

OPINION

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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963

AT ISSUE

Google Inc. is rebuffing Bush administration demands to see what people are looking up on the Internet.

OUR POINT

The company is right to resist, lest online databases become tools for government surveillance.

Google fights subpoena to protect online privacy

The Daily Journal

Google is the nation's most popular search engine. Millions of times a day, online users use the site to find out all kinds of things.

Some people, probably almost all of us at one time or another, even Google themselves.

It's vain. We know that. But who can resist?

And we aren't likely to brag about what we find.

But not all Internet surfers are so benign. In fact, some are downright sinister. Purveyors and customers of child pornography troll the Web like perverted spiders.

The federal government wants to know who they are, and it wants Google's help in locating them.

Last summer, the federal government issued a subpoena asking for a list of all requests entered into Google's search engine during an unspecified week. In addition, it seeks 1 million randomly selected addresses from various Google databases. Yahoo, MSN and AOL received similar subpoenas and have agreed to cooperate.

But Google resisted these efforts. This month, Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez asked a federal judge for an order to hand over the requested records. In court papers, the Bush administration characterizes the information as vital in its effort to restore online child protection laws that have been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Again, the federal government was rebuffed.

It's not that Google is in favor of child pornography or protecting the purveyors of such slime.

Rather, it is trying to protect innocent search-engine users against unwarranted searches by the federal government.

Although the government says it isn't looking for any data that ties individuals or personal information to search requests, the subpoena still raises serious questions about privacy. The content of search requests sometimes contain information about the person making the request.

If the government has reason to target an individual or company in its hunt for child porn dealers, then that effort should be helped as much as possible.

But in this case the government is trolling, throwing out an incredibly wide net in the hope — not a probability, mind you, but merely a hope — that it will bring back substantive information.

Individuals deserve protection from Big Brother snooping. Warrantless, widespread searches should not be used.

Google should continue to fight the government's request. Everyone's privacy could be compromised.

Focus: Ford

For thousands of workers, survival is Job One

Scripps Howard News Service

North American car manufacturing is now ruled by the Big Six. The original Big Three of GM, Ford and Chrysler having been joined by foreigners Toyota, Honda and Nissan.

This week, Ford announced drastic measures, as GM did earlier, to ensure that it would not be a contributor toward making that pantheon the Big Five. Faced with declining North American sales and market share and increasing losses, Ford announced a brutal downsizing in work force and capacity.

Between now and 2012, it plans to close 14 factories, eliminate up to 30,000 blue-collar jobs, 4,000 white-collar jobs and 12 percent of its corporate officers. The targeted white-collar employees are to be gone by the end of March.

The White House insists "the job market is hot" and that it will provide a safety net and help finding new jobs for the laid-off workers, but it's a safe bet they won't be at the same level of pay and benefits.

And that's where the problem lies: Free from foreign competition and prodded by a powerful union, domestic automakers in the booming decades following World War II built up generous levels of pay and health and pension benefits that could not be sustained in the face of globalization.

GM earlier announced it would close 12 plants and lay off 30,000, but even so there are still ominous rumbles about Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Chrysler has been bought by German automaker Daimler. By one count, the Big Three have cut 140,000 jobs, one-third of their North American work force, since 2000.

But auto manufacturing is hardly moribund. This year, foreign carmakers will be operating 28 plants employing about 60,000 in North America, but these are nonunion jobs and the sites are generally far from the traditional auto-making centers.

That Ford should be undergoing this convulsion is a matter of some irony, because founder Henry Ford pioneered affordable cars and the means of mass-producing them.

The loss of these plants with their huge payrolls will be devastating to their communities.

But also being lost is an industrial way of life: a promise of lifetime employment to multiple generations of workers, comprehensive health care and an early — 30 and out — and well-funded retirement.



Lobbyist reform imminent, but will system truly turn around?

Old congressmen never die. They just go to the House and Senate gyms and push special interests, but maybe not for long now.

It looks as though Congress is going to clean up its act when it comes to outside influence.

But don't expect squeaky clean. There are loopholes allowing lawmakers to escape into the seemingly uncontrollable world of campaign finance, where most political evil originates, that may diminish the efforts.

The scandals now generating so much consternation on Capitol Hill have been in the making for at least 130 years, about the time the term "lobbyist" was popularized during the administration of Ulysses Grant.

The major difference between now and then is not the way the game is played, but the number of special-interest players. Their ranks have grown to such an extent that they would fill the entire Willard Hotel, instead of just the lobby that gave rise to Grant's use of the term. Actually, they occupy more than several blocks of office buildings along Washington's K Street corridor.

So now we have the ongoing Jack Abramoff scandal — and the now-infamous K Street Project launched by former House GOP Leader Tom DeLay to raise campaign money and swell patronage. Democrats and Republicans have rushed out competing plans to curtail a number of questionable activities that some lobbyists regularly engage in.

Because Republicans have been in charge of Congress for over a decade, Democrats have lost no time blaming them for "a culture of corruption," ignoring the fact that some Democrats are at least tangentially involved.

Historically, neither party has been without sin in these cases.



Dan K. Thomasson

The last great lobbying scandal, in the early 1960s, involved the Democrats.

Among the proposed reforms are limiting the floor and gym privileges for ex-members of the House and Senate to those who aren't registered lobbyists and have no ulterior motives for skulking around corridors and buttonholing their former colleagues.

One expects that there would be very few. Maybe some will even go back to where they came from following defeat or retirement. That would be the day.

Presumably, those infamous mid-winter "fact-finding" trips to the Caribbean and all the junkets to Europe and Asia would be off-limits if privately financed.

What a shame. Everyone realizes that the environmental aspects of St. Andrews in Scotland are always worth studying. Just ask DeLay, who was Abramoff's guest at a now-notorious golf outing. Some plans would set limits on the amount that could be spent for lunch or dinner, while other proposals would eliminate that perk altogether.

Here's the rub, however. Most of the plans simply deal with ethical behavior and have nothing to do with fund-raising laws. The red wine and T-bone special can still be provided as long as the influence peddler ends the evening by handing the lawmaker a donation to his or her campaign. So unless that glaring gap is

closed, most of what is being proposed is stuff and nonsense, another congressional con job to protect the perks of winning one election and making sure of similar results in the next one.

After weeks of seemingly trying to ignore the burgeoning scandal, House Speaker Dennis Hastert has taken the Republican lead in establishing new rules, obviously hoping to distance himself from his partnership with DeLay.

Should anyone be surprised at his earlier intransigence?

After all, he got the job in the first place with the help of DeLay, whom he initially strove to protect by preserving DeLay's right to return to his leadership post depending on the outcome of state charges.

There is, of course, a legitimate need for outside input into the legislative process despite the huge number of personal and committee staff aides and research assistants.

Citizens groups and representatives of business and industry not only have a right to be heard, they often make important contributions to the drafting of legislation. But the system has gotten out of hand and corrupted by the high cost of campaigning and vast sums of ready cash available for legislative favors.

It doesn't take any special genius to discern what is or isn't ethical.

It will be fascinating to see if this debilitating mess will actually result in a meaningfully reformed system, or deteriorate into just another political brawl with a return to business as usual after the election. That probably will depend on how far into the congressional ranks the scandal reaches.

Dan K. Thomasson, a Hoosier native and Franklin College trustee, is former editor of the Scripps Howard News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

Rice reshapes diplomacy by focusing on regimes more than power balance

When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice leaves her post, probably in January 2009, she will have forged a dramatically different foreign policy for the United States.

The stiletto-heeled proponent of the Rice Doctrine is fond of pinning interestingly artful sobriquets on her ideas. For example, the policy of U.S. agents snatching suspects off the streets in foreign countries and taking them to third countries that sometimes practice torture to force revelation of information is called "rendition." Rice staunchly defends it.

The policy of starting wars with troublesome enemies is called "pre-emptive action." She's a big proponent when the administration deems it necessary.

Now she has come forth with "transformational diplomacy." The idea is not just to have diplomats stationed in foreign posts report to the United States what is going on around them, but to have them act to influence what goes on in host nations to spur the emergence of democracy.

In a speech at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service last week, Rice indicated that she intends to shift diplomats around the world like pieces on a chessboard. What Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld once disdainfully referred to as "old Europe" will get short shrift. Rice finds it troubling that "we have nearly the same number of State Department personnel in Germany, a country of 82 million people, that we have in India, a country of 1 billion people."

Thus, countries such as Indonesia, India, China, Brazil and South Africa are to get more attention. There also will be traveling transnational teams of experts on such issues as disease outbreaks and drug smuggling.

Sadly, Rice did not pledge to try



Ann McFeatters

to eliminate the rotten practice of having rich people who contribute big bucks to the political party in power and presidential campaigns serve as ambassadors in such enticing spots as London or Geneva.

But her intention of forcing ambitious diplomats to speak less French and more Arabic, or more Chinese and less German, is smart. Her determination to staff more outposts in countries that have little U.S. presence now is admirable. Her policy of urging U.S. diplomats to link up more often with "real" people and not just with counterparts is wise.

The new emphasis has the imprint of Karen Hughes, the former presidential adviser who now is charged with improving the poor standing of the United States in the Arab world. Hughes realized how naive her own approach to the Arab world was after her first visit there last year in her new job after she insulted some Arab women with false assumptions.

Rice notes that almost 200 cities in the world with populations of 1 million or more have no U.S. diplomat. She'd like to see one-person diplomatic outposts spring up in remote parts of the world. Rice doesn't say how they would be protected.

But she has grasped an enormously important issue: The world is soundly rejecting American paternalism. Rice pledges that her brand of transformational diplomacy will be "rooted in partnership. ... In doing things

with people, not for them, we seek to use America's diplomatic power to help foreign citizens better their own lives and to build their own nations and to transform their own futures."

Foggy Bottom, the nickname applied to the State Department because of its neighborhood in Washington, needs to be shaken up. It must adapt to a world that no longer responds as U.S. diplomats have long expected.

Rice was right at Georgetown: "The fundamental character of regimes now matters more than the international distribution of power. In this world, it is impossible to draw neat, clear lines between our security interests, our development efforts and our democratic ideals. American diplomacy must integrate and advance all of these goals together."

In the midst of yet another corruption scandal, both political parties are endorsing ethics rules to ban or limit fact-finding trips abroad by legislators if sponsored by lobbyists.

While such trips should not be paid for by special interests, it is disquieting to think of our lawmakers becoming even more isolated when we need to know more about the world, not less. More government-sponsored travel by lawmakers to remote posts staffed by U.S. diplomats is one answer.

And now that the elusive Osama bin Laden is making threatening noises again, we are reminded how much more we must learn about our enemies and where they live. Many would disagree strenuously with Rice on rendition and pre-emptive strikes. But on transformational diplomacy, she may be on to something.

Ann McFeatters is Washington bureau chief of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and The Toledo Blade. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Down-to-earth official deserves free drink

To the editor:

The Jan. 17 edition coupled with two other recent editions has really made for interesting reading, thought and a smile.

Let's start with the smile. When Tom Kite was elected to finish Jim Rhoades' term, a reporter asked Kite and his wife, Ruth, how they would celebrate the victory. They said they would go out for a sandwich and a drink.

I almost lost the cereal bowl. We've lived in Johnson County for more than 21 years. That's the first time I ever read where an officeholder or anyone associated with them used the phrase "and a drink" in a sentence.

They have to be good people. If they ever show up at one of my watering holes, we'll buy them a drink.

Now here is something to think about. Ron West has decided to run against Woody Burton in the primary. One of Ron's reasons: 18 years is too long. We're great believers in term limits. We've always thought that just like the governor and sheriff, two is enough. We wonder what Ron West feels is long enough.

The governor recently has been hitting on one of our favorite subjects, township offices. To get that job done will take about four years. But that plan puts a little sunshine into your article (Jan. 17) about "Library focus in the Center Grove area." What got our attention was "the facility serves as a meeting place for ..." followed by "in a community with no community center of local government, the library has become a gathering place."

How soon we forget. What's that (government) building the property taxpayers in Center Grove just built last year? The one where the trustee wants the sheriff's department to chip in on janitor expenses?

We went to a meeting sponsored by Burton in December that was conducted at the White River Library. While there, we got to wondering why our center wasn't used for the meeting. Maybe because it is out of Burton's district. Would have been OK with us.

But fear not, if we can keep the governor on track to closing all township offices, we can convert the "palace" into a real, live community center for one and all, i.e.: Friday night happy hour (adults only), Saturday and Sunday kickball, pingpong (whatever kids do), Wednesday night movies (family rated).

There you have it, a smile and a couple of things to think over.

Ed Woods
Greenwood

Notre Dame coach wrong to focus only on winning

To the editor:

I don't think Charlie Weis is the kind of football coach that should be brought into the coaching of young athletes in high schools and colleges for sports, and especially football.

He proved himself at the Patriots' team in New England, and his strategy is, according to Notre Dame quarterback Brady Quinn, "(Weis) emphasized the way we should look at football not as a pretty, clean sport but as a way of getting wins by any means necessary" (Dec. 30, Daily Journal). Another quote from the same paper states "(Weis) said he wanted the Fighting Irish to be a nasty team."

I don't know how Weis interprets that, but it is only one word away from dirty team. And that was Charlie's way to play the game at New England.

Oh, you can win games that way if you can get away from the penalties, but where is the sportsmanship in that kind of playing and teaching to young athletes? These precepts can follow them throughout their lives.

Now that rough stuff, if one can get away with that, is a thing that will leave a lot of stadiums empty or half empty.

I believe most Americans like good, clean and tough football, not nasty or win-at-any-cost football.

Some athletes have been driven so hard they have died from exhaustion by some coach who wanted prestige or a win at any cost to hold his job.

Don Sandlin
Franklin

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