

Editorial

United States, Japan reach their limits

After busily directing his attention to our hide-and-seek game with the Soviet Union for so long, President Reagan finally took a little time out to look West. Last week Yasuhiro Nakasone, the newly elected prime minister of Japan, came to Washington to discuss America's relationship with the crowded archipelago. This was a prelude to Secretary of State George Shultz's trip to China, Japan and South Korea.

Japan is a fascinating country, with a curious mixture of traditional culture and modern methods that is more pronounced than any we find here in the United States. Yet we do share some similarities. Japan and the United States have perhaps the largest economies in the world and by looking at our island ally we may discover some clues as to why we are both having such a heap of problems.

The reason for Nakasone's visit was to discuss the economic and defense situations in which Japan and the United States supposedly help each other out. The key word is "supposedly" because right now the United States is buying \$17.5 billion more goods from Japan annually than Japan is buying from the United States.

That spells discomfort in the give-and-take world of capitalism, and American

businessmen are getting a little upset that our highways are filling up with Hondas when they don't get to share the wealth. Douglas Fraser, the president of the United Auto Workers, has voiced his discontent over this trade imbalance with Japan. "We have a discriminatory, unfair and unequal trade relationship," he said.

That doesn't mean he wants to start shipping Chevettes to Tokyo, but that Japan should open its doors a little bit to American products. That is easier said than done, because Japan may be approaching the end of the economic tidal wave it has been riding since soon after World War II.

In a recent article on Japan's economy in Forbes magazine, Japanese economist Keiji Miyamoto said, "Just when Japan is being admired for its economic power, major changes are taking place with the industrial structure. Japan's future economic performance is in danger."

Where has this danger come from? An answer to that requires a close look at Japanese culture and the way economic policy reflects that culture. Japan is a highly disciplined, very energetic country. Keeping such a small land mass vital has required a great deal of structure. And built into that structure is a constant forward motion to produce, to succeed.

Take for example, a train that was built between the cities of Tokyo and Niigata. It required massive amounts of construction, including digging the world's largest mountain tunnel and was considered by many to not be worth the final cost of \$60 million per mile. But it was built anyway, a living symbol of an economy that moves faster than a speeding bullet and is now finding that it has perhaps outpaced itself. As a percentage of Gross National Product, Japan's deficit is even larger than the United States', with much of it going to pump funds into industries like agriculture.

Japan is an exaggerated example of what we are suffering from here in the United States. They are a country that has thrived on shipping billions of dollars worth of goods, 43 percent of them capital goods, around the world just as we have thrived on saturating American markets. Now both have reached their limits. Products sit in warehouses, complaints begin to arise, and here in the United States unemployment lines begin to grow.

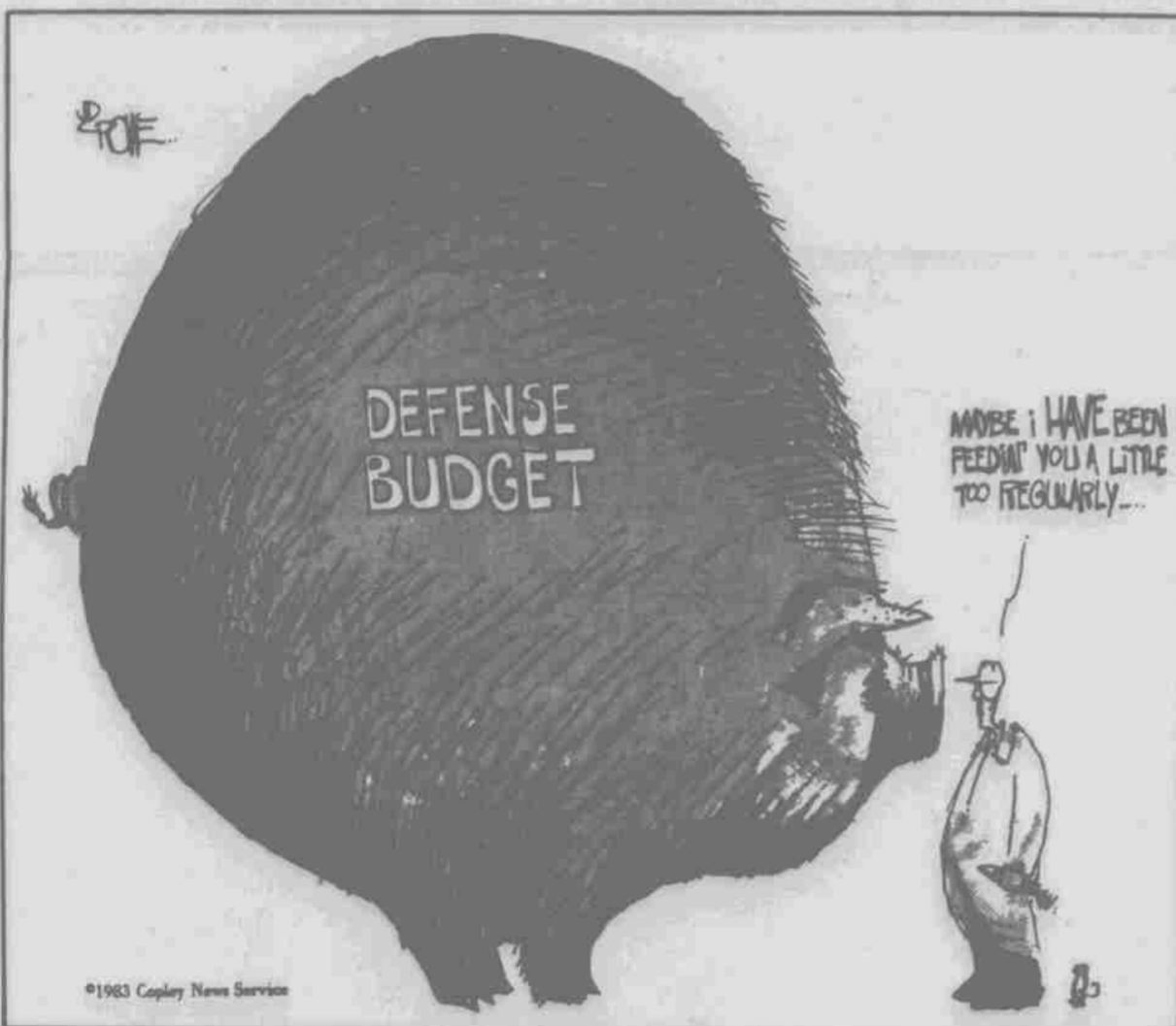
Could our shared malaise become the source of more friction? In a recent interview, Nakasone said, "America was Japan's mentor or teacher. But of late the student has been showing signs of excel-

ling the teacher and the teacher might be getting a little jealous of the student's achievements. . . . The student in the meantime is rapidly depleting his energy and weakening his footing. The United States has been a very good teacher to Japan and the student does not want to fight the teacher."

But the teacher is advising the student to beef up its defense and share the burden of fending off the Soviets. Reagan asked Nakasone to increase Japan's defense budget. One doesn't have to think hard to recall the dangers of increasing defense spending in the midst of economic difficulties, especially in a country where economic vitality and national pride are so closely tied.

It could be that both countries are sharing the same trepidation, a trepidation about their own inability to deal with problems that can all too easily be funneled off into an exaggerated anxiety about a third party. The teacher and the teacher's pet are disgruntled, but rather deal with that effectively they may start grumbling even more about another member of the faculty who has developed a reputation, deserved or not, for being the school bully.

David Thompson



Chic of '70s, slob of '80s

I've been told more than once that I'm too practical. I am especially practical when it comes to dress. Maybe it's because I am a tail-end "child of the '60s" who grew into my teens as I grew into my blue jeans. I have not outgrown them.

My casual, and at times, sloppy dressing style is one that I find comfortable



Monica Osterbuhr

and terribly hard to shake. When I went to college in the early '70s men would sell their souls for worn olive green Army fatigue jackets, whether or not they had been in the service. Bell-bottomed jeans, pea coats and wedgies were in. Bells were probably invented by a designer to make girls' ankles look huge so their hips and thighs would look small.

Back then, students considered themselves overdressed if they had new jeans on. One might even have been asked if he were running for an office if he wearing new jeans.

I am embarrassed to admit this, but I have not worn a real dress to a college

class since 1975 when I appeared before music juries up on a stage in a brown miniskirt.

When I wear nylon hose they get snagged on the first thing they come into contact with — usually my hands. They always bag at the ankles and I end up tying the nylon toes in knots and stuffing them under my toes.

Oh, the blue jeans are still here. But there are some modes of dress for school that were very foreign to me when I came to school at UNL. I must have been hiding in a time warp for the last few years.

Some of the newest things in clothing and accessories have amazed me this year, as far as practicality in the classroom is concerned. Wool tweed tailored suits, pleated ruffles, bow ties, puffed taffeta sleeves and flowing plaid skirts are gorgeous. I love the Victorian collars and the pretty leather pumps that I see. At first, I wondered if UNL was a branch of Patricia Stevens College.

Today's vogue is the sharp, tailored look. It is sharp, but expensive. It was a real shock to me to find that these clothes could be worn for school and not just for the labor market.

When I dress up, I inevitably get pop stains, ink, magic marker, ashes or gum

'Don't lead us on, lead us'

Running the nation can't be as tough as our oafs in office lead on. Leading us on seems to be the leaders' job. Leading us to believe their job is impossible, they sidestep accountability and can go their way.

Myself, I see a flaw in the system. I think politicians would save time and have more fun if they just went ahead and ran the country. Why, I've got a



David Wood

plan easy enough that a trained chimpanzee, or even its sidekick movie star, could understand it. (In fact, Ron Reagan inspired the dim idea.)

Simply, the plan is this: To prod our sluggish economy into brisk goose-step, what we need is good, home-style, tried-and-true fascist domination and worldwide war.

Sure it sounds old-fashioned and conventional. But old, simple, easy ways are often the best ways. Fear for one's life has sparked high productivity in the past. Why shouldn't it still?

Just a cold war and some token violence would do it. I'm not advocating nuclear holocaust, at least not in this column. (I saw a documentary about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the mutations the A-bombs caused and how Godzilla came from the ocean.)

My modest proposal is that we keep a war-like frame of mind. "Bellicose" is Dan Webster's word for the attitude.

It's easy as starting a forest fire. We wouldn't even have to change our foreign policy. All we need to do is stop frittering away money with Pollyanna domestic spending and start

pumping our bottom-heavy tax dollars into the military instead.

Education conflicts with the draft. Also, the old, the weak and the powerless will have no place in the muscular economy. (They're surplus population, much like those cursed swarms of Third World babies. That darn UNICEF will be the first to go when the iron heel comes down.)

It's simple as bang. The rest just falls in place.

Inflation: It'll be a moot point when we convert to a system of K-rations, bread lines and business lunches. Of course, soldiers and laborers will be paid a sub-living wage, to keep them rough, ready, and, mostly, busy. The only social assistance I see as necessary is free cable TV, since commercials will be obsolete. (Yes, by the way, I was the one who wrote Time magazine and nominated cable TV as Man of the Year.)

Unemployment: Everyone will be a soldier, laborer, tycoon, politician or in jail. (Overcrowded jails: The death penalty has always been a favorite of mine.)

High interest rates: Do away with the corporate tax. It's hard to justify anyway.

Deficit spending: Convert from currency to plastic U.S. savings bonds, butter, cheese, powdered milk and old grain.

Foreign debt: Here's somewhere to practice our military.

Import competition: Here's somewhere else.

Failing heavy industry: The answer is obviously munitions manufacture.

Washington, own up to your slack elected job. Don't lead us on, lead us. It's simple as an index card. It's easy as hup-two-three-four.

on my clothes. I thought I made a real advancement this fall when I bought two pairs of corduroys at Sears.

Things have really changed. I remember how I used to get a laugh when I saw women who were still wearing their pointy glasses with rhinestones in the corners. I would never be old-fashioned, I said. Now my snobbishness has returned to haunt me.

I suppose people hold back laughter when I show up with wedgies and my polyester pants on. I am one of those odd fashion crashers who wears a parka hood

over her head when going to class in 60-mph winds. I'm even outdated when I wear leisure clothes. I went to the football games last semester wearing a cowboy hat instead of deely-boobers. When I wore a headband once, a girl asked me how I cut my head.

It's really time that I changed my image. Maybe if I practiced dressing for success now, it would sink in by the end of the semester. I'm going to begin tonight by sleeping in my best flannel nightgown instead of my husband's T-shirt and shrunken boxer shorts.