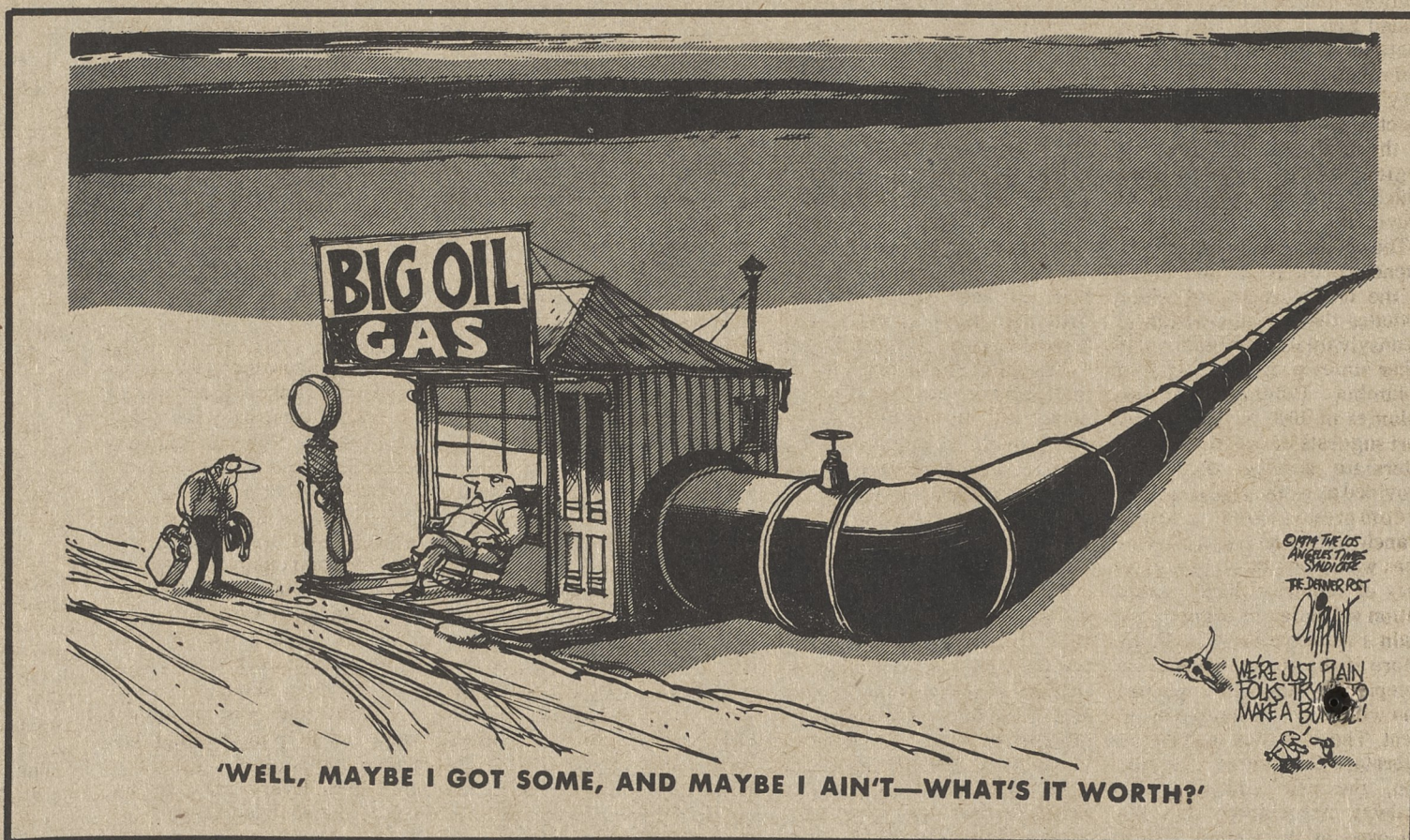
To speak in terms of man or of mankind is

to speak in abstract terms. Survival is personal. It manifests itself in the one human being—Joan at the stake, Luther at the door, Patrick Henry in a schoolhouse, Rosa Parks in an Alabama bus. The trees of freedom are metaphorical trees, but they are watered in real blood and tears. Solzhenitsyn is a symbol; he is also a very courageous man.

As for today's world, it has to be said that his act of martyrdom will not accomplish much. He has not loosened so much as one stone in the monolith. The Russian people will not be roused to counterrevolution. After a

week or two, when the story drops out of the news, detente will continue as before. If Solzhenitsyn had been executed or imprisoned, the prospect might be different, but the Kremlin masters are brutal, not stupid. Exiles, even brilliant exiles, get to be tedious old men. Banishment was better.

Yet things will not be precisely as before. Within the Soviet Union, the story will be told, and told again, of how the seven came for Solzhenitsyn; and under the snows of Russia the story will sleep like a single, indomitable seed.



Scoop Jackson's Charge

build-up, no arms agreement with Moscow save on our terms, distrust of Henry Kissinger and Mr. Nixon in their dealings with Moscow, and full use of any obstacles to detente, like a demand that Russia allow unrestricted Jewish immigration,oust the Arabs and make amends to Solzhenitsyn.

The Ivan the Terrible treatment of Solzhenitsyn is the best thing that ever happened to American liberals, Scoop's supporters think—it reminds them of Russia is a totalitarian state. (The Jackson thesis is that liberals don't know that.) This is the theme, too, of Jackson supporters Eugene Rostow and Ben Wattenberg who back a Jackson-oriented policy group, Coalition for a Democratic Majority, which is trying to pull the Democratic Party over to the conservative ("centrist") side. This also seems to be the goal of the Democrats' National Chairman Bob Strauss.

Sen. Jackson's crusade is a token of the Democratic dissension. His strong pro-Israel stand gets support from the Jewish community. He has made good professional use of his Senate chairmanship to lead the attack on the sitting-duck targets, the rapacious oil giants. Somehow or other we haven't been able so far to take the senator as seriously as we ought, perhaps because we favor detente, or because we haven't adjusted yet to the concept of Richard Nixon being squishy toward Communism.

An American presidential election begins about a year after the previous one ends and runs three years; the present British election lasts three weeks and ends Feb. 28. A British-type election would only be possible in

America if a full voter registry were compiled from the tax list and kept ready and up-to-date; if our political parties stood for something, if we had a legislature that could reach decisions and make policy; and if the adversary leaders like Messrs. Heath and Wilson were also party leaders and fully identified in advanced.

The 1972 election here probably cost \$300 million. The British election will cost a fraction of that (in a smaller country, of course), and there won't be contributions by ITT, the dairy interests, the oil interests and Howard Hughes. In England it wouldn't be possible to elect a prime minister of one party and stalemate him against a legislature of a rival party as we do frequently. Neither system is perfect, of course; the individual members of the House of Commons have very little say and often vote "just like their leaders tell 'em to." In the current election it seems doubtful that the winner, whoever he is, will get a big enough majority to carry on very long.

On the other hand, there is this to be said about the British system, it won't provide an imperial President who lives alone in the White House and decides by himself whether to bomb or invade, to impound funds, or to give up (apes). In Westminster there is a plural government, the members of the cabinet are consulted and have independent political strength; there is collective decision making. James Sundquist of Brookings, author of "Dynamics of the Party System," noted recently that in other English-speaking countries executive power rests in plural cabinets and that even in Russia there is the Politburo. Nations have learned through the

centuries, he says, that "to entrust power to one man is inherently dangerous." In almost every organization the restraint of collective decision-making is forced upon the leader. In Washington alone, he says, the cabinet member has been downgraded to the status of field commander, to get and execute orders. Much of his former power is held by the ambitious presidential staff. The President is in command; it is like the military; it is appropriate that H.R. Haldeman, "the Prussian", has been replaced as chief of staff by Alexander Haig, a retired general.

Yes, the British system, like Canada's, has flexibility. To get rid of a collapsed leader you don't have to behead him, like a King, or impeach him, like a President. You just have a three-week election and displace him, or not, as the electorate sees fit. America is the one great democracy without this device—this fire escape.

Notes: While we're praising Mr. Nixon, we think he and Mr. Kissinger are taking the right track in the third great global economic crisis of the century: in the energy conference here last week they did not revert to Smoot-Hawley (1930) isolationism, but took the Marshall Plan (1947) model of collaboration. Betting here is that present \$10-a-barrel Arab oil is unrealistic and will be down by year-end to \$8. Everybody loves exasperating France but, as Mr. Kissinger had a close Congressional session. "The French have had this unparalleled facility, for 150 years, to work against their own self-interest"...Mr. Nixon's proposed trip to Russia in June may come at the height of impeachment; he's laying down a spectacular dare to Congress.

Movers Need No Statues

expires in about nine months, and there is no evidence that legislative leaders feel compelled to get moving on reform.

One has the impression that, as in the past, the movers and shakers in the General Assembly will find some way to avoid a confrontation with political morality.

The ancestors of the people who pull the strings in the Legislature, Quay and Penrose, were mediocrities or less as statesmen. Their

perverse genius lay in their ability to organize and operate a ruthless political machine devoted to their own welfare and that of their followers.

It was distortion of the American ideal that public officials ought to devote themselves to the public interest that led to the untimely resignation earlier this month of Democratic Sen. John Scales.

You'll never see a statue of John Scales at the Capitol.

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