

Frain's Beat

GEORGE FRAIN

• American Security Bank has opened its 36th branch at 1835 Columbia Road NW. The new branch occupies the site which was the home of the colorful DC Dragons Karate Center for several years. The entire banking operation is one one floor. The entry of a new branch bank was unusually quiet for such a major move. Remember the fight waged by AMO and the ANC against Perpetual in 1976-77?

• A new latino business association is being established in Adams Morgan. Leading members of the latino business community met recently at the Ontario Theater at the invitation of Carlos Rosario who runs the theatre.

• Now that Perpetual American has agreed to merge with First Financial of Virginia Corp. (a major Virginia S&L), it may have the longest name in history. It will have more assets than Riggs if the merger goes through. Will the new name fit on our branch?

month that the Department of Transportation violated the law establishing Martin Luther King's birthday as an official holiday by issuing parking and traffic violation tickets which would not be issued on other holidays, "treating Dr. King's birthday as a second-class holiday." Added Clarke, "Certainly Dr. King did not let traffic congestion deter him from pursuing his causes, and we should not let it deter us in pursuing the cause of his birthday."

Michael Barton, and Cheryl Dobbins have been named to the mayor's Overall Economic Development Advisory Committee City council member Dave Clarke last month called on local religious leaders to open up the churches on "bitter cold nights to give shelter to those who need it."

WARD TWO

WARD TWO NOTES

Paul Greenberg, Scott Marlow, and Rose Narva have been named to the mayor's Overall Economic Development Advisory Committee. The long displaced statue of Boss Shepherd will be placed in the small triangular park at NH Ave., 18th St. and Que St. Anyone wanting to help in the upkeep of the park is asked to call Commissioner Susan Meehan, 234-5151, evenings.

Southwest

NEW BUS ROUTE

Metro has begun a new mini-route between Half & O SW and L'Enfant Plaza (via P, 4th, M, Half, I, 6th, Water, 9th, Maine, 7th & D). Service will operate every fifteen minutes between six am and ten pm Mon-Sat and from 8 am to 8 pm on Sundays. Fares will be fifty cents per trip with transfers issued on payment of the full normal DC fare. For more information about this service, call 637-2437.

Dupont Circle

DUPONT CIRCLE BOARDINGS DECLINE

Total daily boardings have declined at the Dupont Circle Metro station for the first time since 1977, due primarily to a loss in evening rush passengers. Morning peak activity has continued to rise, however, and now surpass the PM peak. Metro reports that the drop is due in part to a significant loss of Montgomery County riders because of recent fare increases coupled with changes in the Maryland flash pass.

Between May 1980 and May 1981 morning peak boardings at Dupont Circle went up from 4,045 to 4,564 while evening boardings dropped from 5,648 to 4,282. According to the Metro survey about 74% of the passengers coming to the station walked while 22% came by bus. Fifty-seven percent of the users lived in DC. All these figures were compiled before the opening of the Van Ness extension.

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DUPONT CIRCLE NOTES

The Dupont Circle Neighborhood Commission has come out against WGL's proposed \$18 million rate increase. The Chastleton Tenants Association is fighting against substantial rehabilitation of its building at 1701 16th St. NW. Under current law, if the landlord makes improvements that equal or exceed fifty percent of the assessed value of the structure, rents could be increased by 125%. The ANC has agreed to support the tenants.

DUPONT CIRCLE ANC

Office: 1722 19th NW, DC 20009

2B01 Page MacCubbin 387-3688
2B02 Bill Middleton 797-1086
2B03 George Nelson 387-5312
2B04 Katherine Ray 296-5149
2B05 Susan Meehan 234-5151
2B06 Ralph Bristol 667-9026
2B07 Ken Rothschild 659-3458
2B08
2B09 Linda Menich 483-3281

WARD FOUR NEWS

Safeway delayed

Safeway's plans for expanding its store at Piney Branch and Georgia Ave are apparently up in the air again. At Safeway's request, a hearing set for January before the Zoning Commission has been indefinitely postponed. In a letter to the commission, Safeway's lawyers said that store officials have "re-evaluated the project in light of the present economy; the substantial investment necessary to expand the store; and revitalized corporate policy regarding store

sizes. In light of these factors, Safeway is presently investigating reducing the proposed expansion from 42,000 square feet to 37,000 square feet." Last year, Neighbors Inc. and the local neighborhood commission successfully negotiated a number of changes in Safeway's plans for expanding the store, including a reduction in the new store size from 54,000 square feet as first proposed. The store is presently about 24,000 square feet. Safeway also agreed to citizen requests for increased parking spaces, interior landscaping on the parking lot, better lighting and special pedestrian access.

"We're frankly quite surprised at Safeway's decision," said NI president Loretta Neumann. "As far as I know, all the community organizations were supporting Safeway's zoning application. And Safeway told us that this was already one of their most profitable stores in the area."

A representative of Safeway told Neumann that she did not think the expansion plans would be abandoned, only deferred.

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WHISTLE STOP APPEALS

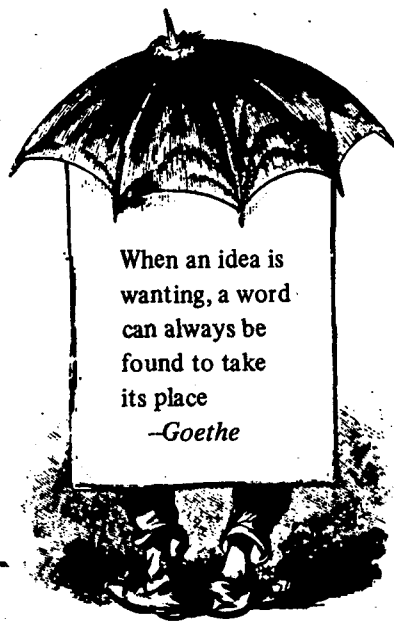
The owners of the Whistle Stop bar on 4th St. NW have filed a court petition appealing the ABC Board's decision denying them a Class C liquor license. They also filed a motion with the court to restore their license, pending review by the court of appeals. According to a lawyer with the DC Corporation Counsel, which is opposing the motions, the appeal could take nine months to a year to be decided. Plan Takoma President Randall McCathren says his organization plans to try to intervene in the case.

JARVIS WANTS FIRES INVESTIGATED

Councilmember Charlene Jarvis has requested that the fire department conduct an immediate investigation of four suspicious fires in Ward Four. The fires were at the Upshur St. Clinic, the Petworth Library and two warehouses in the 4000 and 4100 blocks of Georgia Avenue NW.

THANKS TO NEIGHBORS INC
for its help in this column

Weather



Report

REDS

Jon Rowe

While the communist parties of Western Europe were expressing dismay over the military crack-down in Poland, not everyone in the "free world" was disheartened. One eminently respectable group, the bankers of New York, was actually cheering the Polish Communists on:

TO SOME BANKERS WITH LOANS IN POLAND, MILITARY CRACKDOWN ISN'T ALL BAD NEWS.

That was the headline tucked away on page ten of the Wall Street Journal's December 21st edition. With irony just barely restrained by the Journal's usual deadpan style, reporter Julie Salamon's article began:

President Reagan may denounce events in Poland, but many US bankers see Soviet-style authoritarianism as their best hope for recovering the \$1.3 billion that Poland owes them.

"Most bankers think authoritarian governments are good because they impose discipline," said an executive at a bank with millions of dollars in Polish loans. "Everytime there's a coup d'etat in Latin America, there's much rejoicing and knocking at the door offering credit."

Though few bankers will concede it publicly, many are hoping that a strong Polish government backed by the Soviet Union, or perhaps the Soviets themselves, will pay off the rest of the \$500 million in interest due Western banks.

The U.S. media has made much of the breadlines and jailings, and the wranglings over Poland's enormous debt to Western banks and governments. But of the political implications of that debt, of the support of the Western banks for the military crack-down, we have heard virtually nothing.

Its nothing new, of course, for U.S. based multinational banks to throw their weight behind jack-boot regimes. Milton Friedman and William Simon may say that capitalism is freedom, but the keepers of the capitalist dollar certainly haven't shown much loyalty to freedom around the world. In the past, however, the banks have been able to back dictators, juntas, and torturers and, by waving the red flag, get away with it. There always seemed to be CIA reports linking the opponents of their favorite mustachioed generals to "communist agitators" and "guerillas," who were generally traceable to Fidel Castro.

Whatever their own atrocities, the dictators were fighting off the Commies, and that kept the banks supporting them on the side of freedom.

Poland has blown this cover. In the shipyards at Gdansk, the coal mines at Wujek, the factories in Warsaw, the people are rising up against their Communist repressors. Nobody needs a CIA report. The UPI wire will do. And whom are the banks supporting? The Commies.

Freedom? Forget it. The banks want their money. Apparently, it's not the *ideology* of the Latin American and other insurgents that disturbed the bankers. It is their credit rating.

Citibank official Thomas Theobald admits as much. "Who knows which political system

works?" Mr. Theobald asked Ms. Salamon. "The only test we care about is, 'Can they pay their bills.'"

Can you imagine what Ronald Reagan would do to a Democratic congressional leader who expressed such agnosticism in opposing a new bomber? Can you imagine what would happen to a draftee who refused induction on the grounds that Communism might not be all bad?

The bankers are not alone. U.S. corporations have provided much of the plant and technology of the modern Soviet state. After the 1917 Russian Revolution—"the ten days that shook the world,"—companies like Westinghouse, DuPont, RCA and Ford were scurrying back to Russia to help Lenin construct the new order. General Electric, where "progress is our most important product," built the giant Kharhov Turbine works—which had two and one half times the capacity of GE's largest U.S. plant of those days.

By 1944, Stalin could tell the President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that two thirds of the major industrial projects in the USSR had been built with U.S. assistance—including virtually the entire Soviet auto industry, thanks to Ford and other companies.

The Reganites may chastize liberals as "soft on Communism," but their corporate backers continue to serve as warehouse central for the Communist state. Semiconductors, computers, ball bearing technology—all with obvious military and police state applications, have passed across the Iron Curtain almost as freely as figs at a Middle Eastern bazaar. The trucks used in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were built where? You got it. The Soviets' own American-made Kana River truck factory.

Now we are embarking upon the largest military build-up in the history of this planet, in order to defend ourselves against the Soviet state which our banks and corporations helped finance and build and arm. It wouldn't be surprising if the same companies were getting, in some fashion, defense business on *both* sides.

But what does all this *mean*? Just that banks and corporations are greedy to the core? Lenin, in fact, thought that greed would be the capitalists undoing. "Comrades, don't panic," Lenin once said at a tense moment during a party meeting in Moscow. "When things go very hard for us, we will give a rope to the bourgeoisie, and the bourgeoisie will hang itself."

Yes, the banks and corporations are greedy. But I think something more is going on here, something that could change the way we see big banks and corporations on the one hand, and the Soviet state on the other.

Let's start by asking who *doesn't* get invited to Warsaw and Moscow to sip vodka and cut deals. Strange, but it's precisely those people and groups most castigated in this country as "leftists" and hence, we are told, Russia-leaning. When was the

last time you heard about a Ralph Nader speaking tour in the Soviet Union?

You haven't. And you probably won't. The Kremlin has no more use for such boat rockers than does the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

How about organized labor, another purported threat to free enterprise? You won't see them in Moscow either. Only their bosses, the ones who accuse the unions of being hostile to capital and profit.

Environmentalists? If there's an environmental movement in Russia, its deeper underground than the Soviet Mark Russell. You'll find American bull dozer buffs and polluters doing their thing behind the Iron Curtain. But the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth are no more welcome there than they are in James Watt's Interior Department.

I first started to think about all this a number of years ago, when I encountered at a friend's wedding, a Soviet official who worked, he said, in pollution control.

He was a worn, slightly stooped man in his late forties or fifties, with a gentle yet proper manner and a face that seemed grey.

Fresh out of school, and bubbling with innocence, I blurted out, "Boy, your job must be a lot easier in your country than it is in this country."

"Why?" he asked. He looked genuinely puzzled.

His response took me aback. I thought the point was obvious. "Well," I explained, "you don't have all the big corporations opposing everything you do, like we have here."

His face formed a weary smile, like a man long ago resigned to official falsities. Glancing over his shoulder, he hunched a little closer and said softly, "My boy, in my country, the corporations *are* the government." Then he walked away.

Over the days and weeks that followed, my thoughts went something like this: In the Soviet Union, everything is supposed to belong to the people—or at least to the state, which is sort of holding things in trust until the people grow up. There aren't supposed to be any corporations there. There shouldn't be anyone to oppose pollution control. That's one reason people in this country who fight big corporations are called 'leftists.' Yet this man, who should know, is now telling me that in Russia the corporations control everything. How can this be?

An idea started to grow on me. "Could it be that the whole official picture of things is wrong? Could it be that the Soviet Union isn't the ultimate worker state at all, but is rather the ultimate corporate state—the way government would be if corporations, rather than workers, ran it totally? Could it be that Communism, at least as the Soviets practice it, is not ultimate left, but ultimate right?"

When I tried looking at things through this new prism, I was stunned at how much our largest corporations and the Soviet state have in common. Both are nominal democracies that are really controlled by an inside, self-perpetuating management