

## Good piece of work by the public advocate

To most of us ordinary folks, even after a bout with the supermarket checkout counter, \$100 million off the previous price looks like more than "a very small gesture." That's what Lloyd Jacobs, who heads a Hamilton Township group called Citizens Against Rate Escalation (CARE), called the Public Service Electric & Gas Co. action in reducing its pending rate request by that amount.

Still, Mr. Jacobs has a point. The utility, New Jersey's largest, is still asking that \$347 million be added to the bills of its electricity and gas customers, and the public advocate's office claims that less than \$100 million is all that's necessary.

A reviving economy and the possibility of an early decision by the Public Utilities Commission were cited by PSE&G as reasons allowing a lower rate hike. It's more than likely that the company also saw some handwriting on the PUC wall because of the expert objections being raised by the public advocate's staff to the PSE&G justification of higher charges. The advocate, for one thing, got the utility to agree to a lower rate base (capital investment in power producing and delivery systems) than initially claimed.

A particularly interesting part of

the advocate's case is the study done by Dubin-Bloome Associates concluding that PSE&G had "greatly overestimated" the state's energy needs and that "at the very least" proposed nuclear power plants in Salem County and two planned offshore nuclear plants could be deferred until the late 1980s without causing brownouts or economic stagnation. New Jersey would be well advised to keep the potential dangers of nuclear energy to the minimum that's absolutely essential.

The Dubin-Bloome thesis, which PSE&G doesn't accept, rests partly on doing more to conserve energy than government bodies have been disposed to undertake so far. If such measures as tax exemption for energy-saving building renovation, tax credit for solar units, legal requirements for electrical appliances and time-of-day metering aren't taken, our energy needs could exceed the Dubin-Bloome forecast. Those who are protesting rising power costs should be pushing energy conservation with equal vigor.

The challenge being made to the PSE&G rate request appears to be the best-researched effort along that line New Jersey has seen for a long time. Public Advocate Stanley Van Ness and his staff deserve a lot of credit for that.

## A Red declaration of independence

Future historians may single out the last two days of June 1976 as a turning point in world history. Then, representatives of European Communist parties met in East Berlin and agreed on the principle of autonomy for each national party.

Gone were the days when national Communist leaders would slavishly extol Soviet leadership.

Gone were the days when Communists demanded a Soviet-directed unity and castigated those such as Yugoslavia's Tito who defied Soviet dominance. This conference, instead, welcomed the 84-year-old Tito as the personification of national Communist rectitude.

Myths of unity have long haunted mankind. Throughout the ages some have seen the goal in terms of a single empire; others, of a single religion. In 1848 a new myth of unity was created, the Communist Manifesto, which predicted that an international proletariat would lead the world to Communism.

Following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the heyday of power associated with Lenin and then Stalin, many saw international Communism as the "wave of the future."

The way Communist "true believers" living in democratic societies could condone Stalin's purges and the Soviet police state in the name of international Communist brotherhood struck awe in the hearts of many others who understandably feared such fanaticism.

Then came Tito's split with the Soviet Union in 1948, followed a decade later by sharp rivalry between Communist China and the Soviet Union.

Now, Communist parties in Western Europe reject proletarian internationalism (the code word for Soviet dominance of world Communism).

That East Berlin conference thus symbolizes the end of another myth of world unity. The real world has different religions, languages and

cultures; and those trying to push all mankind into a single system — either by force or reason — are chasing a chimera.

The Soviet Union has failed miserably in its efforts to impose the myth of a new world religion and empire, with Moscow as the new Rome. This does not mean that the world is any safer now that Soviet Communism loses its ideological cloud. We must not forget the brutal Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the arrogant Brezhnev Doctrine justifying more of the same.

We should, however, draw two important lessons from this decline of Soviet-dominated world Communism.

First, we must view our problems with the Soviet Union in terms of old-fashioned balance-of-power politics rather than in the false illusion of a Communist bloc facing the rest of the world.

Second, since we seek only a world of freedom and diversity, we should recognize the fading away of world Communism as a healthy development to be encouraged.



"There goes the last of the neighborhood"

### Letters to the editor

## Park improvements viewed with disdain

Recently I took a group of youngsters to Washington Crossing State Park for a picnic. On the way into the park, I saw for the first time a footbridge crossing Route 29. The river side of the footbridge seemed to cover an awful lot of what was previously beautiful grass.

Further up the road, I noted new parking areas being built and a new entry road to the park cut through a previously beautiful field. One of the old exits is already closed, and from newspaper reports, I read that the old entrances will soon be closed also.

As a person who remembers traveling over these beautiful roads through the park for the past 30 years, I have to ask myself, "Why?" Why in this Bicentennial year do we have to build a bridge, new parking lots, new entrances, destroy old roads and start charging \$2 per car to enter this park? It certainly seems like a cheap shot by the

state to financially take advantage of our 200th birthday. What ever happened to the spirit of this country?

Since these so-called improvements will not be done in time to handle the Bicentennial crowds, I can only assume that this is another badly handled political move in government. A lack of confidence in New Jersey government? You bet there is! In a year when money is extremely tight — tight enough that our schools are threatened with a shutdown because of a lack of funds — I must ask myself, "Are these improvements really necessary?" My answer is a definite no! And when this state asks me to pay an income tax to save them from their poor management, once again, with all my heart and soul, I say no, no, no! Not until the financial mismanagement in this government is stopped!

Robert D. Houck  
Trenton

## Our headline called misleading

Along with the mounds of misinformation some other foes of I-95 are disseminating, your paper made its own contribution thereto last week in the Region section where there appeared the news item about the I-95 EIS contract, having been signed, under an eye-catching head in bold type reading, "Hopewell I-95 study to cost state \$995,000."

I believe that you must be fully aware of the force of such a headline, and surely you must realize that it could have the effect of

turning otherwise "undecided" readers against the project.

The fact is that 90 per cent of the cost of the I-95 EIS will be borne by the Federal Highway Trust Fund into which all motorists have been paying ever since it was set up some 20 years ago.

J. Anton Hagies  
Executive Director  
N.J. Citizens Highway  
Committee

## Bicentennial 'gift' deplored

I recently attended the Channel 3 program "Meeting House," where the crisis facing the New Jersey schools was discussed. I went as a concerned parent of three children who attend public schools and also as the past president of the James W. Alexander PTA. Many groups were represented but only a few people had the opportunity to ask questions. This is my question: Since the Assembly and the Senate are at a stalemate, why can't a referendum on tax reform be presented to the public and allow the people of New Jersey to decide which of the tax packages they would prefer to have?

After the program, I walked across the

street where the Liberty Bell is now housed. As a guide gave a history of the bell, the fact that the bell was used to call the Pennsylvania Assembly into session stayed with me. I would like to proclaim that all the bells in New Jersey ring out to call our Assembly and Senate into session to resolve this crisis.

It is sad that the ones who have to lose are the children. Is this the Bicentennial gift that the elected statesmen of New Jersey give our children?

Linda Wieszczyk  
Hamilton Square

## Sublime, mediocre Americans

WASHINGTON — The officials who arranged the display of the Magna Carta in the rotunda of the Capitol as part of the nation's Bicentennial celebration have unwittingly provided a splendid guide to the character of the government and society whose birthday we mark.

As one stands beneath the great dome, looking at the Latin script in which the British sovereign was limited in his exercise of absolute power (the pale letters somehow seeming more fragile when surrounded by all the burnished gold of their case), one notices the reflections of two statues across the way.

Looking up from this charter of rights, one sees, across the rotunda, the statues of two Presidents — Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant.

What a fine reminder, in this time of national back-patting, that just as our people and our politics are fully capable of producing men of sublime genius and saintly character, so also they produce men of surpassing mediocrity and moral obtuseness. And both kinds become President.

### Founding Fathers were wise

Fortunately, the Founding Fathers framed the government on the principle that there are more Grants and Hayeses in any generation than there are Lincolns. Jimmy Carter may think that all we need is a government "as good as our people," but the men who wrote the Constitution knew better.

They knew that rather than relying on the virtue of mankind to produce a virtuous government, they had better design a system of self-government where the interests of each citizen were served by the preservation of liberty for all.

"It is of great importance in a Republic," the Federalist Papers remind us, "not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part. Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. . . . In a society under the forms of which the stronger can readily unite and oppress the weaker, anarchy may . . . truly be said to reign. . . . (But) in the extended republic of the United States, and among the great variety of interests, parties and sects which it embraces, a coalition of a majority of the whole society could seldom take place on any other principles than those of justice and the general good."

### The unjust institution

That last sentence was an extraordinarily bold assertion to make in 1788, when Hamilton or Madison submitted that essay to The New York Packet. But it has not turned out to be such an idle boast.

True, the people and government of the United States defended the unjust institution of slavery for almost a hundred years. And today, a century after its abolition, we are still rebelling at righting the consequences of that ancient wrong. True, in both domestic and foreign policy, on issues from Teapot Dome to Vietnam, "justice and the common good" have not always been recognized.

But we have corrected most of our errors and we have learned from our experiences. And we have not — for all the ways we have changed — lost our grip on the fundamentals.

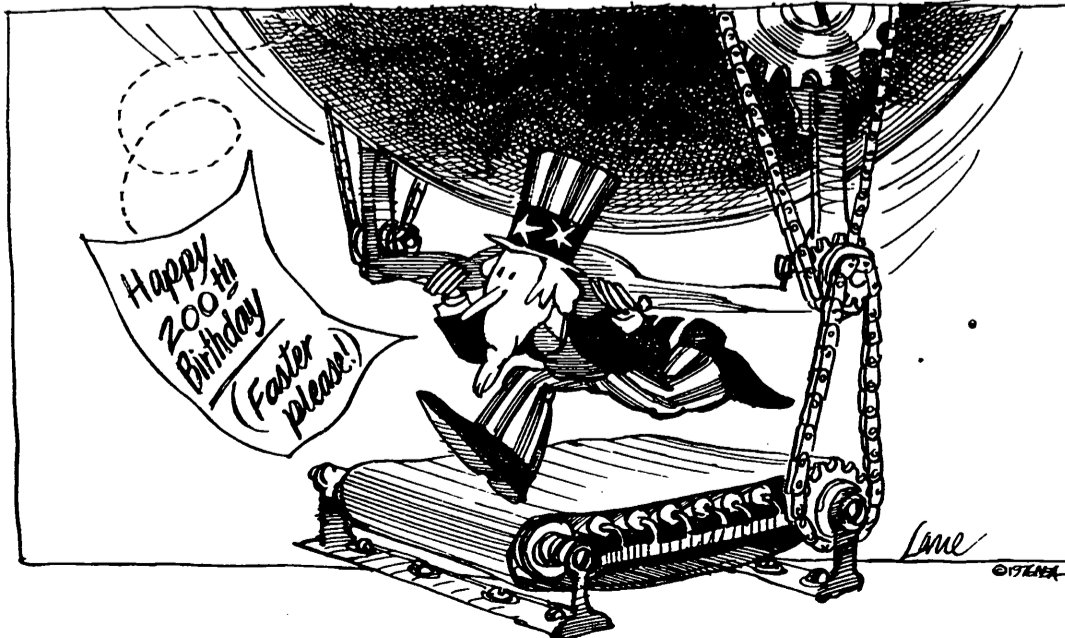
Just two years ago, we saw demonstrated again that the idea of the rule of law — the fundamental idea of the Constitution — exerts as strong a hold on the minds and hearts of Americans of this generation as it did 200 years ago. The American people showed that once they had the facts, they were prepared to render a judgment against a Chief Executive who had overstepped the bounds on his power and force him to yield the office which they had but recently and by large majority entrusted to him.

That says something. It says Mr. Jefferson was not wrong when he wrote, "Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves are its only safe depositories."

We have not forgotten that. We have operated on that principle and, for 200 years, we have made it work.

Faith in government has been severely tested in this generation. Both men and institutions have failed us. But nothing I have seen as a journalist has made me doubt either the capacity or the desire of this generation of Americans to sustain the burden this great experiment in self-government imposes.

And that is worth celebrating.



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