# ()PINION



An independent newspaper established in 1883

Joe Hladky, President and Publisher Ken Slaughter, Vice President and Treasurer Dale Larson, Vice President and General Manager Jerry Elsea, Editor of Editorial Pages and Editorial Board Chairman

Mark Bowden, Managing Editor

#### GAZETTE EDITORIALS

# President? Treason? No sex? Never mind

ERNARD L. SCHWARTZ and his Loral Space and Communications Ltd. are not household words. The bet here is they won't be, even though they made a big splash in the news over the weekend.

Schwartz is rare in his field of aerospace and defense — a non-engineer and a Democrat, according to Monday's Washington Post. He has given more than \$1 million to Democratic Party committees since President Clinton took office. But he insists that the Clinton administration's favorable treatment of him and his company are only a coincidence.

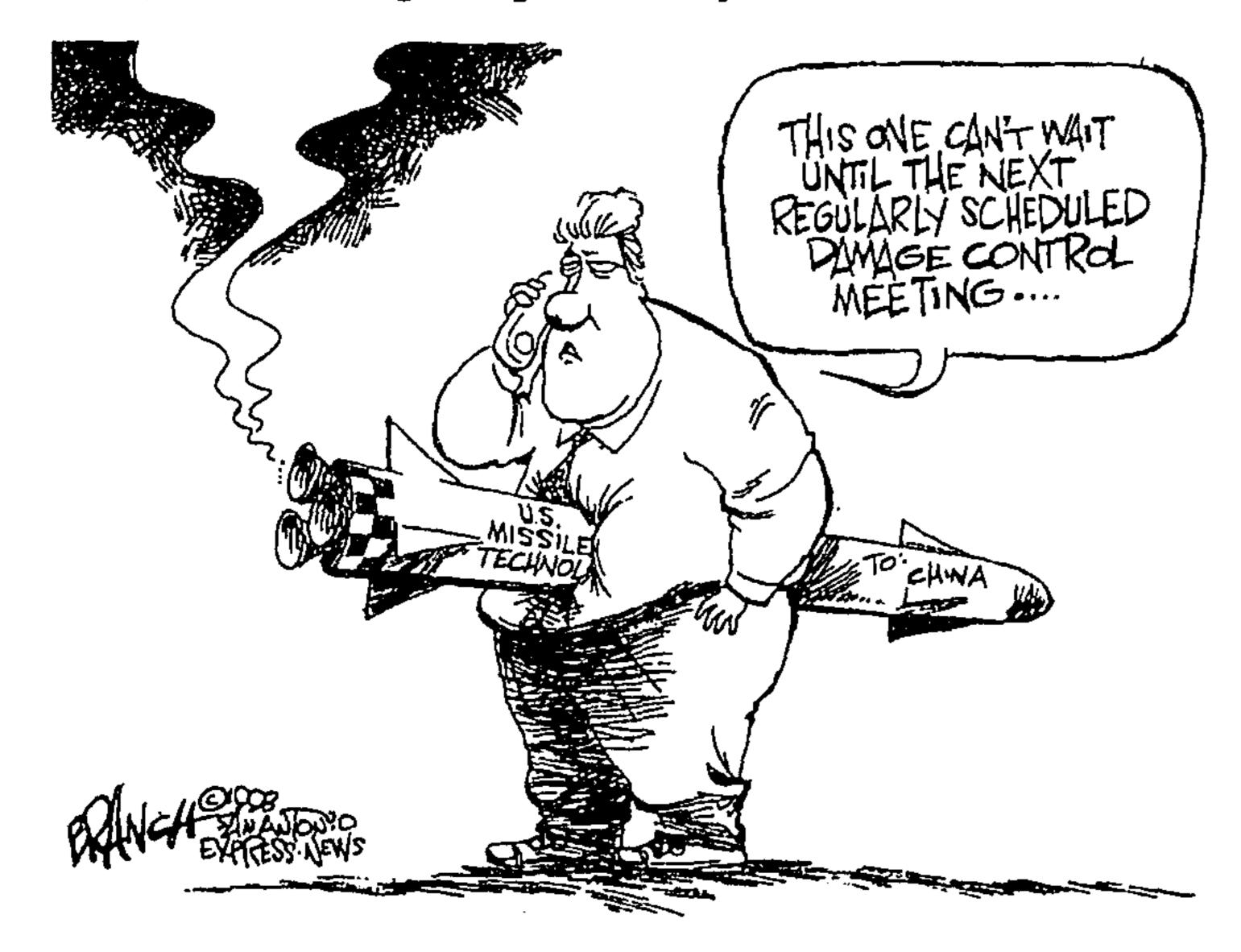
Oh sure.

Loral, as has other companies, contracted with the Chinese to launch commercial satellites. But after troubles with one such launch, Loral gave assistance to the Chinese that raised national security concerns here: Could the information be used to improve China's ability to launch missiles — against us? The Justice Department had been looking into that technology transfer when Loral desperately needed U.S. approval for another satellite launch this past February. Loral faced the loss of a big satellite sale and "tens of millions of penalties," the Post reported on Saturday. But President Clinton gave the go-ahead, the Post continued, despite staff concerns that his doing so might be seen as letting the company "off the hook."

A select House committee is looking into the matter. Republicans are inches short of accusing the administration of treason. The issue flourished over the weekend on the talk show circuit.

But the public will have a hard time getting excited about this story — considering all the news it has had to digest about the Clinton administration since the first of the year. The irony is, the elements at hand here — campaign finance, national security, possibly passing secrets to what may be this nation's next big threat in the next century — are more substantive than all the titillation that has spiced news reports for nearly six months. But the details of this story are hard to follow — and none of the details involve sex.

People already know what to expect of this president, so nothing surprises any more.



## Privatization has limits: Mind public safety first

NLY RARELY should government provide services that can be secured, perhaps at a lower cost, by the private sector. One obvious reason is that government should not be in business competition with taxpayers.

Under some circumstances, though, government should be running the show.

An example is security at the state's correctional facilities. Unfortunately, Gov. Terry Branstad has vetoed a legislative recommendation that no prison privatization take place without legislative approval. In snubbing lawmakers' advice, the governor said their action was premature; they should wait until a study now under way is completed.

Predictably, the head of the largest union of state employees discourages talk about prison privatization. Jan Corderman, president of Council 61 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), labeled the concept a "prescription for disaster."

Her argument is valid. Beyond just the competition angle, another reason for the state to get out of a particular business is to reduce costs. However, it seems doubtful that Iowans are so concerned about the cost of government that they want prison security to be determined by price alone. The situation is reminiscent of the old gag about the astronaut who, while in orbit, suddenly realizes the spacecraft in which he's traveling was built by the low bidder.

People riding herd over some of society's roughest, toughest outcasts must be trained, competent professionals, compensated accordingly. Guarding prisoners should not be an entry-level position, or a minimumwage job, which could happen if the bottom line on a

profit-and-loss statement looks too gloomy. Corderman's concern naturally is for members of her union. Ours is for the safety of those workers and the safety of all Iowans. Public safety is one of the few fundamental obligations a government has to its citizens. This is all about public safety.

# IRS reform? Not for the little guy

By Robert S. McIntyre ith much fanfare, the U.S. Senate recently passed its Internal Revenue Service overhaul bill. After discussions with the House, a version of the legislation will undoubtedly become law soon.

The Senate vote was 97-0, with no one willing to go on record against the cynical Republican bashing of the IRS that produced the bill. Even President Clinton, whose Treasury Department remains deeply concerned about several provisions of the bill, has become a cheerleader.

For the vast majority of Americans, however, the IRS bill is no boon. In fact, the biggest winners are likely to be large corporations, not the ordinary taxpayers whose alleged problems with the IRS were highlighted in the largely bogus horror stories presented at highly publicized Senate hearings.

TAKE, FOR INSTANCE, the new private-sector IRS oversight board that the bill creates. Most of its members are supposed to have qualifications such as "expertise in the management of large service organizations" — in other words, executives of big companies. Maybe they'll put aside their corporate self-interest when they meet to set IRS policy, but the potential conflicts of interest are obvious.

Lawmakers backed off from their original scary idea of giving the new corporatedominated board the authority to hire and fire the IRS commissioner. But the board will still have significant authority over the IRS budget. It could decide, for instance, that the IRS is devoting too much energy to cracking down on corporate tax cheats and should shift its attention to individuals. Or it might press to move tax-enforcement resources away from multinational corporations and toward smaller firms.

Then there's a truly obnoxious item stuck into the bill at the last minute to preserve a huge loophole for multinational corporations. Earlier this year, the Treasury Department discovered a regulation it issued in 1996 was being abused by U.S.-based multinational companies seeking to wipe out taxes on their overseas profits. The companies want to be allowed to use paper transactions to tell, say, Germany that their German profits were earned in a foreign tax haven, while simultaneously telling the U.S. government that the tax-haven profits that normally are subject



to U.S. tax don't exist.

Concerned about the harmful impact on American jobs of new tax incentives to invest abroad, Treasury quickly amended its ambiguous earlier regulation to close the inadvertent loophole.

But a fierce lobbying campaign by the multinationals persuaded the Senate to block Treasury from correcting its mistake. If the multinationals' outrageous new tax avoidance scheme isn't stopped, tens of billions of dollars a year in corporate taxes may be lost. Even worse, the giant sucking sound we'll hear will be American jobs and investment rushing out of the country in search of tax-free profits.

So-called "innocent spouses" are in line to get a break if they mistakenly sign fraudulent tax returns. But this relief won't go merely to inattentive wives whose husbands evade taxes and secretly send the money to the Cayman Islands. As passed by the Senate, many "innocent" wives won't be liable even if the tax-evasion dollars end up in the wives' own bank accounts. No one would think it sensible to allow a wife to keep money her husband stole from a bank

and gave to her. But the Senate apparently thinks a different rule should apply if the money is stolen from other U.S. taxpayers.

TO PAY FOR the estimated \$18 billion cost of these "taxpayer protections" over 10 years, the Senate bill relies largely on a big new upper-income tax cut. It will go to investors who want to transfer funds from their tax-sheltered retirement accounts into certain new, even more tax-favored IRAs. Of course, such transfers lose considerable revenue over the long term. But in the short run, investors who move funds will have to pay additional taxes. The Senate bill spends that short-term revenue gain while ignoring the much larger long-term loss.

So the bottom line on the IRS "reform" bill is that it benefits big corporations and adds to our long-term budget problems. So why are we supposed to be grateful to our senators for passing it?

Robert S. McIntyre is director of Citizens for Tax Justice. This article was written for Newsday.

Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service

### LETTERS TO THE GAZETTE

# Misspent money, veto, shootings all hurt schools

How devastating it is to have another public school shooting. Why?

Could it be the fault of our school systems? If your answer is *no* and you believe everything possible is being done for teachers, students and families, then tragedies should stop.

The simple truth is, are we providing classroom situations where teachers are able to experience each student:

- Doing their best?
- Being respectful of others?
- Working as a team?
- Being encouraged positively?
- Truly understanding the subject matter?
- Taking part in daily family communication? Why can't students be in neighborhood schools (kindergarten through 8th grade), using Saturdays for group music led by college students?

Why aren't classroom teachers given the highest salaries in our school system, given self-contained classrooms with 20 or fewer students, with each teacher responsible for all activities so each student will develop in every area to their best ability. . . .

Why can't our classroom teachers have a system where they can be accountable?

If all the misspent money now going to outlandish administrative travel, postage, tax-deferred annuities, elaborate building expenses, transportation, assistants in everything, managers, associates, special teachers to give classroom teachers prep time and the ridiculous high salaries going to so many who do not teach, we would have a tremendous amount to pay terrific base salaries and accountability pay to the classroom teachers.

Many of us worked hard, and big congratulations are in order for the Iowa House and Senate Education Committee members — Democrats and Republicans — who worked to bring good school reform (including charter schools) to Iowa. What was the governor thinking by vetoing that concept, which will do more for reforming our school systems than anything?

Why can't Iowa be the leader in a common sense educational system?

Rosanne Freeburg Cedar Rapids

#### Make it short and sweet

Rain! Blessed rain! I'm sure many of the Howard University graduates were most grateful when rain caused Hillary Rodham Clinton to scrap 11 pages of her speech.

Eleven pages! Reminds me of two friends who attended a political rally. One arrived late. He sat down by his friend and asked, "What is he talking about?" His friend replied, "He hasn't said yet."

There are many, including both Clintons, who mistakenly think the longer the speech, the better it is. The great speeches of the past were short, but the speakers had something to say.

> T.G. Jackson Marion

### YOUR TURN

The Gazette welcomes letters and guest columns. Not all columns can be printed. But most letters are run that address public business (not private) and meet guidelines. All material is subject to editing and none of it can be returned to the sender.

- Writer's full name, signature, full street address, and daytime phone number must be included. (Addresses are not published.) No letters run
- anonymously. 300-word length limit on letters; one letter per writer
- every 30 days. Column length suggestion:
- 700 words or fewer. Address: Cedar Rapids Gazette, Box 511, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406. FAX: (319) 398-5846.

**■** E-mail: gazette@fylowa.infi.net (Be sure to include full name. address and phone number. On-line names are not sufficient identification.)

# Murder series performed a service

In response to a May 16 letter, "Don't focus on unsolved murders": As a survivor of an unsolved murder, I have to disagree with the writer's assessment of the Gazette/KCRG series on unsolved murders, except for his point about the timing. Mother's Day was a poor choice to start advertising for this series.

The writer should know that the wounds are always open, but the worst kind of "salt" that can be rubbed into them is that the victim be forgotten by the public and law enforcement. Every time my brother's murder has been featured in television or newspaper coverage, tips have come in. So far, nothing has come of any of these tips, but who's to say the next one won't be the one that solves the case?

If anyone wants to be indignant with the press for coverage of murders, maybe attention should focus on the "body bag" scenes, or the scenes of bodies covered by tarps with blood running out from under them. These images are truly sensationalism and are harmful to the survivors of the victims.

I wonder if the letter writer is not simply uncomfortable with the knowledge that unsolved murders point out the vulnerability of society, since the perpetrators are still out there somewhere and all of society is at risk.

Mary Cline Cedar Rapids

### Murder series took on a lurid tone

I feel compelled to write to protest the whole lurid tone of your "Unsolved " Murders" series. As insensitive as it was to introduce the series on Mother's Day, of all days, your following article on the murder of Traci Evenson surpassed even that level.

The headline on that article referred to her death as a "classic whodunit." This was not an Agatha Christie movie — this was the tragic death of a real live young

woman. She deserves to be treated more seriously in death than this light-hearted murder mystery headline.

Please do not add to the trivialization of violence and death that seems to be a part of our society. Traci Evenson's death was not a detective novel or a video game, and to treat it lightly to write a headline cheapens us all.

> Peggy Sannerud Mount Vernon

### Enormity in these word choices

Three shockers: The PSA test for prostate cancer is causing cancer. Iowa legislators considered a law requiring cops to disrobe victims. "Grease" has excessive wickedness.

A story reported, "The researcher attributes the increased incidence of prostate cancer to the advent of PSA testing."

If PSA testing increases the incidence of cancer, it should be halted forthwith. Incidence means "frequency of occurrence." What PSA does is expedite the *detection* of cancer, thereby improving the percentage for earlier diagnosis.

Thanks to Ruth Gash Taylor, we have

at hand two sentences about the Iowa Legislature.

A state senator asked a visiting North Carolina judge what his state was doing about its "bludgeoning prison population." Maybe the judge gave the senator a few whacks with a club. That's what *bludgeoning* is.

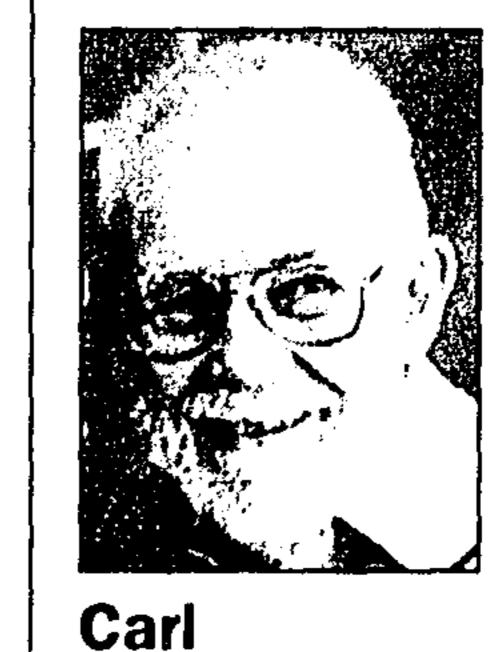
The senator probably meant burgeoning, but that is a debatable choice. Plants burgeon — "put forth buds." However, burgeoning is being used increasingly — but not universally — to mean "growing rapidly."

The Legislature considered a bill requiring peace officers "to assist an abused person in removing clothing." Ruth commented, "Snickers later, obtaining was substituted for removing."

Referring to the re-release of the movie "Grease," Olivia Newton-John said. "I don't think anyone could comprehend the enormity of its success." Jerry Elsea and I agree, "Enormity isn't the word to describe the film's phenomenal staying power."

An enormity is "a monstrous evil." Don't let dictionaries mislead von

### WRITE RIGHT



Carl Kane Free-lance writer