

Christopher's past shows insider role

What did he know, and when did he know it? Those are the questions yet to be answered by Secretary of State-designate Warren Christopher.

The question stems back 25 years ago, when Christopher was deputy attorney general for President Lyndon Johnson. During that time, the intelligence branch of the U.S. Army was allegedly conducting illegal domestic surveillance of anti-war and civil rights protesters.

According to memos found in the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Texas, Christopher was aware the Army's 116th Military Intelligence Group was gathering information on Washington area dissidents and had "their own operatives in the area."

If this is Clinton's idea of 'change,' we've been reading the wrong dictionary.

In the margin of that particular memo, dated July 23, 1968, was scribbled "Noted, WC," suggesting Christopher had, in fact, seen and acknowledged the information in the memo.

But during his 1977 confirmation hearings as Jimmy Carter's deputy secretary of state, Christopher denied any knowledge of the surveillance, known as Operation Chaos.

"If it had been brought up, I would have been strongly opposed to it," Christopher said at the hearings.

President-elect Clinton has promised change and a new ethics in government. Christopher fits neither of these categories. Christopher has been a political insider since 1965, when he was given the job of deputy attorney general in the Johnson administration and helped organize the McCone Commission study of the 1965 Watts riots.

While in the Carter administration, Christopher negotiated unsuccessfully with Iran for the release of 52 U.S. Embassy hostages. Critics blame Christopher for the fact that the crises lasted for 444 days and likely cost Carter his bid for re-election.

Should Christopher's appointment be approved by Congress, he will have served under three of the past seven presidents and in every democratic administration since 1965. How much more "inside" can one be?

Whether Christopher lied to Congress may never be known. Thursday, Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said they would not press Christopher on the issue at his confirmation hearings.

Without that challenge, Christopher can be expected to sail through the confirmation process without a scratch. But if this is Clinton's idea of "change," we've been reading the wrong dictionary.



LETTERS

Earth power

Because we are living in a reality in which thousands of species become extinct each year, human activities are poisoning the air and water, and our planet's forests are being decimated at a rate far exceeding growth, Stephanie Sisson presented a shortsighted view in her column, "Earth will adjust to catastrophes" (ODE, Jan. 11).

Sisson fails to recognize human existence as a very recent introduction to a planet that has seen the rise and fall of many creatures, including the dinosaur, which dominated the earth long before mammalian evolution.

As a species, Homo sapiens fill a specific ecological niche. We have the power to manipulate our environment in ways — if left unchecked — that will eventually threaten human survival.

Yes, humans are not powerful enough to obliterate the earth. And it does, over time, have ways of mending itself. The earth will be here, but will we?

Holly Gryte
Anthropology

Basic facts

Stephanie Sisson's column "Earth will adjust to catastrophes" (ODE, Jan. 11) is another impressive example of man's ability to deny unpleasant truths. Is mankind really "not big enough or powerful enough to destroy the earth"? Are our concerns only because of a "panicked, environmentally aware era"? I'm afraid not.

Just to review some basic facts:

In only a few decades our civilization will use up natural resources that have accumulated over millions of years.

New species used to evolve at a rate of (very roughly) one new species per 100 years. Today we extinct a species every some hours.

These processes are absolutely irreversible, and their pace is still not slowing down. What's gone is gone, and it's going fast.

Of course, mankind has the right to influence and change

the earth to a certain degree. But the global ecosystems are not infinitely stable. And wherever the limits lie, the examples show that we have long surpassed them. Quite frankly, a little bit of recycling here and some energy efficiency there won't help.

To survive, our society must profoundly change. We will have to learn to lead a fulfilling life without consuming whatsoever at an ever faster pace. We must understand we have responsibilities that go beyond our own lifespan. And, first of all, we've got to have the guts to face the harsh ecological realities. Denial won't do it.

Christof Romahn
Graduate student
Physics

Take care

In response to the recent Stephanie Sisson column "Earth will adjust to catastrophes" (ODE, Jan. 11), I would like to say that Sisson is gravely misleading readers.

Sisson would have us believe the human race is "not big enough or powerful enough to destroy the earth," and the planet is fully capable of restoring itself after man-made disasters. Furthermore, she asserts Americans are "too cautious" with the environment, and the only way to preserve the earth is to eliminate man.

Humans may not be powerful enough to destroy the Earth, but we most certainly are capable of destroying ourselves. That, in essence, is the whole point of the environmental movement — the preservation of existing species. Each creature humans cause to become extinct — and we do cause the extinction of many species — brings us one step closer to decimating our ecosystem and thus human existence.

Humans are harming the environment at a faster rate than the planet can recuperate. How many oil spills will it take before all ocean life is irrevocably

damaged? It's irresponsible to assume this planet can survive, as a living planet, despite man-made disasters.

As far as being too cautious, continued life on earth depends on our responsible stewardship. We can't be too careful. The more care we take of our planet, the better chance we have of assuring that life will remain for generations to come.

Erik Larson
Biology

Embarrassing

Regarding the article by Tammy Batey on fraternity breaks (ODE Jan. 12), I was rather embarrassed upon seeing my name attached to a quote claiming we keep doors unlocked in an effort to somehow convince people that students are living there during breaks.

While naivete takes a prominent position among my character faults, I can assure Batey it does not stretch quite that far into the realm of fantasy. Please allow me to clarify, not so much for the huge multitude no doubt hankering for this information, but to preserve what little reputation I have left.

In the past, we left doors open because everyone knew no one was there, and we grew tired of shelling out hundreds of dollars every time we returned to school and had to replace shattered doors and door frames.

Today, the outer doors of our house are reinforced and feature combination key pad locks, but our policy remains to keep interior doors unlocked for two reasons: There are no valuables left in the house during breaks, and people will get into the house if they really want to, so we make sure they find nothing to steal, nor anything to break. I don't want to accuse Batey of misquoting, but I hope I wasn't that unclear when we spoke on the phone.

Jamie Bakum
Kappa Sigma

LETTERS POLICY

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