



# The Working Press

## Skelton's advice heeded at last, but he still won't cheer

*The GOP was just never quite Democrat enough; now Schwarzenegger is addressing that.*

GEORGE NEUMAYR

**L**OS ANGELES TIMES columnist George Skelton has made a career out of instructing the California GOP to move leftward, so it is worth noting his reaction to Arnold Schwarzenegger's appointment of Susan Kennedy, one of the state's leading abortion proponents, a high-profile lesbian activist, and a former aide to many prominent California Democrats. Did Skelton cheer? No, he tacked to the middle. "There simply is no precedent — at least in any current political lifetime — for what Schwarzenegger did Wednesday. Appoint a hard-core, dedicated soldier from the enemy camp as his chief of staff. Not just an 'advisor' or 'counselor' — but his No. 1, his alter ego," Skelton wrote. He should have treated this development as the crowning achievement of his punditry at the *Los Angeles Times*.

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Writing at Robert Scheer's online magazine *truthdig.com* in late November, former *Los Angeles Times* Book Review editor Steve Wasserman subjected his old paper to some stinging analysis. The paper, he writes, "finds itself beset by three separate if overlapping crises: The first is the general crisis of confidence confronted by the entire profession as it grapples with technological change that dramatically alters the way news is delivered; the second is the crisis occasioned by the consequences of the paper's acquisition by the Chicago-based Tribune Co., and the third is the crisis of identity caused by the changing demographics and political economy of its circulation area in Southern California, a region of some 18 million people that stretches from San Diego in the south to Santa Barbara in the north. These crises have combined to pro-

duce near-desperate measures on the part of the paper's owners and managers. The resulting spectacle is exemplary."

Wasserman continued: "The paper's management recently announced it would eliminate 8 percent of its editorial staff (some 85 positions), through a combination of buyouts and layoffs. This comes on the heels of years of steady downsizing. To be fair, not all of it is to be laid at the door of Tribune Co., the paper's current owner, which bought Times Mirror Co. for \$8 billion five and a half years ago. The problems that plague the paper are well known. Ken Auletta in a recent report in *The New Yorker* offered a detailed and revealing look at how the paper's editors are seeking to meet its corporate owners' expectations. Tribune Co. insists that the paper deliver annual operating profit margins nearer 25 or 26 percent than its more customary return of around 15 or 16 percent. (Last year, according to Auletta, the paper reaped an operating profit margin of about 20 percent, a figure that failed to satisfy the Chicago money men.) The paper's top managers and editors are determined to do so or die trying. But before they expire, the paper they seek to resuscitate may well be reduced to a husk of its former self. The prospect is not pretty."

**S**PEAK FOR yourself, Mr. Wasserman. What exactly will be lost if younger readers tune the *Times* out? The truth is that younger readers find the *Times*' stale liberalism un compelling and are turning to the Internet for more relevant offerings. Most *Times*' readers are aging liberals. The average age of a subscriber is now around 55. But *Los Angeles Times* editor Dean Baquet has been consoling his staff by saying that the problem of dropping circ is

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# LEGISLATIVE FILE

by Ray Haynes

Governments are instituted among men, wrote Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration, to secure the peoples' inalienable rights, which means that protecting individual liberty is what legislators exist to do. Unfortunately, actual legislators tend to do the opposite, exercising power in strange, intrusive ways. Perverse people and unnatural actions merit perverse recognition: hence, the "Noseys" — my annual public notice of outstandingly stupid exercises of power during the past year in the California Legislature. So, getting right to the point, the 2005 Grand Nosey Award Winner is:

**A**B 1677 (Koretz) Correctional Condoms Act: This bill provides for the legalization and distribution of contraband in our state's correctional facilities by allowing any non-profit or health agency to distribute condoms and dental dams freely to inmates (just what *is* a dental dam?). This bill is the no-contest champion of 2005's crop in the let's pretend we're stupid so we can do the opposite of what we say we are doing category.

**F**irst, sex between inmates is a crime, so this bill says its purpose is to "prevent disease." The author assures us the bill isn't intended to encourage illegal sex acts between inmates. Well, then, all we have to do is pretend we're

dumb enough to believe that and everything's OK, right?

**T**he trouble is we know the left always and everywhere encourages unnatural sex, along with every other self-destructive behavior, because self-destructive people are easier to control, and power over people is their guiding ideal. Does anyone suppose Mr. Koretz would support free distribution to inmates of Biblical injunctions against perverse sex as the state's chosen way to "pre-



vent disease" in prison? Put me down as a cynic if you like, but I do not.

**N**ext we have the 2005 Nosey Award runners up: AB 651 (Berg, Levine) State Sponsored Suicide: Attaining the ultimate in self-destructiveness, this bill sought to provide a state sanctioned means of self-murder with the "help" of "health care" providers. One of the Manson family killers reportedly told one of those about to be stabbed to death that murder is an act of love, a sentiment this bill seems to have cap-

tured and would incorporate into state law. Charlie would be proud.

**A**B 616 (Vargas) "Cigar Envy": On the lighter (although no more air-headed) side, this bill sought to prohibit smoking in an outdoor area enclosed on four sides by a public building. Juan Vargas' willingness to have the taxpayers print a bill whose only function would have been to interrupt the relaxed atmosphere in the governor's signature cigar smoking tent illustrates perfectly the playground antics of an insulated Capitol establishment.

**A**B 17 (Koretz — yet again): criminalizing smoking at the beach, proving that no category of humanity can ever be down enough to prevent their being kicked one more time by lefties. Now we have no smoking indoors and no smoking outdoors. When smoking is outlawed, only outlaws will smoke.

**A**nd, inevitably, taxation — SB 607 (Bowen): Taxing Yard Sales — would you expect anything less from lawmakers who tried to pass a "soda tax" and force building codes to include the principles of "Feng Shui" (the positioning of objects based on patterns of yin and yang and the flow of chi)? And AB 1103 (Karnette) Tour de tax: The legislature has long tried to figure out how to tax kids. This year they did it. Tax bikes. Youngsters, welcome to a free society. CPR

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