

Editorial

Wait a minute, Douglas not guilty yet

Since a Lancaster county grand jury indicted Attorney General Paul Douglas Monday, many people have called for and expected his resignation. Among this group are Sens. Elroy Hefner of Coleridge and Ernie Chambers of Omaha.

Douglas' attorney, William Morrow of Omaha, has said Douglas will not resign. And he shouldn't, at least not yet.

Douglas has been accused of committing one count of perjury, a felony, and one count of obstructing government operations, a misdemeanor. Both charges stem from Douglas' dealing in the Commonwealth Savings Co. collapse.

The first count accused Douglas of lying when he said he paid taxes on all payments he received from Marvin Copple, a former vice president of Commonwealth.

The second count accused Douglas of discussing a Commonwealth-related letter from the FBI with Copple. Douglas testified before the Legislature's special Commonwealth Committee that he did not discuss the letter.

According to the Lincoln Star, Sen. Hefner is sticking by his decision, made last March, that Douglas "did wrong." Hefner voted in March to impeach Douglas, and called for his resignation.

Chambers said Douglas should resign just because he has been indicted.

"There's no way he can remain in office," Chambers was quoted as saying in the Lincoln Star. Chambers in-

itiated the legislation in March to impeach Douglas.

But wait a minute. Douglas hasn't been found guilty. Remember the good old U.S. cry for justice, that of innocence until guilt is proven?

If convicted, of one or both crimes, then Douglas should resign. Some Lincoln attorneys have said that if he is found guilty — or even pleads guilty — of a felony that Douglas will automatically be out of office.

According to the Star, one Nebraska law says office holders must resign if they are convicted of an "infamous crime" or if they violate their oaths of office. Another state law prohibits convicted felons from holding state offices.

But Douglas has not pled guilty. He has not been found guilty.

Sen. Chris Beutler of Lincoln has said this indictment has served to further erode any public trust that Douglas may have had after his impeachment acquittal. That's what many people said before the state Supreme Court began deliberating the Douglas case — public opinion had already sentenced Douglas.

The public — and public officials — should not be so quick to condemn Douglas. Although evidence and public opinion seem to point to his guilt, he has not gone to trial yet. And when he does, the court may override public and public official's hostilities and find Douglas not guilty.



Refusal to choose hurts left

The left has suffered sufficient disappointments to have learned equanimity. Nevertheless, when two spokesmen for that tendency are invited to voice a comprehensive arraignment of conditions and manage only to exercise a sedative effect, the exhaustion of the left is startling.

Puzzled by the relative silence of the left, The New York Times Magazine invited Irving Howe, editor of Dissent,

increasing pay relative to productivity. Harrington calls for "structural change" in the economy, which is like calling for night to follow day. In this country, change is not a choice, it is a constant.

Harrington says: "If a company was willing to go to McKeesport, Pennsylvania, and open up a profitable modern steel plant, then fine, I would be for giving them a big tax break for creating jobs." Forward to 1981: The investment tax credit has been with us since Kennedy (1962), and accelerated cost recovery (1981) is called, depending on your preference, "Reaganomics" or "trickle down."

It is extravagant for Howe to describe the new Eastern Airlines contract (in exchange for wage concessions, some workers get a percentage of equity in the corporation and seats on the board of directors) in socialist language. He calls it a step toward "workers' control of their economic life." In true socialist terms, such control means not just involvement in a corporation's decision-making, but government management of market forces. Eastern is more subject to those forces today than it was a decade ago.

Howe says he can give only "a few telegraphic clues" as to what he means by socialism. But even if the Swedish or British and East Bloc experiences are not clues enough about socialism, surely socialism, and the constant agenda of the left, must involve at least this: centralized state power used to promote material equality, through state direction of production, or state allocation of the product. However, what has collapsed under the weight of evidence during the last generation is precisely the belief that such measures are a reliable route to an open, progressive, dynamic and just society.

Harrington stresses "democratic, participatory, bottom-up" planning of this nation's gigantic economy. He deplores "elitist" governance by "experts" concerned with "technical details and fine print." But the policies he advocates require a regime he deplores.

It is idle sentimentalism to expect a modern welfare state to be both a powerful engine of distributive justice and a model of Jeffersonian "bottom-up" democracy. To govern is to choose. The left has made itself irrelevant to the contemporary political conversation by refusal to choose. It is a refusal rooted in a willful sentimentalism. The result is blithe disregard of the costs of both the means and the ends of the program of the left.

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Hispanic's group power not welcomed by majority

When a racial minority begins to grow in numbers and becomes visible to the majority, that majority has ways to offset those numbers. These range from the threat of physical violence to economic coercion. Oftentimes a system of "snitches" helps to keep the masses under control.

Hispanics are rapidly becoming the largest minority in this country, a fact pointed out four years ago in a Time

Magazine article. Since then, Hispanics have used their political power in the southwestern United States to bring about some changes.

However, the majority of the population does not welcome Hispanic's power and growth. And the tool the majority has used most effectively to limit that power and growth is that of "thingification." The majority reduces human beings to objects and then degrades them. When this is done, the majority has justifications to "get rid of that thing once and for all."

For black people, the term was "nigger." Now it is the brown man's turn, the Hispanic's turn. He is even now being confronted with a term that is doubly degrading. The term that I speak of is "illegal alien."

Such a term has an ominous quality and character when the social dimensions are analyzed and processed. In

Matthew Stelly

the first place, something "illegal" implies being against "the law." The white man speaks of his laws when dubbing something as "illegal." At no time does he consider the fact that the ultimate laws are the laws of nature.

If this is the case, then that which is "illegal" is that which goes against the laws of nature; that which disrespects nature. That — or those — who pollute the air, murder off the wildlife while claiming it is for "the good of humanity" disrespect nature. As far as illegality is concerned, technology is anti-natural and is therefore illegal. And the creator of this technology then, would also have to be considered a criminal.

Now, what is an alien? "Alien" is defined as "someone who owes his allegiance to a foreign country." Is not the American structure — legal, political and ideological — a manifestation of European culture? Are not, indeed, these "Americans" really "Euro-Americans?" Do they not, indeed, have a system which is based upon the belief that the more money you have, the more rights you have?

Therefore, who is the alien? Who is the foreigner? A foreigner cannot be someone who is born and bred in a particular place. The so-called Native American is not a foreigner, and since this continent is connected, the Hispanics could not be, either. They were both here already. The "alien" is the white man and well he knows it. Hence, he blames or labels others for his own actions or crimes.

What do we have then? A violator of the "laws" of nature and humanity and someone who comes into a situation with a set of "foreign" values and ethnocentric notions. He is an illegal alien.

The Mexican-American community is therefore victimized by a term that invokes fear in the population.

Illegal alien is a double negative that can only serve to justify any act or endeavor that is anti-Chicano: proposed "taco curtains" made of barbed wire along the border; illegal search and seizure; identification badges and of course, physical violence and brutality by the Texas Rangers and "Americans" of that ilk.

George Will

and Michael Harrington, co-chairman of Democratic Socialists of America, to explain what the left thinks. The result was tepid porridge.

Howe says the left's role is "to put a little starch into traditional liberalism," meaning the Democratic Party, while keeping alive "the ideas of democratic socialism." He and Harrington begin with regrets about President Reagan's foreign policy, but are at pains to speak about national security, a concern they say was inadmissible on the left 15 years ago.

It is telling that they talk so much about U.S. foreign policy, and "north-south" redistribution of income, and the International Monetary Fund being mean to Third World governments that are on the dole. Philosophically interesting arguments are about domestic policy: how people should live together under a common sovereignty. There is no classic volume of political philosophy about relations between nations, which is a matter for prudential maxims. When the left is preoccupied with foreign policy, it is adrift from its philosophic tradition.

But when Howe and Harrington come to domestic policy, you understand why they do not seem eager to do so. The left's program turns out to be "Forward into the 1870s!" (rebuild the railroads) or "On to the 1940s — in Britain!" (economic planning).

Perhaps Harrington is, as socialists usually are, eager to shock the bourgeoisie, of which he is a member. In any case, he says the idea of economic planning "is pretty rough stuff for many Americans." Not really. What is rough is the task of convincing many Americans that planning by government would be an improvement on the sort of planning done by, say, IBM.

A more specific proposal is for a 35-hour work week — creating opportunity not by economic dynamism but by

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