

Government employees working again, for now

OUR OPINION: Federal workers go back to their jobs, but a long-term budget is still needed

Even though most younger people will probably never see or benefit from the kind of supplementary income paid to retired citizens through Social Security taxation, Congress will be making a major mistake if it decides to move too quickly to dismantle (or drastically cut back) the kinds of programs Americans have become so incredibly, and in some cases unfortunately, dependent on.

In the short run, the recently resolved government shutdown will put fur-loughed government workers back to work — but with an added twist.

They will actually get paid.

However, if Congress chooses to focus only on the immediate need of making sure the paycheck is delivered to the thousands of federal workers who depend on that income, then the alternate choice may be one that hurt even more Americans later on when other needed programs are severely scaled back or cut altogether.

We hope that Congress makes a bid for the future and looks into cutting programs that could stand a little trimming.

Defense, though an entity that has experienced massive cutbacks for the past several years, could still remain strong and healthy with further reductions.

Thanks to the recent U.S. Marine-induced troubles on the Japanese island of Okinawa, some military experts and critics are saying that it may indeed be time to bring some of those thousands of military members home.

Okinawa, though understandably upset over years of abuse and disrespect at the hands of American service members, does not appear to be a threat to national or international security, so it might be wise to take advantage of this window of opportunity and bring some of our people back to the states.

Not only would this plan reduce the incredible costs of living related to the housing and feeding of a military stationed overseas, but it would allow more active-duty service members to perform where they are needed more. Bosnia is one such hot spot that comes to mind. This "moving of the troops" would also lessen the burden (financially and otherwise) increasingly being felt by America's Reserve and Guard forces.

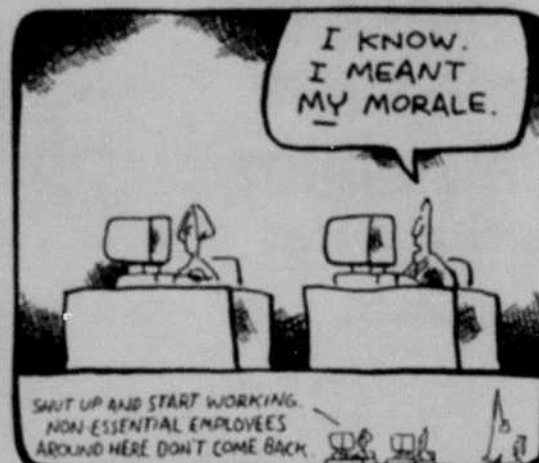
Another idea comes from a former high-ranking Air Force official: Turn NASA's space shuttle program over to the military — the Air Force to be exact.

It's no secret that Air Force pilots routinely command and fly the shuttle and that often, the shuttle's payload is nothing less than yet another spy satellite — or some other piece of top secret "military hardware."

This official's idea presents an interesting argument. Get NASA out of the costly military business so that it can focus on space exploration.

Whatever Congress ends up cutting, they, like President Clinton, will be faced with never-ending criticism.

When it comes to making decisions that will keep this country and its government running, politicians will always be damned if they do, and damned if they don't.



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LETTERS

Not fair

The editorial "Smith uses tax refund to buy voters' support" (ODE, Nov. 30) was one of the most ridiculous things I have ever read. Why should the state government be able to keep taxpayers' money?

The state makes a prediction as to how much in taxes it will collect, then constructs a budget accordingly. If there is a surplus left over, then the money should be returned to its rightful owner: you and me.

The argument that "Annie student's" refund check is much smaller than "Ms. Glamour's" check is also absurd. Annie student pays significantly less in taxes than Ms. Glamour, so why should she not get less back? If the argument is reversed, and everyone should be returned the same amount, then should not everyone pay the same?

"This would not be fair," you said. Let's look at it in another perspective. According to your logic, if you receive an "A" in a class and I receive a "C" in the same class, I should get some of your "A." It's only fair.

While I do agree that something needs to be done about education, there are better ways in which this can be accomplished than by raising taxes. To suggest that this excess taxpayer money should be put to use to "lower the cost of higher education," while our basic education programs are in need seems somewhat selfish.

I do not usually write letters, but something about this editorial made me stop and wonder just how the author would feel about this issue when he is out there in the real world. I bet his feelings will have changed, especially if he finds himself in the same position as Ms. Glamour. In short, I am just fed up hearing people whine and complain about not being able to get anything for free anymore.

J. Lindsay
Political Science & Finance

Comrade Kevin

I found the quote made by Kevin Hornbuckle (ODE, Nov. 28) rather interesting. "I am a member of the Communist party because ... it stands for economic justice."

I am curious if comrade Kevin is aware of the outcome of 70 years of "economic justice" in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: families living in apartments of 500 square feet, bread lines, meat lines, milk lines, military takeovers of other countries, a large industrial complex that pollutes far more than this country, a police force that maltreats people worse than the Los Angeles Police Department ever could, medical technology 20 years older than ours, crops that rot in the fields, a military conscription, a dozen inmates per prison cell, and all throughout this, a black market that flourishes and politicians who are sinister with power and wealth.

Is this the "economic justice" comrade Kevin refers to? If it is, then I prefer this nation's form of economic justice: Learn a lot; work hard, and earn as much economic justice as you want.

Kimberley Witchey
Eugene

ROTC courtesy

This fall I enrolled in the Reserve Officers Training Corps at the University. In so doing, I inadvertently added myself to some people's hate list.

My fellow cadets called this to my attention by warning me to be cautious when wearing my uniform. Almost everyone related a story about an unfriendly encounter with hippie-types who gave them trouble. One cadet was spit upon as he walked down the street the first day he donned the uniform. It never occurred to him that a stranger would commit such a disgusting act merely because of the clothes he wore. Even worse, this is not an iso-

lated occurrence; it happens often.

Spitting is the assault method of choice for cadet-haters. This is usually preceded by verbal insult. Many foul words come from the mouths of these beligerents, but "baby killer" seems to be a favorite. Accosting cadets with such an unfounded slur shows the foolhardiness of those who direct this unjust animosity toward us. We are college students for God sakes! None of us has killed or attempted to kill anyone, let alone a baby.

Hippies have always been enthusiastic in their opposition to stereotyping people by their appearance. Why, then, do they assault ROTC students for wearing a required uniform? Evidently, some hippies are hypocrites. They only know that cadets are associated with the military and must therefore be evil.

I do not expect everyone to like me or the choices I make. The problem comes when I am treated with disrespect by ignorant people who still — even in this day of increased education — allow stereotypes to govern their actions.

These people think it is their responsibility to coerce others to live and act as they do. So far, the worst I've experienced has been ugly stares as I walk down the street. But I worry that one day, I too, will meet someone who feels the need to "correct" others.

The next time you see a person dressed in an Army uniform, don't show yourself to be a fool by shouting erroneous insults at him or her. Instead, extend to him or her the same courtesy you would for any civilian-clothed stranger. Do not assume that those who wear uniforms on the outside must all be the same on the inside. Remember: The military is as diverse as the society on which it draws to fill its ranks.

Jon Ladra
Journalism

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