

States of the Union

THE DAY THE PRESSES STOPPED

BY RICHARD J. MARGOLIS

The man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed than he who reads them, inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehood.

—THOMAS JEFFERSON

What is a newspaper but a sponge or invention for oblivion?

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

MUCH of significance occurred in these United States during New York City's long newspaper strike. Here, for instance, are some valuable *Times* items that never saw print.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—President Carter today ordered Drug Abuse agents to cease spraying Mexican marijuana crops with paraquat, a poison the Administration has been using to discourage pot-smoking in the United States. "We are rethinking the paraquat program," he explained to newsmen. "Some people on my staff objected to it on personal grounds."

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.—Sources here report that attorneys for the Sheik of Moussaka, a small, oil-rich principality unmentioned on most maps, are

negotiating for the purchase of a "subsidiary package" that includes Warner Brothers, the Fatty Arbuckle library, Frank Sinatra's toupee and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

The asking price is said to be one utility infielder and two utilities.

Moussaka does not exist, according to the Associated Press.

The Associated Press does not exist, according to United Press International.

HASHBROWN, N.H.—Feminist leaders are meeting here to commemorate the birthday 150 years ago of Lucy Spoonover Lark, author of *Recipes for a Small Oven*, *Sharpening Your Needlepoint* and other out-of-print works.

"Lucy Lark was a victim of a sexist society," declared a spokesperson for the group. "Even here in Hashbrown her books were tragically ignored. Strange to tell, the public preferred the mutterings of Melville to the lyricism of Lark."

Participants at the conference named August 18 Lucy Spoonover Lark Day, and resolved to boycott any bookstore that did not carry her works.

NEW YORK, N.Y.—Stocks were

mixed today in light, heavy and moderate trading. The Bronx was up and the Battery down. A good time was had by all.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Postal officials are puzzled by the results of a mail survey they distributed nationwide more than three months ago. "We haven't gotten back a single questionnaire," said Morton Feinschmecker, special assistant to the postmaster general. "Apparently they've all gone astray."

Feinschmecker said authorities had considered enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope with each mailed questionnaire, but had rejected the idea because "we couldn't afford the postage."

The purpose of the survey was to learn what citizens thought of their mail service.

OMAHA, NEB.—Henry Kissinger announced here today at a wheatgrowers' foreign policy prayer meeting that he would not actively seek the Presidency in 1980, but he would accept a draft "if the Republican rank-and-file want me." He added he would also accept a draft "if the Democratic rank-and-file want me—or anyone else, for that matter."

The former, peripatetic secretary of state said he and his wife Nancy were planning a whirlwind vacation that would take them to 14 countries in as many days. "We both need the rest," he explained.

Amid much applause, Kissinger thanked the wheatgrowers for cultivating his breadbasket.

TRAVERSE CITY, MICH.—Making a sentimental journey to his home state, Gerald Ford played two leisurely rounds of golf here yesterday, only to discover that he had left his clubs in Palm Springs.

WASHINGTON, D.C.—White House officials have imposed what appears to be a total blackout on news concerning the rumored confrontation between President Carter and his Secretary of

Health, Education and Welfare, Joseph Califano.

A highly placed source at HEW says the incident occurred yesterday afternoon when Califano caught the President smoking a cigarette out back behind the East Wing.

Harsh words and coughs were said to have been exchanged.

At a hastily called press conference this morning, White House Press Secretary Jody Powell told reporters there was no truth to "the base allegation that President Carter is a closet smoker," nor to reports that Joseph Califano has been fired.

HARRISBURG, PA.—Members of the Delaware Indian tribe formally petitioned the State Legislature today for return of about 1 million acres of land to tribal possession. The parcel in question includes all of Philadelphia, with the exception of Independence Hall and the Betsy Ross house.

"The Liberty Bell is cracked, and so was Betsy," declared a tribal elder.

Reached by telephone, Philadelphia Mayor Francis Lazzaro Rizzo expressed shock and disbelief. "It's outrageous," he said. "Those Indians are un-American."

Meanwhile, black community organizations in Philadelphia are pressing legislators to act speedily on the tribal petition. "The sooner we give Philadelphia back to the Indians, the happier we blacks will be," a community leader said.

MINOT, N.D.—This hockey-hooked town of 30,000 closed out the long season yesterday with another championship. Playing before a capacity crowd in their new, open-air stadium, the sweating Minot Grazers beat the panting Winnipeg Mounties 4-3 in double overtime.

It was the 51st game in a best-of-51 series.

Mounties' Coach Bertrand Ebert had no apologies for his team's performance, except to note that the hot August weather was a factor.

"Not to take anything away from the Minot fellows," Ebert said, "but I

do feel that our boys would have skated better if there'd been ice."

LOOPALOOSA, LA.—Angry protesters here have been picketing the site of a \$1 billion reservoir and dam project proposed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. One picketer's placard—LET'S BE ROTTEN TO THE CORPS—summed up citizen feeling.

A spokesman for the Corps, Brigadier General Lucius K. Ordway, said the purpose of the proposed project was to widen the bayous and aid barge traffic. "Our Environmental Impact Study shows that people have no grounds to be afraid," General Ordway said. "Except maybe the tiny village of Loopaloosa, which is likely to end up about 20 feet underwater."

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Supreme Court yesterday returned to a lower court for reconsideration a case that may have far-reaching implications.

The litigation concerns a white, gay male couple in Denver who wish to adopt a black, female test-tube baby. A Federal circuit judge had earlier ruled that such an adoption would be unconstitutional and "possibly dirty."

After remanding the case, the justices voted to repair to the Sans Souci for a three-martini lunch.

MEMPHIS, TENN.—The local chapter here of the United Federation of Arsonists (UFA) voted unanimously last night to walk out in sympathy with striking Memphis firemen. "We're all in this thing together," said Torchy Spinoza, UFA president. "We propose and they dispose."

A spokesman for the firemen's union said his fellow workers were gratified by the arsonists' show of support, but added a correction to Spinoza's statement. "Actually," said the fireman, "they dispose and we hose."

CHICAGO, ILL.—The National Safety Council today announced publication of its long awaited report, "200,000 Really Raunchy Products." The volume is said to weigh 3 pounds, 4

ounces, and to list in alphabetical order all consumer products deemed unsafe, from Aardvark toys ("somewhat risky") to Zygote safetytins ("suicidal").

A Council official said the book has been bound in fire-resistant plastic. In addition, he noted, "The pages are organic and can easily be ingested."

KEY WEST, FLA.—U.S. meteorologists in charge of tracking tropical storms have reluctantly changed their hurricane nomenclature from names of men to names of cities.

"It was masculinist pressure," commented a weatherman who asked that his name be withheld. "A few male fanatics objected to our use of such names as Hurricane Albert, Hurricane Broderick and Hurricane Charlie. From now on we're going to stick to Athens, Boise and Calcutta."

In Houston Gregory de Plume, president of the National Organization for Men (NOM), said he was gratified by the new policy. "Men everywhere can now face the weather without shame," he observed.

TOPEKA, KAN.—Alfred M. Landon, the 91 year-old Republican who ran for President in 1936 on an anti-Social Security platform, told reporters yesterday he has not ruled out the possibility of trying again.

In a front-porch press conference the spry nonagenarian said he has come to believe that the Republican Party needs a candidate of his political stripe.

"Do you mean conservative?" a reporter asked.

"I mean liberal," Landon replied.

NEW YORK, N.Y.—In a surprise move today the Book-of-the-Month Club purchased majority control of this city's three struck newspapers—the *Times*, the *Post* and the *Daily News*—pledging to bring them out occasionally as Book-of-the-Month "bonuses."

"Basically," said a club executive, "our members are serious readers. But we feel that once in a while they deserve a change of pace."