

China gets trade rights instead of sanctions

How long is three years? Well, 1,095 days without a leap, but in the mind of presidential world politics, it's hardly a blink of an eye.

Three years ago Wednesday, China began a crack-down on unarmed demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, ending weeks of pro-democracy protests that the Communist government saw as a challenge to its authority.

As the world moved toward democracy and personal freedoms, China subdued its population with clubs, guns and tanks. The Tiananmen Square massacre was just one particularly brutal phase of China's continued human rights violations. Dissidents abroad are exiled; dissidents at home have been beaten, shot or thrown into prison.

Reading a list of China's treatment of its citizens is a study in repression. Last year, the U.S. State Department said the country fell "far short of internationally accepted norms" when it came to human rights.

Sounds bad, right? What would the United States do? Send in troops? Impose sanctions? Bluster and fuss in the United Nation?

Nope. On the eve of Tiananmen Square's third anniversary, the Bush administration extended China's most-favored nation trading status for another year.

Makes you proud to be an American, doesn't it?

The brutal treatment of its citizens is just one of China's thug-like activities. Last week, it exploded a 1-megaton bomb — many times more powerful than the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In addition, China sells its nuclear technology and missile systems with the intensity of a backstreet peddler.

It's not like the Bush administration doesn't know what China's doing. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater Wednesday said the president was unhappy about the human rights violations, but didn't think the U.S. should retaliate with trade sanctions.

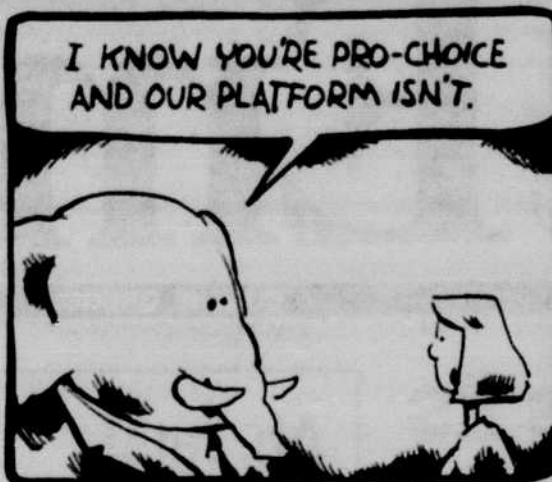
If there was ever an occasion that a country deserved trade restrictions, this is it.

That our illustrious president would pander to China is nothing new. He served there as an envoy from 1974-75 and has always seen the country with a Nixon-like mentality: a bulwark against the Soviet Union.

But the Soviet Union no longer exists and the Cold War is over. At a time when the U.S. should be pushing other countries toward democracy, Bush lets China play fast and loose with human rights in the hopes of not damaging trade relations.

In the end, it all comes down to economics. We are still in a recession, and restricting trade with China would hurt American big business. And as we've all seen, money is more important to Bush and Co. than people.

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OPINION

Yeah, but will he still do the weather?



THE FINE PRINT

BY DON PETERS

If you ever wanted to get into politics, now's the time. Anti-incumbent fever is rampant. Political outsiders are in vogue.

In fact, if you just hang tight for a few months - until after the fall election - you just might be president.

By default, Welcome to the newest political game. It's called "What Do We Do Now?," and it's based on the fascinating chance that none of the three major candidates for president will get a majority on the first Tuesday in November.

Time magazine ran a piece on it, complete with a flow-chart graph showing how Joe Isuzu could be the next occupant of the Oval Office. Various TV news programs have also gotten into the game, with speculations on No. 42 running from Sen. Bill Bradley to Secretary of State James Baker.

This type of situation is not new; we just haven't seen it for, oh, 168 years. Not since the heady days of 1824 - John Quincy Adams vs. Andrew Jackson - has the electoral college failed to produce a clear winner.

So this year's version — three viable candidates, or more accurately, three candidates who could pull electoral votes — has sent would-be political experts scurrying for copies of the constitution in a vain hope to discover who would be president.

As a public service, I will now present a possible scenario for the upcoming election.

November 3, 1992 — Election Day. George Bush squeaks by with the popular vote, followed by Ross Perot and Bill Clinton. However, Perot captures California and Texas, and Clinton takes New York and a

couple of other states, keeping Bush from getting an electoral majority.

December 14, 1992 — The electoral college meets. The last two months have been full of political in-fighting, back-stabbing and skulduggery. A proposal to decide the election with a World Wrestling Federation-style "Battle Royale" (last electoral voter standing chooses the winning ticket) is nixed.

January 6, 1993 — In a pompous ceremony, Vice President (for now) Dan Quayle, serving as president of the Senate, opens the electoral ballots. As expected, no candidate receives a majority, though Richard Nixon and Mr. Rogers each receive a sympathy vote.

The ticking clock — The House of Representatives has until March 4 to choose the next president from Bush, Perot and Clinton. Each representative has a vote in his or her state delegation — a majority of votes wins the state, a majority of states wins the election.

Anyway, the chaos continues. The Democrats control the House, but their candidate finished third. Given public feeling toward politicians, handing Clinton the presidency could result in the first Congressional barbecue on the House floor, courtesy of a peeved electorate.

Result: stalemate. Meanwhile — Under the same deadline as the House, the Senate meets to pick the vice president from the top two finishers. Here, a simple majority wins.

The Democrats again have a majority, but their candidate didn't make the finals. So it comes down to Quayle and Perot's nominee, picked in a weak moment of populist, blue-collar pandering.

March 4, approaching midnight. The Senate tally deadlocks at 50-50. The House, unable to resolve its vote, waits to see if a vice president can be picked. If one is, they will be sworn in as president.

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The Senate President gets to cast the deciding vote, but Quayle is busy watching Gilligan's Island.

"Ah, Mr. Vice President," a harried aide whispers. "You have to vote."

"Shh," Quayle says. "This is my favorite episode. It's the one where they almost get off the island, but Gilligan screws up."

The Senate's sergeant of arms walks to the podium. "Mr. Vice President!" he roars.

"Yes?" Quayle asks, eyes still glued to the television.

"Is that your vote?" the sergeant of arms asks. "Aye?"

"Sure, sure, whatever." And America gets a new president.

March 5, 1993 — Inauguration Day. U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist asks the candidate to raise his right hand. "Repeat after me," Rehnquist says. "I, Willard Scott, do solemnly swear..."

Hey, it could happen.

Don Peters is an editorial editor for the Emerald.

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