

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Watch the Oregon Legislature

The Oregon Legislature will meet next week to begin work on hundreds of bills, some of which will become law.

Among the important issues that will be decided are the state budget and the funding of programs of special importance to people - education, welfare, corrections, etc. One of the most hotly debated issues will be reappointment of the Legislature - will Albina be split eight ways again, or will the community be allowed some sort of integrity? The Legislature will consider continuation and funding of the Black and Hispanic Commissions established by the Governor.

Ratification of the Washington, D.C., amendment to the U.S. Constitution, passed by the 1979 Senate but rejected by the House

will again be an issue.

One of the most discouraging issues that will be discussed again this year is day care - day care subsidies have been cut, forcing mothers back on welfare at a time when welfare funds are also decreasing. Although day care has been a topic of national debate for twenty years or more, the U.S. remains one of the few developed nations that does not provide it as a matter of right, and Oregon's day care is in worse shape than it was ten years ago.

The session will bear watching. Those who oppose people oriented programs will be heard. Those who care about the effect of budget and program on the public will only be heard if they are vocal and persistent.

What's behind Mexico visit?

President-elect Reagan's visit with President Jose Lopez Portillo of Mexico is evidence of the Mexican's increasing importance to the U.S. Instead of reserving his first foreign visit to our traditional European allies, Reagan chose Mexico - long ignored as a second class, culturally backward neighbor.

The U.S.'s relations with Mexico have always been marred by the typical North America's attitude of superiority over any nation that is racially and culturally different. And not only are Mexican nationals used and abused in this country, but Americans of Mexican descent are subject to discrimination and insult. Although immigration officials ignore the thousands of illegal Canadians living among us, Spanish speaking illegals are diligently hunted and exported.

Why is Mexico suddenly so important? Oil and geography. Mexico has oil and gas resources that could end U.S. dependence on middle eastern oil. According to a recently released autobiography of Mexico's former president, the U.S. could have that oil now but Kissinger rejected this offer in favor of Iran. Recent events suddenly make Mexican oil seem more valuable.

Mexico sits between the U.S. and Central America, and the U.S. government has always

considered Central America vital to our national interests because of its position near the Panama Canal and the Caribbean shipping routes. Mexico supports the liberation movements in Central America, providing assistance to the new government of Nicaragua, telling the U.S. to stay out of El Salvador, and guaranteeing the sovereignty of Cuba from U.S. military attack. Not only is this position contrary to U.S. interests, but the State Department now has a new "domino theory."

If the U.S. supported government in El Salvador falls and a revolutionary government takes power, can Guatemala and Honduras be far behind? And then Mexico? If the U.S. takes its usual position of rejection of an opposition to revolutionary governments - and there is no reason to expect any change - will we soon share a long and exposed border with an unfriendly nation?

The visit of Ronald Reagan to Mexico should not be seen as a change of attitude toward Mexico and its people; it does not foretell any change in racist attitudes toward a different people. It is only the first step in an effort to bring Mexico into our sphere of influence and to isolate it from its Central American neighbors.



Oh! What a year!

By Fungai Kumbula

Zimbabwe: The most exciting news of the year have to be the events that took place in Zimbabwe. After a decade of an often most brutal civil war, an agreement was reached in London calling for elections to choose the nation's government. As so many similar tries had failed before, the world was skeptical whether this latest venture would be any different. Let us trace events as Zimbabwe evolves from "Rhodesia":

January 28: The deadline for all guerrillas to be in the assembly camps as per the Lancaster agreement passes. It is reported that almost 80% of the estimated 30,000 freedom fighters had turned themselves in by this date. However, they refuse to give up their arms.

February 1-8: Tenuous ceasefire continues to hold much to the amazement of the world and to the delight and relief of war-weary Zimbabweans. Election dates drawn up and constituencies and candidates announced.

February 14: White voters go to the polls and, as expected, retain Ian Smith's Rhodesia Front Party which won almost all the 20 parliamentary seats set aside for the whites. This marked the return of Smith to Parliament as an ordinary member rather than prime minister as he had been since 1964.

February 27-29: The Africans go to the polls to choose from a list of candidates from 9 separate parties. In the last days of the campaign, Abel Muzorewa, the Rhodesian whites and South Africa had dramatically increased their attacks on Robert Mugabe and his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union, ZANU. ZANU and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union)

led by Joshua Nkomo had originally been allied in a loose military coalition called the Patriotic Front but, for the elections, had decided to run separately.

March 4: The results are announced and it's a runaway! Robert Mugabe and ZANU had won 57 or the 80 seats or 71.25% of the popular vote. His partner and ally, Joshua Nkomo and ZAPU had won 20 seats or 25% of the popular vote. So, between them, ZANU and ZAPU had won 77 of the 80 seats and 96.25% of the total Black vote. Muzorewa who had spent almost \$30 million supplied to him by South Africa and other white conservatives had managed to win no more than 3 of the 80 seats and only 3.75% of the vote. The world is "stunned."

March 4-April 18: Comrade Mugabe, now declared Prime Minister of the new nation of Zimbabwe sets about the task of forming a government and assuring every Zimbabwean of the government's commitment to reconciliation and rehabilitation. The white exodus that had been threatened should the "Marxists" come to power fails to materialize.

April 18: Independence! Rusununguko! Inkululeko! Uhuru! For the first time since the miserable day of September 12, 1890 when our country was stolen, Blacks are once again in charge of their own destiny. Dignitaries and representatives from 100 countries around the world grace the festivities and witness the lowering of the British flag and the hoisting of the new Zimbabwe's proud Red, Black, Gold and Green. Zimbabwe has finally arrived!

April-May-June-July: Zimbabwe joins the Organization of African

Unity, OAU, the UN, the Lome Convention of the European Economic Community, opens an embassy in Washington, becomes a Front-Line state, joins the Economic Community of Southern African States, wins a Gold Medal at the summer Olympics in Moscow. Prime Minister Mugabe visits the US and addresses the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "My people in Harlem," meets with and floors the media.

July 80-January 81: Zimbabwe continues to make progress in the rebuilding of the war shattered economy and rehabilitation of her people. A major recruitment campaign to replace the Smith-Muzorewa hold overs in the civil service is still under way. All indications are that 1981 will very well be the best year Zimbabwe has had since 1889.

Uganda: After several false starts, Ugandans finally went to the polls to choose their first freely elected government since 1962. The elections took place December 10 and former President Apollo Milton Obote was returned to power after being ousted by Idi Amin in 1971.

Guinea Bissau: November 22: Luis Cabral, brother of Amilcar Cabral, one of the founders of the PAIGC liberation movement, was toppled by Nino Viera. Cabral was the President of Guinea Bissau and Viera was the Prime Minister.

Upper Volta: President Sangoule Lamizana is overthrown by Colonel Sana Zerbo on November 27. All in all 1980 was a year of great changes all over the African continent and 1981 looks like it will bring more of the same.

Gun buying ground swell

By Rasa Gustaitis

The rekindled debate over gun control, set off by the death of John Lennon, comes at a time when record numbers of Americans are buying hand guns for self-defense.

According to U.S. Treasury Department, 2.1 million guns were produced in the United States in the last fiscal year, compared to 1.8 million the previous year. The National Rifle Association, the principal anti-gun control lobby group, reports an "incredible" increase of membership from 1.2 million to 1.8 million.

The gun control debate has sharpened lately with the rise in crime, especially the apparent increase in random or senseless killings of the sort that took the life of the niece of former Senator Abraham Ribicoff in Los Angeles and the brother of author David Halberstam in Washington, D.C. It has also escalated with an anticipation of civil disturbances in a declining economy.

"If they start cutting social programs you might have a buildup of frustration and hatred. There are 40 million more guns out there than there were in the late 1960s. It will be worse," predicted Charles Orasin, executive vice president of Hand Gun Control, Inc., an 80,000-member group started by handgun victims and based in Washington, D.C.

Gun control advocates maintain that no country in the world is so permissive with handguns as is the U.S. Pro-gun people point to that same situation with pride, seeing it as evidence that this is a free country.

Almost anyone can buy a gun, legally, over the counter or by mail. There is almost no official record-keeping or control over how many are sold, to whom, by whom and under what circumstances. "We don't track sales, the law does not give us authority to do so," said a spokesman for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Control in the Treasury. Reports are received from manufacturers on a voluntary basis.

Mail order sales are technically restricted, under the Federal Firearms Control Act of 1968, to gun dealers. But to become a dealer, "the primary qualification is to have \$10 to pay for the license," the Bureau's spokesman said. Among 170,000 licensed dealers are many private individuals.

To buy a gun over the counter, federal law requires only the filling in of a form stating that one is not a felon, not mentally ill, does not use dangerous drugs, is of legal age and resides in the state where he is making the purchase. These forms are not passed on to any official agency for verification but are merely filed with the dealer.

A study conducted by the Treasury Department in 16 cities, tracing guns used in crimes, found a flow of firearms from states with weak laws to states with strong ones. A major source for guns used in New York, which has one of the toughest laws, was South Carolina. That state has since tightened its gun laws. But now Florida is a major source. It has lenient laws and is also the entry point for Saturday night specials, cheap guns which are brought into the country in parts and assembled in Florida shops.

Every 50 minutes, by one estimate, someone in this country is killed with a handgun. Between 1963 and 1973, when 46,121 Americans died in Vietnam, nearly twice that many -- 84,644 -- were killed at home with firearms.

A recent Lou Harris poll conducted for ABC-TV showed that 67 percent of respondents want some gun regulation. Gun control advocates have pressed for a federal law that would at least apply to handguns the kinds of controls now applied to cars: a license to show competence to use, registration and records that would allow tracing from manufacturer to seller.

The anti-gun control groups, however, have been such effective lobbyists that no legislation of substance has managed to get through Congress, or through most state legislatures. This explains an anomaly in California: A handgun can be bought after simply out a form and waiting 15 days. But to buy nonlethal teargas requires a permit and the passing of a course of instruction. Only certain kinds of gas are permissible, and possession of illegal teargas is a felony, as is its use for anything other than self defense.

"Our basic belief is that firearms laws do not reduce crime, do not have any effect on the criminal and only serve to restrict or disarm law-abiding citizens," said John Adkins, spokesman for the NRA. "You give government power and some way or other that power will be abused."

Anti-control groups have gone to great lengths on occasion. An Ohio

gun group once distributed a poster of Abner Mikva, then a Congressman from Illinois, with a bullseye superimposed over his face for apparent use at rifle ranges. Mikva had authored some of the strongest gun control legislation and was a highly active anti-handgun spokesman.

With chances now strong that even such laws that exist may be weakened further in Congress, citizens are in the position of having to decide for themselves whether a handgun intended for self-defense is a safeguard or a hazard.

"We do not condone the purchase of handguns. In many cases it's a mistake," says Sgt. Bernard Shaw of the crime prevention unit in San Francisco police department.

To be useful in case of attack, a gun has to be readily available and its owner must be skilled in its use. Otherwise it can easily be turned against him.

Guns bought by law-abiding citizens with self-protection in mind often find their way into the hands of criminals. Up to half the guns used in crimes are stolen.

In San Francisco, said Sgt. Shaw, there are up to 1500 burglaries a month, and guns are among the first items to be stolen. If half the burglarized homes contained guns, that could mean around 700 new weapons out in the streets each month, he estimated.

Guns in the home are seldom used for self-defense and far more often become instruments of tragedy, according to Orasin. "A woman might buy it for riding through the city in a car. But then she might have to fight with her husband and instead of throwing something at him she might shoot him."

However, with faith in institutions that provide for public safety crumbling, many are deciding they need firearms.

"Police protection is getting less - things are going to get worse and people should know how to defend themselves," said Vern Truesdale, a Canadian who has written and published a book, "How to Choose A Survival Weapon for the Coming Bad Years," which he sells through the mail.

"I firmly believe there is an economic collapse coming and I wrote the book with that in mind," he said. More people would likely to crack under the strain," said Truesdale, "and if they have a gun you better have one, too. The only defense against a gun is a gun." (Please turn to Page 3 Col 1)

Letters to the Editor

Children's works inspire

To the Editor:

Those of us who work for and/or with young children thoroughly enjoyed the special insert "Christmas 1980, Through the Eyes of Children." We commend you for your attention to the special holiday world of the young.

The writings and drawings of the children reflect their development, understanding and emotions. The

honest, direct requests and illustrations clearly portray the excitement children feel during this holiday season. We thank you for sharing that wonderful portfolio.

Sincerely,

D. Dooley Clarkson
Community Services Coordinator

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters are welcome, but only those bearing Signatures, current addresses, and telephone numbers where the writers may be reached during the day will be considered for publication. If the *Observer* cannot verify authorship, the letters will not be published. Letters are subject to editing and become the property of *The Portland Observer*. Writers' names may be withheld should unusual circumstances dictate anonymity. Letters should be addressed: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.



Bruce Broussard
Editor/Publisher

Portland Observer

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The *Portland Observer* was founded in October of 1970 by Alfred Lee Henderson.

The *Portland Observer* is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the Black population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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