

OPINION

DAILY JOURNAL

JEFFREY W. OWEN

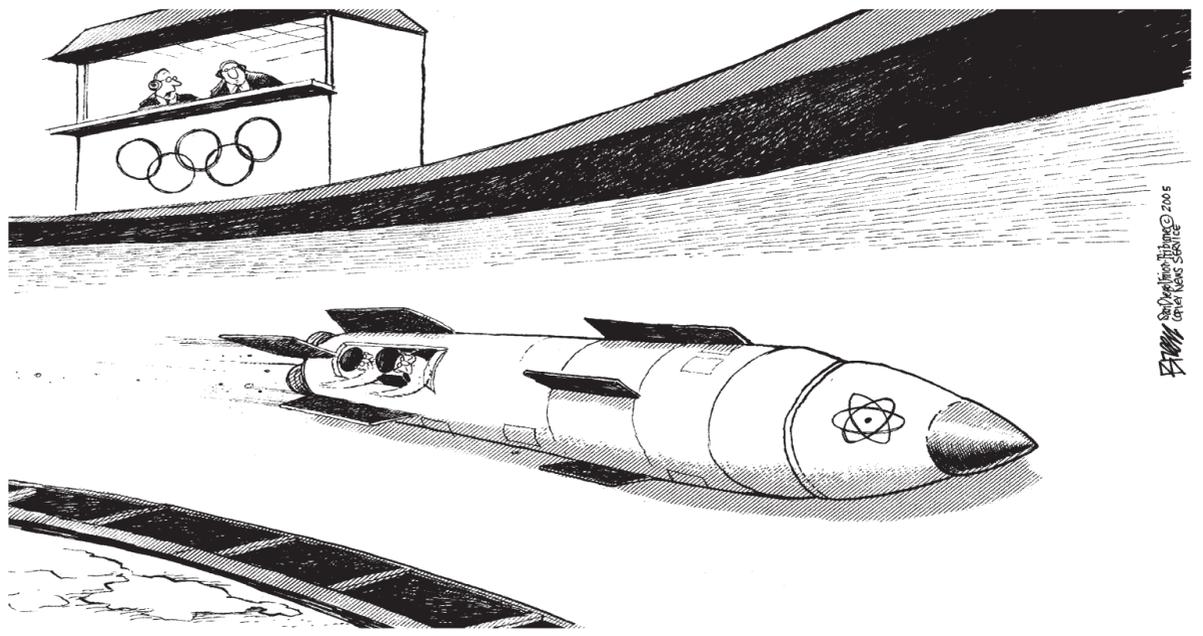
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"The Daily Journal is dedicated to community service, to defense of individual rights and to providing those checks upon government which no constitution can ensure."

SCOTT ALEXANDER
founding editor, 1963



"DO YOU NOTICE ANYTHING ODD ABOUT THE IRANIAN BOESLED TEAM?"

Opinion roundup

EDITOR'S NOTE — Today the Daily Journal presents a sampling of editorials from around the state and nation:

Safest sleeping place for baby: crib

South Bend Tribune

It is hard to imagine anything more heartbreaking: A young mother, trying to do the right thing, tucks her newborn son into bed next to her after a late feeding. She awakens in the morning to find him dead.

The fact that some infant deaths could be prevented makes them all the more tragic. And when new mothers get mixed messages, the cause of safety isn't helped.

Advocates of infants sharing their mothers' beds say the practice is natural, that it encourages mother-baby bonding and makes breast-feeding easier. That may be. But bonding and breast-feeding don't depend on the infant sleeping with mom. In some instances, safety might depend on the infant not sleeping with mom.

There ought to be one message, and it ought to be the clearest, safest one possible.

That message is conveyed in "Back to Sleep," the American Academy of Pediatrics slogan coined in 1994 and aimed at encouraging parents to put their infants to bed on their backs, in their own cribs.

Choose the safest way. It need not be at the expense of a healthy, close mother-baby bond.

Katrina fund abuse highlights need for scrutiny

The Herald Bulletin, Anderson

For months, we've been hearing about the mismanagement of disaster relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina. For example, the story that truckers hauling supplies were sent from one end of the country to another before being allowed to unload.

The news got worse with the release of two audits that showed that up to 900,000 people offered false ID to collect aid, including \$2,000 debit cards that were briefly given to evacuees.

We realize that pouring \$85 billion into anything is not going to be a particularly well-run endeavor. It's too much, too soon, without the checks and balances in place to control it.

The theft and abuse of the dollars is every bit the fault of the people who took the money. We want to be very clear about that. In the end, they'll get what they deserve.

However, knowing the world we live in, we strongly urge lawmakers and the administration to come up with a way to keep honest people honest and dishonest people without.

Secrecy game on Capitol Hill destroys process

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

While the Bush administration has earned a well-deserved reputation for acting in secrecy, similar cloak-and-dagger tactics are popping up on Capitol Hill, where the Republican majority has demonstrated that it can make legislation appear or vanish without even a vote.

A case in point came before Congress' Christmas recess, when Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist inserted an immunity provision for flu vaccine manufacturers in a defense bill after other lawmakers had agreed that it would be left out.

Now the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office reports that GOP officials slipped a \$22 billion gift to the health-insurance industry into legislation that was supposed to cut the federal budget. The action was taken during a meeting from which Democratic lawmakers and their staff members were excluded.

According to congressional observers, such tactics are becoming the norm.

Under the traditional procedure, bills are introduced, amended in committee and debated and voted on in the House and Senate. If different versions of similar legislation are passed, a conference committee of members from each chamber is supposed to be appointed to reconcile them.

But what's happening is that the bills actually are being rewritten behind closed doors by GOP leaders, assisted by their staffs and with input from special-interest lobbyists. In some cases, changes reportedly have been made even after conference committees have met and voted.

Such tactics are more than high-handed. They are a fundamental short-circuiting of the legislative process, just one more layer in the culture of corruption that is slowly strangling Washington and making a mockery of our democratic form of government.

Efforts to save national symbol heroic

Scripps Howard News Service

Getting the bald eagle off the endangered-species list has been almost as long and arduous as the eagles' recovery of nearly four decades.

The Continental Congress ordained the bald eagle as our national symbol in 1782, passing over the wild turkey, a much less imposing but much more edible bird. By the early 1960s, we were well on the way to eliminating our national symbol everywhere but in Alaska. The number of breeding pairs in the lower 48 states had dropped to 417 by 1963.

The eagles are protected under three laws, the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the 1940 Bald Eagle Protection Act and the 1973 Endangered Species Act that supersedes the two earlier laws.

Once the eagles were off the endangered-species list, the two older laws would be back in force. Developers feared their provisions would be more onerous than the 1973 law. The Interior Department has drafted voluntary guidelines to meet these objections plus a regulatory protection that relies on an expansive definition of "disturb."

The Continental Congress would be pleased that its descendants liked its choice of national symbol enough to make heroic efforts to save it.

Apartheid ended segregation, but South Africa still struggles

EDITOR'S NOTE — Yu-long Ling recently spent three weeks in South Africa. His next column will focus on South Africa's efforts in education.

It is a rare occasion for an ordinary citizen to receive such an overwhelming tribute upon their death as Coretta Scott King.

Of course, she was not just an ordinary person. She was the widow of the most prominent civil rights leader in this country's history, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

After King's assassination in 1968, his wife continued his efforts in fighting for social justice in order to make the United States a better place for all. Three former presidents, the current one and other dignitaries were on hand to reminisce on her achievements and contributions.

One of these dignitaries was Winnie Mandela, wife of a civil rights leader Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Many Americans don't know that the civil rights movement in South Africa was waged by Mahatma Gandhi.

As the story goes, Ghandi, an Oxford-trained lawyer from India, went to South Africa to begin a career in law. One day, he boarded a train to Johannesburg with a first-class ticket. But before the train left the station, he was told to leave the car because of the color of his skin.

After spending the night in the freezing weather, Ghandi decided to begin a crusade for social equality. His efforts began in 1893 and continued in other countries until his death in 1948. His nonviolent resistance set an example for Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and others.

Recently, I participated in a college trip to South Africa, where I had the opportunity to explore my interest in the country and its history. One of my objectives during



Yu-long
Ling

the trip was to determine whether life has really improved in the post-apartheid era. Apartheid ended in 1990. As a political scientist, I was interested to know how life has changed in the past 16 years.

We all know that during the apartheid, the life of the native majority was miserable as they were treated as less than the white minority. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia says that apartheid actually means "separateness" or "apart-ness" in the native language.

In this country, the civil rights movement was begun by a minority after suppression by the majority. But in apartheid, that was reversed. The white minority suppressed the rights of the native majority in South Africa. In a certain way, it becomes even harder to justify the suppression.

During my three weeks in South Africa, I tried hard to gather information about the current life of the people. I talked to most anyone we encountered on the trip, including tour guides, shop owners and restaurant workers. I spoke to people who were white and people of color.

I realized my trip was short and my contact with these people was limited, so my perspective might not be complete. But, as the Chinese proverb says, once the leaves begin to fall from the trees, you can anticipate that autumn is coming. By catching a snapshot, you can get an idea of the whole story.

South Africa is a beautiful

country. The scenery is picturesque, and the animals are entertaining. But inside this beauty, there is turmoil. The snapshot I got was troubling.

According to statistics, 10 percent of South Africans are white. Land ownership, however, is reversed. The white population controls 80 percent of the land in the country. The unemployment rate is close to 50 percent. Worst of all is the unequal distribution of income, which is evident by driving through housing neighborhoods.

White neighborhoods look very much like those in European countries. But the majority of people live in conditions that are closer to homelessness than anything else.

It is difficult to describe the hardships of these people who live in makeshift shacks without electricity, running water or a sanitation system. These facts, together with the unfertile land and harsh climate, make life extremely difficult. Good health is anything but a given in this situation.

Political corruption is also rampant, and the country is led by people with little experience. Inefficiency is widespread as a result. Political freedom and social justice are good ideas in theory, but without some economic improvement they are simply theories and good ideas. It is difficult to feel free when you have no means to exercise your freedom.

Yes, apartheid is over. But until the economic struggles of the country are addressed, there will be no real freedom for the disadvantaged people of South Africa. They defeated apartheid; now they must defeat poverty.

Professor Yu-long Ling holds the Williams Chair in Law and Public Service at Franklin College and is an internationally respected expert in foreign policy. He writes this weekly opinion column for the Daily Journal. Send

Racism? Elitism? No, storm victims hurt most by gross incompetence

The Bush administration was prepared to hunker down and make a fight of its action in the Hurricane Katrina disaster had it been fought out the way the Democrats were shaping it, as a bitter struggle along class and racial lines.

But now, from within Republican ranks, a blow has been struck against the administration from the president on down. The administration's fault was not race or class but weakness in management, heretofore regarded as its greatest strength.

President Bush, product of the best management education that money can buy, led a team of well-financed and highly reorganized government suits into one of history's worst government blunders. How could that have happened?

The current investigation into Katrina is blaming the blunder on a reorganization of government prompted by the Sept. 11 disaster. The Department of Homeland Security was created as a new colossus that absorbed dozens of small agencies, including one that had become highly effective over the years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

FEMA's Michael Brown, who became famous for the presidential phrase "Brownie, you're doin' a heckuva job," was called back before a Senate committee last week. He said he was through being the scapegoat for the government's failure in New Orleans in the days following the floods.

He laid the blame for the government's failure to respond on his boss at Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, who Brown said had put his agency on a path to failure after taking it over.

The real path to failure,



John
Hall

however, may have been of Brown's own making. He could not adapt to another layer of bureaucracy between him and his patrons at the White House.

It is an old story not only in governments but business. People have friends in high places. Suddenly the friends are not as easy to reach as they used to be, and you are told to deal with intermediaries.

In the case of Chertoff and his associates, it was not just a group of strangers but men and women with an entirely different mission and purpose.

Brown said if there had been a report that a terrorist had blown up the 17th Street Canal levee in New Orleans, there would have been an immediate response at the Homeland Security and Defense departments. It didn't surprise him that Chertoff and other top officials weren't aware what was going on when the hurricane struck and the levee broke.

"They were off doing other things. It was just a natural disaster, so 'we're just going to let FEMA handle all of that'" was the way Brown described the attitude in the new department.

Brown chose to try to go over Chertoff's head in the middle of the New Orleans emergency. To this day, he thinks it was his only choice. He regarded Homeland

Security from the beginning as a bureaucracy that would slow him down, and he chose to deal directly with the White House. It was a disastrous choice.

"If I needed the Army to do something, rather than waste the time to call Secretary Chertoff and then have Chertoff call somebody else, and then maybe he calls (Defense Secretary Donald) Rumsfeld and then Rumsfeld calls somebody, I'd rather just call (White House chief of staff) Andy Card or (White House deputy) Joe Hagin and say, 'This is what I need' and it gets done."

Sen. Robert Bennett, R-Utah, who was questioning Brown, said it was a "staggering statement" demonstrating "a dysfunctional department to a degree far greater than any we've seen."

Apparently, no one at the White House throughout the crisis told Brown that he should stop ringing their phones and call the other people he reported to at the department — like the emergency plan said he should do.

Why didn't this administration do a better job? The committee report doesn't mince words, calling the Katrina response a national failure and an abdication of the most solemn obligation a government has.

That doesn't come from a Democrat, but from an 11-member, all-Republican House select committee.

The administration is now pleading guilty to it. Gross incompetence is easier to defend against than racism and not caring.

John Hall is the senior Washington correspondent of Media General News Service. Send comments to letters@thejournalnet.com.

YOUR VIEWS

Man takes issue with 'Daniels Stupid Time'

To the editor:

Please thank Dick Wolfsie for classifying me as "dumb" in his recent column (Daily Journal, Feb. 4), but I'm afraid Dick has his theory a bit wrong even while poking fun at my real last name.

While it is true I will not be changing any of my clocks or watches in the spring (or fall for that matter) as I don't plan to support Daniels Stupid Time (DST for short), I won't be losing my job as I own my own company, which operates in four states, and have since 1978.

I also won't have any kids wanting their dinner because I am very happily gay with a wonderful husband of 13 years who won't be changing his clocks either.

In short, Dick, I think I'm way smarter than you (and the governor) because I know that a majority of my fellow Hoosiers oppose DST, and especially Eastern DST, so I'm choosing to do what I can to keep it out of my life.

I also am able mentally to add or subtract an hour from my clock and make my outside appointments on time, and I'm intelligent enough to be self-employed and not beholden to an outside firm for any of my income.

I'd say to find out who really needs the definition of dumb might require a mirror on your part.

Ted "Rumpletiltskin"
Fleischaker
Indianapolis

WRITE A LETTER

The Daily Journal invites readers to submit letters, opinion columns and e-mail comments for the opinion page.

GUIDELINES

- Letters published in the Daily Journal must contain the writer's name and city or town.
- Letters sent to the Daily Journal must be signed and must include a daytime telephone number for verification to be considered for publication.
- Letters should be kept as brief as possible.
- Make sure the e-mail letter includes the writer's name, mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address for verification.
- Opinion columns for the community forum section of the editorial page also will be considered for publication. The article should be kept to a reasonable length and should include the writer's name, address and telephone number for verification.
- Because of space and legal considerations, the Daily Journal reserves the right to edit any letters or articles and to limit comments.

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Should the Greenwood City Council approve a ban on smoking in restaurants and other public places?

- Yes
- No

Readers can vote and offer comments on the Daily Journal's Internet edition, www.thejournalnet.com

Readers who don't have access to the Internet are welcome to mail or fax comments.

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