

opinion

Clark's nomination a Reagan affront

After inflicting bad environmental decisions with a general disregard for the opinion of the American people, James Watt finally tendered his resignation as interior secretary.

Watt chose to resign in what seemed to be a graceful exit, although if he stayed on it's a certainty he would have faced a Congress prepared to pass a resolution to oust him.

Watt dodged the bullet, so to speak. Still, with Watt gone the American people breathed a sigh of relief.

Right away came the sweepstakes for Watt's successor. The general opinion was that almost anybody could do a better job.

But with the nomination of William Clark, environmentalists and anti-environmentalists, conservatives and liberals alike, were stunned. Clark was a national security adviser and former associate justice of the California Supreme Court. What kind of a background is this for a Secretary of the Interior?

Being an old crony of Pres. Ronald Reagan is the foremost of Clark's credentials. It's nice to have friends in high places. And as far as credentials go there seems a lot more to worry about with Clark, instead of Watt, in charge.

At least Watt had a background in environmental issues. Of course, he consistently fell on the side of business over environment. However, Watt was regularly apprised of all the issues surrounding the environment. Regardless of whether you approved of Watt's policies they were at the very least based on available information.

Clark's position is called pro-development, derived from his decisions as an associate justice in the California Supreme Court. Clark dissented against a majority ruling requiring an environmental impact study on inland oil drilling. He also was the only justice to contend San Diego's anti-billboard ordinance was unconstitutional.

Not that we're advocating bringing back lovable Jimmy Watt. Quite the opposite is true. Watt was a thoroughly bad Secretary of the Interior, but he seems to bask in the reflected glare caused by Clark's nomination.

In a way Clark's nomination is another affront to environmental groups by Reagan. Designating Clark — who's background in national security seems to betray a certain instantaneous incompetency in the area of environment — is another in a long series of Reagan appointments that are more callow than qualified.

Watt's resignation isn't going to change much in the department of the interior. Watt's policies will probably be carried through by Clark without alteration.

But the smart money isn't betting for a change for the better.

Keep vitriolic Helms out of King's FBI file

Here's a singular instance: The Reagan administration is acting properly. In this case it is through efforts to prevent access to sealed FBI files on the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms' is trying to get King's FBI files to bolster his attempt to defeat the proposed Martin Luther King day. Helms, ever vitriolic, will use the information in these FBI files to his best advantage — and the worst for the slain civil rights leader.

How accurate is the information in the FBI files? Probably not very accurate.

When J. Edgar Hoover died, certain aspects of his reign as director of the FBI came to light. Hoover was a man with more than a little paranoia. He was paranoid about King and the civil rights movement. Hoover was sure it was a communist plot (one of many such plots) and set the FBI after King. The type of information the FBI gathered under the Hoover dynasty (as demonstrated by others who have requested and seen their FBI files under the Freedom of Information Act) was a mish-mash of rumor, innuendo, outright lies and paid informants' testimony. Sometimes they lucked-out and got a smattering of truth.

There's no reason to believe that King's FBI file isn't full of such mud.

If Helms gets hold of King's FBI file he'll sling the most damaging items, regardless of the truth, to stop the popular movement for a King memorial day.

King is deserving of a day of memorial for all he achieved in his public life as a civil rights leader. But his private life and the doubtful information in the FBI files should be kept safe from jackals like Helms.

letters policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content.

"Comment" is an Emerald opinion feature submitted by members of the University community. "Comment" columns must be limited to 500 words and typed.

Letters to the editor and "Comment" columns should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.



"OH, HI, SHERIFF! ER, ME AND THE WIFE AND KID WAS JUST HAVIN' A LITTLE CELEBRATION... BUT YESSIR, WE'LL KEEP THE NOISE DOWN, SIR, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT... YESSIR, SURE WILL..."

letters

Free postcards

"War is hell" and must be avoided, but it is also eternal upon Earth. Any simpleton knows even neutral governments keep military forces. The United States also needs adequate defenses. The United States needs a draft and those who avoid draft registration must be ferreted out with effective measures.

I urge all those who agree with these elements to acquire ASUO's Solomon Amendment postcards and rewrite them to support the measure. Send them to your congresspersons immediately. In addition, join the ASUO lobby network. Give the network your name, address, etc., so you will be informed of their actions and may further thwart their efforts.

Paul Parks, Jr.

Smoking missile

Although the first reports of the shooting down of the Korean airliner seemed to defy any logical analysis, the media coverage, the public outrage and the political posturing have followed a predictable pattern.

Catching the Russians with a smoking missile in the slaughter of 269 innocent men, women and children was a story made for vituperative rhetoric, sensational headlines and vilifying cartoons. The puzzling inconsistencies in early fragmentary reports and the perplexing questions about what actually happened and why could wait for a calmer climate. Unfortunately for rational analysis and intelligent reaction, the near hysterical ferocity of the initial response has so set the prevailing attitude that subsequent revelations are perfunctorily discounted or simply ignored.

The position of our government seems to have changed from a claim of irrefutable proof that the

Soviets acted knowingly, willfully, and with a barbaric disregard for human life to the position that if they didn't know they were attacking a civilian airliner, they should have, and so are just as guilty.

Since neither side is likely to agree to submit all evidence, information and witnesses to a judicial procedure, whether the Soviet action was aggravated murder, manslaughter or self-defense will remain a subject for academic speculation.

Not so academic is the question of how those in the media who played such a key role in fostering frenzied accusations will adjust to the revelation that the Soviet leaders have judged their own air defense guilty of incredible incompetence. Members of the media must face the question of the extent to which they ignored disturbing inconsistencies to accept an official interpretation without proper journalistic challenge.

Since a communist regime feels no compulsion to tell the truth, perhaps the media feel comfortable with manipulating facts to make this evil empire look bad, or perhaps they instinctively try to avoid the serious risk of appearing soft on communism.

The release of information on the airliner tragedy has left our intelligence community and our military establishment somewhat at odds. Either our intelligence service has been grossly overestimating Russian capabilities or our military leaders have been systematically exaggerating Russian strength in order to frighten us into unnecessary defense spending.

But how could the Soviet defense system have been so inept in tracking, identifying and eliminating a huge, high-flying, subsonic, civilian intruder?

We now know they were seriously distracted by one of our

sophisticated spy planes. Since one important mission of our electronic surveillance is to activate Russian radar, try to confuse it, and then monitor results, was it this type of operation that rendered the Russian defenses almost impotent for two hours?

Our intelligence reports about a shakeup in the Russian command indicate we can break Russian codes and listen in to almost anything that goes on. If we can listen in, can we also talk back? If computer whiz kids can penetrate sophisticated computerized networks, can we not assume that our National Security Administration can and routinely does penetrate the Soviet defense system and can even scramble their signals?

Since modern spying amounts to an ongoing electronic warfare, could the airliner have been caught in the middle of an electronic interchange? Could this explain reports of communication problems and even be the reason it strayed so far off course? Could this be why the Russians, with their electronic systems made unreliable and their paranoia inflamed, felt they had to shoot first and worry about consequences later?

Gene Lehman

Correction

The Emerald regrets any misunderstanding that may have taken place regarding the "open mike" editorial Oct. 18. Maranatha representatives have informed the Emerald that Bill Glass, who was cited as a speaker, is not affiliated with the group.

Although Glass was not linked to Maranatha, they maintain it was implied he was.

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