



"Patty Hearst is a crook...I know a crook when I see one!"

## Penny pinchers

Most consumers are hard-pressed to find anything that has survived the surge of inflation. Even so, who could have predicted that the humble copper penny would one day be priced out of the market?

That day is at hand. The Treasury Dept.'s cost of making a cent is perilously close to exceeding the face value of the coin. One of two reasons is the price of copper, which reached \$1.20 a pound last week, compared with 50 cents a pound a year ago January. The second culprit is metal speculators, who Treasury officials suspect have been hoarding and then melting pennies for their copper content—which is soon to exceed the face value of the coin. According to Treasury Secretary George P. Shultz, demand for pennies in the last three months has totaled two billion, double the demand for the same period a year ago.

It's the old story: the demand is exceeding the supply. The U.S. Mint's inability to produce enough copper pennies has resulted in an unprecedented nationwide penny shortage, with a few government banks forced to ration the number of cents they give their customers.

The obvious solution: use a cheaper metal.

The Treasury had hoped to abandon production of copper pennies altogether and instead make pennies out of aluminum. Congress, however, takes a dim view of the idea because of pressure from the vending machine industry. It seems an aluminum penny would not be heavy enough to enable a youngster to exchange it for a jawbreaker, ball of bubblegum or whatever.

In any case, penny holders bent on making a profit should beware. Any person convicted of melting or exporting pennies is subject to a maximum penalty of \$10,000 and five years in prison.

Mary Voboril

## Extinction warning issued for GOP

arthur hoppe  
innocent bystander

Just in the nick of time, a bill has been introduced in Congress to declare Republicans an endangered species.

In dramatic testimony before the House Wildlife Committee, the noted ornithologist, J. Livingston Segal, declared that recent surveys showed the number of Republicans had dwindled drastically during the past year.

"Furthermore," he said, "those that have somehow survived are threatened by mass slaughter during the hunting season this fall."

Oddly enough, he said, Republicans had been flourishing in past decades—spreading from their native breeding grounds in the Midwest even into the deep South, where none had ever been spotted before.

But in recent months, he said, their natural environment had been radically altered by pollution seeping through carelessly unclosed watergates. "As a result," he said, "one seldom hears their familiar cheery cry of 'good government!' any more, and their sources of sustenance have all but dried up."

"Unless they are declared an endangered species, and soon," Segal grimly warned, "Republicans will go the way of the carrier pigeon and the dodo bird."

Under cross examination, Segal conceded the Republicans, as do any creatures, were struggling desperately to avoid extinction.

Most, he said, were striving to sever their symbiotic link with the largest of their species (genus Nixonis). The Nixonis, itself, he said, was still laying numerous eggs, but most proved rotten and this disability appeared to be infecting surviving flocks.

Other Republicans, he said, are adopting protective

coloration, attempting to disguise themselves as harmless Independents. And some, he reported, are even turning on the Nixonis, as do sharks on a wounded member of their own kind.

"But Republicans are handicapped by a quirk of evolution that left them with a large right wing and a miniscule left wing," he said. "They can thus fly only in circles, as the present crisis demonstrates. Weakened as they are, they will therefore fall easy prey to their natural predators, the Democrats."

"Unless this bill passes," Segal concluded, "our children will grow up never to see a Republican—except in the Smithsonian, stuffed."

In addition to declaring them an endangered species, the bill provides for sanctuaries in the Midwest where surviving Republicans can be protected, studied and fed. Experts differ, unfortunately, as to whether the species, even with their survival at stake, would accept government handouts.

But all conservationists agree the effort must be made. "Republicans are part of our great American heritage," one said. "And they deserve to be saved from extinction just as much as the condor, the hump-backed whale and the whooping crane."

Moreover, as Segal pointed out, they are part of a complex bioecological system. If they become extinct, the Democrats will be next.

"Without Republicans to feed on," he warned, "Democrats will succumb to their peculiar, lemming like compulsion for self-destruction. Within a few years, we can confidently predict, the Democrats will have eaten each other all up." (Copyright Chronicle Publishing Co.)

## Kurt's catty cacaphony creates catastrophe

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. the cat, proudly announces his recovery. Chuck Johnson sends his regards.

When Al and Renee moved, their friend Ruthie, the cat, moved, too. She argued long against the move, worrying aloud about conditions in the unknown they faced. "What about the cat box?" she wailed. "What of my scratching post, my catnip mouse, my comic books?"

Cats have an uncanny ability to see the universe as revolving around themselves. Ruthie was shocked to learn the people she lived with were moving whether she came along or not.

Eventually, of course, Ruthie moved, though she was surly and refused to help with the packing. Shortly after the relocation she gave birth to quintuplets, leading to speculation she had reasons for staying that had nothing to do with comic books or scratching posts. At any rate, Ruthie began organizing a legal aid society in her new neighborhood.

Kurt and Chuck, relieved of the need for vigilance Ruthie had occasioned (relieved, too, of the worry of possible paternity suits) were joyous. Kurt danced in the governor's bushes while Chuck, always the more refined, began a critique of (William) Faulkner's *Light in August*.

But suddenly the tranquility was shattered. Molly, the biggest, meanest, cross-eyedest, funniest looking Siamese in central Lancaster County, issued a warning: "Look out!"

Is it necessary to relate Kurt ignored the warning? Kurt displayed common discretion rarely, and never at the right time. Chuck, seeing that Molly was bigger, braver and smarter than he, wisely resolved to cower pathetically in the presence of the big newcomer.

keith landgren  
desperate remedies

Kurt refused to humiliate himself, but he did exercise considerable restraint. He allowed Molly to use the cat box, sat quietly while she played with his favorite paper wad.

Molly, naturally, grew bolder every day. If she could count on the cat in tennis shoes running for

cover, she had only the black longhair to contend with. So her cross-eyed gaze took in the apartment, searching out the best scratching areas, trying to find a soft, sunny place to watch "Hogan's Heroes."

Eventually the tension broke.

"I—I just couldn't take any more," Kurt recalled later. "When she sat down on that orange pillow, I saw red. Even Ruthie never did that."

A mad panorama of fur, teeth and claws ensued. When the dust settled, Molly was gone. Kurt sat licking his paw as if nothing had happened. But his nonchalant hid a serious injury.

"Yeah, I know I should have gone to the vet right away," he said. "But I know you're busy now, what with finals and deadlines and all that. So I said nothing."

But the swelling worsened and he began to limp. The vet was called. Kurt spent a painful afternoon being injected with antibiotics. His sentence of 10 days indoors was only slightly eased by the unexpected pleasure of refusing to take a pill every day for a week. Kurt spends his days resting and training.

"I let her get behind me that time," he says. "Boy, I sure can't let that happen again."

Molly isn't saying anything.