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Is this America?

The shooting of Gov. George Wallace of Alabama is deplorable regardless of how one might feel concerning his candidacy for the U. S. presidency.

Surely people of this nation have become civilized enough to allow each other opinions which differ from their own without resorting to bloodshed and violence.

The saddest part is the majority, the 99.99 plus per cent of Americans would never raise a finger against someone because his opinion differed from their own.

Then there's the fringe on both the right and left, those people whose emotions push them over the edge of rational thinking and behavior.

Are they going to force our public figures into glass walled cages? Are our leaders going to speak to us only on the boob tube with the unreality it can so artfully stage?

We, like the rest of normal America, can only pause and ask the question: What have we come to?

Let's vote, now

City of Billings voters should go to the polls as soon as practicable to decide whether we keep the new zoning codes as adopted in the Comprehensive Zoning Plan.

There is no use stalling around about it through failure to validate petitions for whatever reason.

In a sense of fair play, the persons who supported the petitions to halt implementation of the zoning plan are entitled to action on their request.

They submitted 4,300 signatures with a need for only 2,800. No one can fault their industry even if their purpose.

In seeking signatures, zoning opponents made quite a point about everyone having a right to vote on the Comprehensive Zoning Plan.

Okay, so let's vote and the sooner the better.

If it's a showdown at the polls that the anti-zoning crowd wants, let's have it.

Goofy, but great living

By JAMES RESTON

If there is any redeeming quality about this goofy nuclear age, it is that Moscow and Washington seem to know when to hold back when one of them risks a major collision with the other.

They both go crazy from time to time, but not together.

When the Soviet Union invaded Hungary and later Czechoslovakia, risking a clash with the United States to impose Moscow's control over Eastern Europe, Washington aborted the confrontation.

When the British and French used force to achieve their critical objectives in the Suez crisis, Moscow, which could have slaughtered them both, held its fire.

When Krushchev misjudged President Nixon, facing the Vienna Summit and ran into Kennedy's blockade against placing Soviet missiles in Cuba, the Moscow politburo turned the missile ships around and fired Nikita.

AND NOW AGAIN, when President Nixon, facing the collapse of his whole policy in Vietnam, turned loose the bombers and the mines and challenged Soviet power, Moscow has turned away from the challenge, and re-invited him to the Soviet Union to talk about the more important questions of the world.

Well, this is some kind of progress, not much but some. The President and Secretary of Defense Laird and Secretary of State Rogers, all of whom know better, have been complaining that the Soviets have been irresponsible and even reckless in supplying far less arms to Hanoi

than they have to Saigon, and they are now very pleased with themselves that the Moscow summit is apparently going on, and the White House press secretary, Ron Ziegler, in the exuberance of his 33rd birthday, is proclaiming the success of the President's military and diplomatic policy.

THE MAIN POINT, however, is quite different. Moscow could have accepted the President's military challenge. The Soviets were not blocked by the U.S. mines in Haiphong. They could have flown missiles to Hanoi, as they did to Cairo, that could have attacked the U.S. aircraft carriers whose bombers are now ranging over the battlefields of Hue and Kontum, and attacking the railroads from China to Hanoi, and seeding the Haiphong harbor with mines.

But so far, they have restrained their power, as the U.S. has throughout the Vietnam War, and as Washington did when Moscow risked a major war over Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

The critical decisions of avoiding world war now rest with Washington and Moscow. They are both the most powerful and least experienced of the major states.

THEY have totally different philosophies of life, and conflicting vital national interests in their relations with the two rising industrial powers of Japan and Germany, but they both have as much to lose by major war as anybody else, so at the moment of ultimate crisis they usually tend to draw back.

A matter of trusting the Legislature

17th in series

So what's good about Article VIII, Revenue and Finance, in the proposed Montana constitution on which you'll vote June 6. Plenty, in the eyes of its advocates.

"The revenue and finance article is a testament to the belief in representative government held by the members of Montana's constitutional convention," writes Dr. Maxine Johnson, associate professor of Business Administration, University of Montana.

"Rather than fill the article with constitutional limitations which might serve as hindrances to effective government, they opted, in most cases for legislative discretion in fiscal affairs. In general, the article is a short and simple statement of guidelines for state fiscal policy."

There it is again—do you trust your legislators?

IN THE PAST legislative efforts to aid financially beleaguered cities have been hampered by 1889 constitutional provisions which quite likely did not envision a modern society.

The proposed document places faith in the legislative process by giving it enough leeway to meet needs as they arise.

Let anyone think that the Legislature will take off in a mad gallop to spend money, it should be recognized that past legislators have been exceedingly reluctant to meet the needs of growing population areas.

THE NEW CONSTITUTION would eliminate the constitutional barriers but not the ones in the minds of the Senate and House.

This is a strong argument to override the fears of those who tremble at the thought of removing the constitutional 2-mill statewide property tax levy and the debt limits.

Constitution or otherwise, getting money and permission to raise money from the Legislature has been like pulling teeth from a balky mule.

IN ESSENCE, Mrs. Johnson explains, the new constitution leaves the administrative details of the new tax system to the Legislature. It does not provide for tax boards at either the state or local level. It does away with the independent State Board of Equalization which has drawn so much fire.

The new state tax agency will be established by the Legislature and administered by the executive branch of the government.

The new constitution omits the old section which had been construed to prohibit state revenue sharing with local governments. That's up to the Legislature. Debt limits are properly left up to the Legislature.

THE NEW ARTICLE requires a balanced budget, does not allow the state to go into debt to cover deficits and prohibits creation of state debt without authorization by a 2/3 vote of both houses or a majority vote of the electors. Mrs. Johnson deems the provisions reasonable and appropriate.

Highway funds were not thrown open to unrestricted spending but provisions relaxed to allow earmarked funds to be used for county roads and city streets. Registration fees and the tax on new cars were not earmarked. Diversion of funds by three-fifth vote of the Legislature does make it conceivably possible that sometime in the future highways will not au-

tomatically be funded at the expense of other badly needed public services.

Revenue and Finance retained restrictions on how public funds can be invested. Only retirement funds may be invested in private corporation capital stock.

MRS. JOHNSON DOES regret that the article did not require a uniform accounting system for all state and local agencies. The state is adopting one over the opposition of some agencies and state institutions.

Sec. 1, Tax Purposes, is simplicity personified. It states, "Taxes shall be levied by general laws for public purposes." It permits the Legislature to establish needed tax structures.

Sec. 2, Tax Power Inalienable, limits the power to tax to government.

Sec. 3, Property Tax Administration, leaves the Legislature free to determine the method of securing property tax equalization. It exists today in name only, despite repeated efforts to achieve it.

Sec. 4, Equal Evaluation, states "All taxing jurisdictions shall use the assessed valuation or property established by the state." It is a worthy goal and although present in the present document hasn't brought it about.

Sec. 5, Property Tax Exemptions, says the Legislature may exempt governmental unit facilities, places of worship, charity hospitals, nonprofit cemeteries and educational institutions. The present one makes exemption mandatory.

It specifically permits taxation of private interests in government-owned property and assessment of special improvement district charges on tax exempt property.

Sec. 6 is the Highway Revenue Non-Diversion provision previously discussed.

Sec. 7, Tax Appeals, instructs the Legislature to establish appeal procedures separate from the board making the assessment. A local level appeal is mandatory.

Sec. 8, State Debt, removes the debt limit with restrictions on how it may be accomplished as previously discussed.

Sec. 9, Balance Budget, means just what it says, keep expenditures within revenues when the Legislature appropriates.

Sec. 10, Local Government Debt, allows the Legislature to establish debt procedures and limits, not restricted by the constitution.

Sec. 11, Use of Loan Proceeds, still requires money to be spent only as authorized. Sec. 12, Strict Accountability, mandates the Legislature to insure strict accountability by all government entities.

Sec. 13, Investment of Public Funds, has been discussed.

Sec. 14, Prohibited Payments, is self explanatory, stating, "Except for interest on public debt, no money shall be paid out of the treasury unless upon an appropriation made by law and a warrant drawn by the proper officer in pursuance thereof."

MRS. JOHNSON STATES the case for Article VII, Revenue and Finance, when she says, "Overall-worth of support: If one does indeed believe in representative government and has enough faith in future Legislatures to wish that they may legislate with some degree of flexibility, then the revenue and finance article represents progress."

That's about it. Do you trust your legislators? The strength or failure of article depends on your view.

Next: Article IX, Environment and Natural Resources. Not all new, but mostly.



'Long, long haul

By SYDNEY J. HARRIS

Neither the proponents nor the opponents of what we loosely call "Women's Lib" today realize how far modern women have come—and how far they have had to come from.

American common law is derived from the Common Law of England, and only a century ago, the wife was almost the complete chattel of her husband. We find it hard to believe now that, less than 100 years ago, a man could legally support his mistress on the earnings of his wife.

IN HIS shocking history of social reforms (what is shocking is the stupid ways in which they were resisted by the bulwarks of



society), E. S. Turner points out that the 19th Century wife had fewer rights than accorded to a wife under Roman law "and hardly more than had been conceded to an African slave before emancipation."

Published some two decades ago, his book, "Roads to Ruin," spells out the relationship of the Victorian husband to his wife: "He owned her body, her property, her savings, her personal jewels and her income, whether they lived together or separately. He could deprive her of her assets entirely as he thought fit, and he could do this whether he were alive or dead." His power to disinherit a wife (of her own goods) was absolute and irrevocable.

One of the few men of his time to speak up against this iniquity, according to Turner, was John Stuart Mill, the philosopher and political economist, who himself openly repudiated his legal rights when he married. In his tract, "The Subjection of Women," (1890), he said of the English housewife:

"SHE CAN acquire no property (except for her husband); the instant it becomes hers, even if by inheritance, it becomes ipso facto his. . . . If she leaves her husband, she can take nothing with her, neither her children nor anything which is rightfully her own. If he chooses, he can compel her to return by law, or by physical force; or he may content himself with seizing for his own use anything which she may earn or which may be given to her by her relations. . . ."

When the long campaign began on behalf of the Married Women's Property Bill, it was widely attacked as a "vicious principle" that would dissolve the marriage bond, and a proposal as lunatic "as perpetual motion or stopping the revolutions of the moon." From perusing the press and Parliamentary reports of that period, a visitor from another planet would really imagine that society would be turned upside down if women were permitted a few legal and financial rights of their own.

As I say, one has only to read this chapter to recognize how far women have come since then—and how much more remains to be done.

Climate of madness

By TOM WICKER

Never mind what George Wallace stands for. The attempt to assassinate him was a foul and terrible act, incomprehensible in its motivation unless—as may be—the assassin was deranged.

Never mind the political consequences of this senseless deed. The only thing men of reason and decency can hope for is that Wallace recovers, as speedily as possible.

THEY MUST also ask how

often this wracked and contorted nation can go through such traumatic moments? How often can it? If Alabama's governor should die, there would be no difference—in terms of our common humanity—from the murders of John and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King. The bell tolls for us all, and most particularly so when man has turned to wanton violence against his fellow man.

Are we cursed, then, or sick, or lacking some essential quality of character, that we should so often have been witness to these episodes in which it seems that—as James Reston wrote on Nov. 22, 1963—"Somehow the worst in the nation had prevailed over the best?" Or does some political circumstance exist that makes it probable that these murderous responses will be frequently forthcoming?

THE ANSWER must be "No" to both questions—to the first, because whatever degree of rationality we can still claim argues against the idea of some mystical national flaw; and to the second, if for no other reason, because of the wide diversity among the four assassin's victims.

But can either question be left at that simple answer? For one thing, it can hardly be denied that the past decade in America has been one of remarkable violence—in response to the Southern civil rights movement, for example, then later in the black ghettos of the major cities; against white students at Kent State and against black students at Jackson State; above all, in Vietnam. Even some radical antiwar activists have turned to or advocated violence.



AND WHAT about the popularity of violent western movies, in which the "hero" never hesitates to dispatch the "villain," a pattern repeated endlessly on virtually every television action and adventure show? What about the organized violence of professional football, in which "hitting people" is the credo of the successful? What is to be said of those endless lines outside theaters showing "The Godfather," and the applause which usually greets the murderous successes of the Corleone family?

At the very least, this easy climate of unlimited violence can hardly fail to make an impression on minds already inclined to precipitous or ill-considered action, or warped and strained by personal circumstances—as seems to have been the case with both Sirhan B. Sirhan and Lee H. Oswald.

THIS MAY have been less so with James Earl, but all three of these accused or convicted assassins, as well as Gov. Wallace's assailant—and those who fired at Harry Truman and Franklin Roosevelt, as well as those who murdered Presidents McKinley, Garfield and Lincoln—did so with firearms that were easily available to them. And

that is another point that cannot be dodged.

Nowhere in the world are guns so readily at the assassin's hand as in America. Nowhere else is the general population so heavily armed.

The blatant availability of guns in America simply cannot be set aside or discounted as a major source of violent crime. Let the gun-makers and their lobbyists, the gun-lovers and their organizations, the gun-bearers and their apologists, say as often as they will that men, not guns, shoot people.

The sheer mindlessness of that response—no one supposes that men or women don't fire these weapons—makes it scarcely worth rebuttal.

THE SAD likelihood is that the American climate of violence, which so often is official violence—Attica, Orangeburg and Augusta come to mind—contributes as much as "the frontier heritage" or "the sporting tradition" to the fierce American resistance to any form of gun-control laws. As long as that climate flourishes, such laws are unlikely—and such madness or depravity as that which felled George Wallace will recur.

No amount of additional Secret Service protection can altogether protect such public figures, as they move among what is essentially an armed population. And that is likely to remain the case until American leaders at every level of government, in all parties and factions, whether they command armies or police forces, set an example of restraining rather than relying on violence.

the small society



I THINK ALL THE TROUBLE IN THE WORLD IS CAUSED BY PEOPLE TRYING TO BE IMPORTANT—



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