

From Our Point Of View

'Direct democracy' invites paralysis

THE "let-the-people-decide", bypass the Legislature spirit of Howard Jarvis lives on.

A Michigan group, Taxpayers United Federation (TUF) says the people have the right to reject state spending programs.

TUF wants to challenge the Legislature's appropriation power. Under the Constitution, the Legislature retains the power to appropriate funds.

Here's how it would work: After a spending bill passed the Legislature, a petition drive could begin to force a referendum.

If voters turned down the appropriations measure, lawmakers would have 30 days to make new spending plans before the law was cancelled.

TUF'S PLAN is flawed, if for no other reason than voters already have access to lawmak-

ers in the form of ballot box reprisal.

Rep. William Ryan of Detroit, former House Speaker, says the proposal would create "anarchy", destroy representative democracy and might jeopardize essential state services.

Bybypassing the Legislature such as the TUF plan envisions might just as well install robot-voting machines, according to Bill Ryan.

THERE ARE OTHER equally odious aspects of the TUF plan. It takes on blind faith voter interest on and awareness of complicated appropriations measures.

To postulate that voters are knowledgeable enough to pass on the validity of an appropriation when Lansing lawmakers sometimes spend years acquiring expertise in these matters is foolish in the extreme.

At least one other key question remains unanswered: Why, when voting participation is as low as it is, should we "reward" this slovenly exercise of citizenship rights with additional elections and their accompanying expense?

Representative government is still best. If it at times appears to work slowly, it is nothing compared to the paralysis that would come if TUF carried out its version of direct democracy.

Panama vs. Iran

IRAN'S immediate response to the deposed Shah's departure for Panama - a declaration that it makes "no difference" - amounted to a claim that Panama is not really an independent country.

Nevertheless, whatever the actual impact of Saturday's events may prove to be, it will still stand as a day when the rule-of-law concept made headway.

PANAMA'S chief delegate to the United Nations was among the first to address the Security Council when governments were getting themselves on record last month in support of U.S. demands for release of the embassy prisoners in Tehran.

His comment had two important implications. It was a re-

buke to the Khomeini government, which has attempted to portray international agreements guaranteeing immunity and safety for diplomatic personnel as merely a tool of the major western nations.

It was, perhaps, coincidental that the deposed shah's acceptance of Panama's offer to live in that country became effective on the same day the UN's International Court of Justice ordered Iran to release the U.S. hostages.

More see neither party as capable

WASHINGTON - The good news for Republican party loyalists is that the GOP appears to have recovered from the damage inflicted by the Watergate scandal.

The bad news is that the party's support among rank-and-file voters still hasn't returned to the levels enjoyed by the GOP in the 1950s and early 1960s, when 25 to 30 percent of all voters identified themselves as Republicans.

Those figures dipped down to the 20-25 percent range in the late 1960s and early 1970s - but the party didn't reach the nadir of its popularity until late 1974, after Republican President Richard M. Nixon resigned in disgrace.

In a nationwide public opinion survey completed only four months after Nixon was forced out of office, only 18 percent of those questioned identified themselves as Republicans.

MARKET OPINION RESEARCH, the highly respected Detroit-based survey research firm that conducted the 1974 poll for the GOP, has just completed another survey that shows 22 percent of those questioned labeled themselves Republicans.

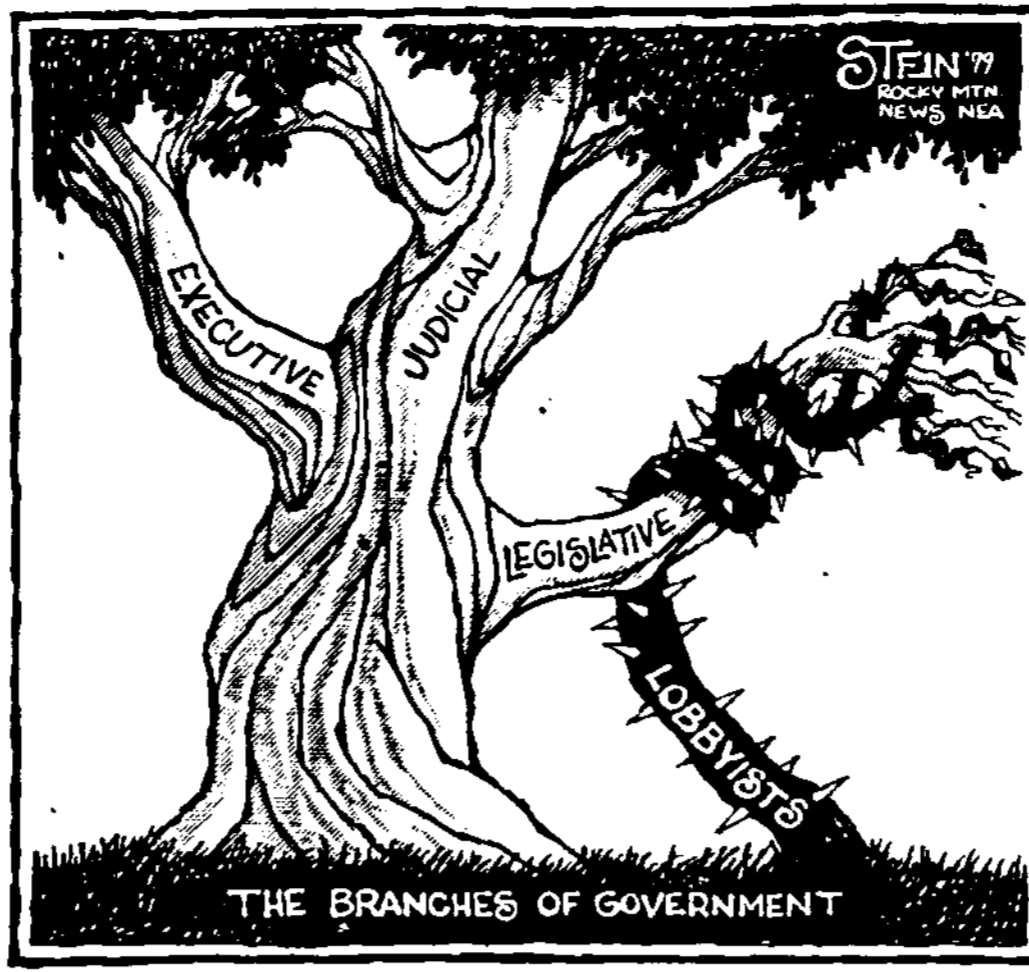
tudes in response to questions about which of the two major political parties could best handle specific problems or issues.

For example, those surveyed in 1974 chose the Democrats by a 39-19 margin when asked which party would do the best job in controlling government spending.

Public opinion on controlling inflation went from 48-12 Democratic in 1974 to 33-25 Republican this year. In the issue of reducing unemployment, the Democrats currently are preferred by a 39-18 margin, but in 1974 the split was a far wider 54-8 in favor of the Democrats.

PROBABLY the most intriguing results of the just-completed survey illustrate the extent to which an increasingly sophisticated and cynical electorate believes neither party is capable of resolving contemporary problems.

The survey didn't offer "neither party" as a choice, but 18 percent volunteered that answer when asked which party could control inflation, while 21 percent gave the same answer on the issues of insuring adequate energy supplies and holding down taxes.



Readers' Viewpoint

Frat house says it's sorry

Editor, The News: We would like to express our deepest concern involving the incident (concerning the cat) that occurred on Thursday the 6th of December.

We, the members of Alpha Delta Phi, offer our sincerest apologies for the irrational, senseless behavior attributable to a small minority of this house.

Those members involved have been dealt with and severely punished and also regret their unreasonable actions.

We strongly believe this action is by no means a reflection of the members of the house or the University of Michigan.

As we have publicly stated, we shall attempt to mitigate the deleterious effects of our actions through volunteer work for the Humane Society and the community at large.

Douglas Hamlin, president Alpha Delta Phi

'Moral lunacy'

Editor, The News: I know many readers share my horror, disgust, and outrage at the alleged mutilation and torture of the fraternity-house cat by three U-M students reported in last night's News.

I urge that if sufficient evidence supports the allegations, the students involved be prosecuted to the fullest extent possible and, if found guilty, also be expelled from the University. Like the other fraternity members and as an employee of the University for 13 years, I wish to exclude them from my community.

Perhaps a return to punishment in the public stocks would be a fitting and effective means of re-education for such persons: they would directly experience the absolute contempt of other citizens toward an act of such moral lunacy.

Perhaps, as members of the human race, we should all send some penance money to animal kind, in care of the Humane Society.

Doris Humphrey

'Despicable act'

Editor, The News: I was enraged and disgusted to read where three men from a local fraternity tortured and burned to death their pet cat. Any human being who could bring himself to perform such a despicable act on a defenseless animal is sick.

No matter what course of action is taken against these men, it won't bring back the life of this innocent creature. Sometimes I'm ashamed to be a part of this society. Forgive us, Lord.

Kay Hurst

Keep a cool head on Iran

Editor, The News: We are required to seek peace and justice in a world often devoid of both. The avoidance of war, therefore, is our highest moral imperative while other means are still available to establish peace and accomplish a just resolution of conflict.

We deplore the taking of hostages in Iran. At the same time, we believe intransigence on both sides - the U.S. demand for the unconditional release of the hostages and the Iranian demand for immediate extradition of the Shah - has resulted in a dangerous impasse.

The repression, torture and corruption of the Shah's regime in Iran are a matter of public record, as are the roles of the C.I.A. in installing the Shah and of the U.S. government in providing him with unlimited armaments. It is time for our present government to admit the facts on these matters and acknowledge them publicly, thus making a clean break with the corrupt policies of previous administrations.

We commend President Carter for his policy of restraint and urge him to continue to pursue non-military solutions to the conflict.

We regret the clear implication that the blame in this matter rests entirely with the Iranian government. The Iranian people have legitimate grievances against the Shah and against the U.S. government for supporting him...

We call for international supervision of the conflict by an agency such as the U.N. Security Council, which would provide for the release of the hostages and an international tribunal to consider the charges against the Shah and his regime.

We call on the American people to understand the difficult situation of Iranians in this country and to cease the harassment of them.

We believe the current crisis dramatically demonstrates the need for developing a foreign policy based on principles of cooperation and mutual respect rather than increasingly ineffective and dangerous military force.

The Rev. Richard O. Singleton Mary Anne Perrone Donald Rucknagel Mark S. Lenz Michael L. Pennanen Anne Laurance Grace Smith Barbara Fuller for the Interfaith Council for Peace

Enjoy good polls while they last



WASHINGTON - There are relatively few matters on which John B. Connally and Edward M. Kennedy agree. But in the space of a few hours, one day last week, they uttered strikingly similar interpretations of President Carter's sudden surge in the public opinion polls.

In almost identical words, the two men said that the plaudits the President is receiving for his handling of the hostage situation in Tehran could easily turn to bricks, once that crisis is resolved.

As is his habit, Connally used language that was blunter than need be, calling Carter's improvement in the polls "an aberration."

It is not aberrational. In fact, as both Kennedy and Connally noted in their comments to groups of reporters and editors, international crises - particularly those threatening the loss of American life - almost always call forth at the outset a feeling of patriotism and a sense of national unity that causes people to rally around the President.

Every professional analyst of public opinion has made the point that it is that surge of spontaneous patriotic sentiment - as much as Carter's own coolness in crisis - that has lifted him from the depths of public disapproval in which he had been floundering for months.

What both Connally and Kennedy said was that once the hostage situation is resolved, inflation, high-interest rates and the woes of the economy will once again be uppermost in people's minds, and, as Connally put it, "Carter's polls may fall as fast as they've risen."

The upheaval taking place in Iran - of which the hostage situation is part - does worsen the economic problems facing this country and the rest of the industrial world. Oil prices are going up again, and oil supplies can more easily be disrupted. That means more inflation and a greater risk of recession, and those are the forces which were dragging down Carter in the polls.

On the issue of his personal leadership, where he has also been vulnerable, Iran has so far worked to Carter's advantage. Thus far, he has persuaded the public that the most prudent course is to blend a demonstration of American restraint with orchestrated international pressure for release of the hostages.

But it must be observed that thus far this policy has not achieved its objective. From the viewpoint of the captors, who are employing the 50 Americans to gain leverage on American government, the American news media and perhaps even on American opinion of past U.S. policy toward Iran, it is not clear that our patience provides them much inducement to release the hostages.

The focus on the 50 Americans - properly our first concern now - in some ways obscures the historic import of what is happening. The most important country in a vital portion of the world - the Persian Gulf - is sliding ever further toward internal chaos and demagogic anti-Americanism.

The likelihood is growing that, in order to counter this fundamental threat to our national interest, there will have to be an increased deployment of American forces in the Persian Gulf region - either slowly and methodically, to contain the situation, or suddenly, to deal with a crisis.

It is not going to be easy to be the first post-Vietnam President to order an American military deployment, and it will go against Carter's instincts, even more than it would against those of other men, to have to deliver that message to the people.

The hardest tests - and the toughest times - of his presidency lie ahead of him in the coming months. Today's polls pale in importance compared to that prospect.

George F. Will

Treason poses as 'idealism'



WASHINGTON - Treason in our time, from the Rosenbergs to Britain's Anthony Blunt, whose treason was recently made public, is giving idealism a bad name. But, then, much that calls itself idealism deserves a bad name.

Blunt's story (and that of his collaborators, Burgess, Maclean and Philby) is a tangle of homosexuality and treachery, revealing a thin but important slice of the social history of Britain in the 1930s and 1940s. The story of Christopher Boyce and Andrew Lee, a tangle of drugs and half-baked politics, is an illuminating footnote to America's recent history.

Espionage, a sordid crime, has rarely been more sordid than in the case of Boyce and Lee. They were altar boys together in the wealthy Los Angeles suburb where they grew into remarkable case studies of confusion, cynicism and degeneracy. Lee's vocation was crime, dealing in drugs - hence "the snowman." The only thing Boyce ever did well was a hobby, training falcons. Then his father got him a job with TRW, an aerospace firm that makes, among other things, satellites that are part of the technical basis of the nation's increasingly tenuous security.

Berry's World



"I'm not reading any news for a while - only seed catalogs!"

