

Bipartisan budget battle reveals larger problem

OUR OPINION: Politicians need to be reminded that they are employees of the people

By the time you read this, a large sector of the federal government could be in a state of suspended animation, and 800,000 government employees could be sitting at home watching soap operas.

All because the boys in Washington just can't play nice.

If congressional leaders and President Clinton weren't able to reach a budget compromise by midnight Monday night, the government will only be able to operate the most essential of law-enforcement and health-care services. The Republican-controlled Senate submitted a proposal to the Oval Office that would cut Medicare funding, deregulate environmental protections and slice deep cuts in education spending. Clinton refuses to sign the budget, and thus, without a compromise, the system comes to a screeching halt.

Of course, both sides are blaming the other. Bobby and Newt say Billy won't talk to them. Billy says if Bobby and Newt don't follow his rules he's not going to come out and play. And caught in the middle of this reality-sized game are thousands of government employees and the American people.

Not surprisingly, a government shutdown will not include a freeze on politicians' salaries. But it should.

As Democrats and Republicans jockey for first place in the presidential race, their preoccupation with power has superseded their

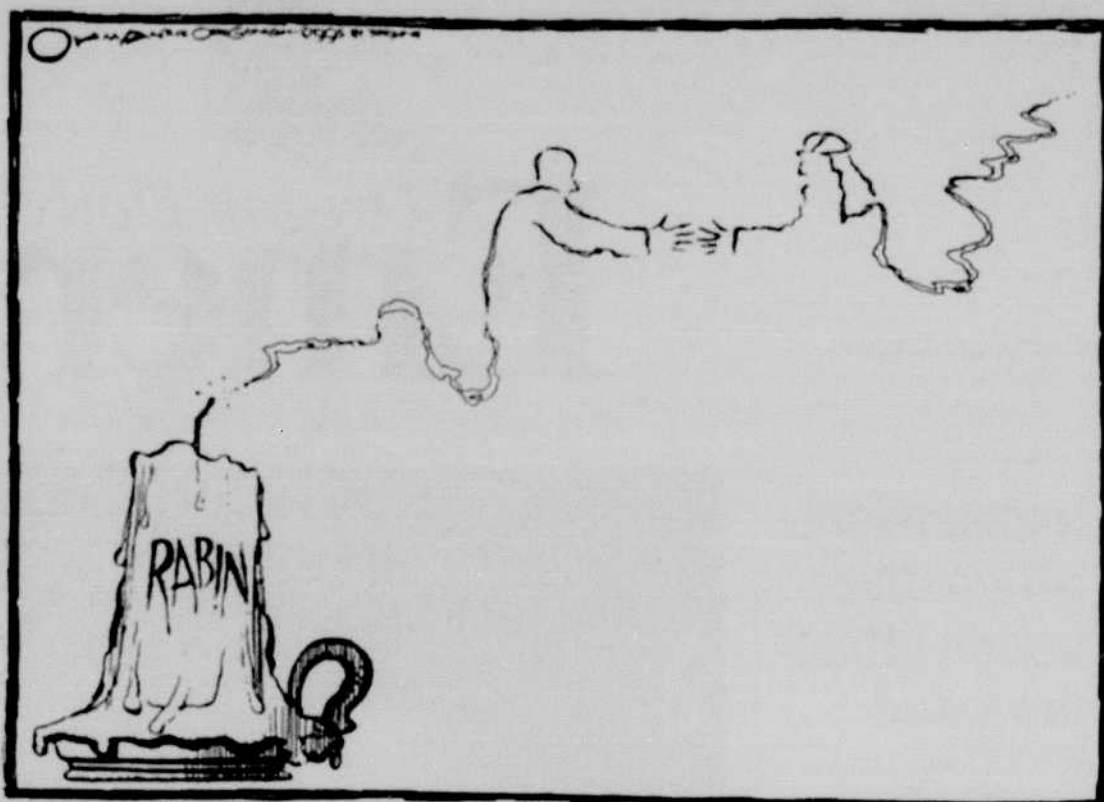
concern with what is best for the country. Is the average American going to benefit from increased effluent dumping into the country's rivers? Will it really mean better-paying jobs for blue-collar workers in Mississippi? Of course not.

Politicians support the people who donate money to their campaigns so they can spend the next 12 months flooding our television screens with images of wholesome family men eating apple pie and shaking hands with people of color. Meanwhile, the people who do the real work for the government have to worry about how they'll put Thanksgiving dinner on the table next week.

Instead, the American people should demand a stop-payment on all elected-officials' salaries until our representatives can agree on the budget. As it stands, neither the Senate nor the White House is motivated to work together because they have nothing to lose. Both sides can sound-bite their way to the next election, pointing fingers and calling names. In the end, both can say they stood by their principles.

By eliminating their paychecks and their perks, politicians would feel the pressure they seem so willing to place on their constituents. More importantly, it would remind them that we, the people, are their employers. For too long, the federal government has acted like the parent of the people.

It's time to let our politicians know that they are only temporary guardians and we will have the final say on election day. In the meantime, we should take away their allowances and ground them until they can behave.



Give peace a chance, but watch your back

Peace claimed another casualty Nov. 4. Yitzhak Rabin was killed because he dedicated himself to solving the violence between two exiled peoples determined to claim the same homeland. He recognized the necessity for compromise in a nation where every acre of land is sacred history.

Rabin is now part of a tradition of martyrdom that has become the hallmark of peace struggles. Anwar Sadat was shot by fanatics opposed to the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords while he watched a military parade in 1981. Gandhi was shot by another Hindu in 1918. And no one in America can forget that Martin Luther King's peaceful campaign for racial equality was snuffed by an assassin in 1968.

Society has a habit of butchering its peace leaders. Diabolical rulers live long lives protected by the militia of paranoia, but those who select peace as their path live in danger of every fanatic with an attitude.

Great love is akin to terrible hatred — inspiring the one often incites the other. Christ advised that we love our neighbor, but the Bible itself teaches us that preaching peace-love will get you three nails and a cross.

The bumper sticker says it all: *Wage Peace Not War*. These days, peace can get you killed.

Rabin and his Nobel Peace Prize co-recipient, Yasser Arafat, understood what it meant to wage peace. Both men were old campaigners in the brutal business of political war before they turned the other cheek.

Rabin joined an underground army while still in high school. "I was a military man for 27 years," he once said. "I fought as long as there was no chance for peace." Arafat evidently used the same logic when he headed the Palestine Liberation Organization during its terrorist activities: If there's no way in hell you'd join 'em, lick 'em.

Unfortunately, Rabin's and Arafat's early activities set an example that would come back to haunt them. Together they guaranteed that Israel's next generation would consist of Jewish youths with guns (all Israeli citizens are required to serve time in the army) and frustrated Palestinians with bombs.

If Rabin's death teaches us anything it's that the prejudices of a lifetime can't be changed as quickly as government policies. For an illuminating account of how quickly Britain changed its government policies regarding Israel after the second World War, see *The Long War* by J. Bowyer Bell.

Arafat is unique because he found a balance between the hot strategies of early PLO activities and patient progress. He and his organization, the PLO Authority, call the most intense strip of land in the world their home. He is surrounded by potential enemies on all sides and must con-

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Sonja Sherwood

tend with Muslim fundamentalists such as Hamas. Nonetheless, he straddles the political fence with poise.

Arafat signed peace accords with Rabin while the official PLO vow to destroy Israel was still in effect. How many post-terrorist politicians-cum-statesman could get away with that? Even now, as Arafat goes ahead with plans to bring more of the West Bank under Palestinian self-rule, the PLO Covenant remains an active terrorist decree.

Arafat couldn't attend Rabin's funeral because it would have been too controversial, yet he consoled Rabin's wife during a historic visit to Israel last week. Arafat is a genuine peace-warrior.

His challenge will be to resolve his credibility problems with his neighbors, put a stop to Hamas' attacks on Israel and clean up the ghettos of the West Bank. And to stay alive — he's a peace-maker now; people will be out to nail him.

In the void left by Rabin, the region needs a leader who can wean the West Bank from international aid and transform it into a site for international investment. Middle Eastern businessmen are excited about developing an Israel-Palestine-Jordan economic triangle now that tensions have eased. There has been talk of luxury hotels, airport services and a currency union set to launch in 2001.

Business may now do for the Middle East what terrorism and militancy didn't. The (minimum) wages of peace are security, prosperity and tolerance. The costs are long struggle, violence, and sometimes the loss of an extraordinary leader.

Men like Arafat, F.W. de Klerk of South Africa and Northern Ireland's Gerry Adams are trying to dismantle the apparatuses of hate and rebuild with better materials. The deaths of men like Sadat, King and Rabin remind us that the fight will be hard.

Sonja Sherwood, a senior majoring in journalism and English, is a columnist for the Emerald.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* welcomes your opinions on this and other issues. You may submit a letter no longer than 250 words to the Emerald offices at Suite 300 in the EMU or send us your thoughts via e-mail at ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

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