

EDITORIAL

Time for reassessment

As the Reagan administration snatches at wind-blown straws of economic recovery to bolster republican chances for winning election campaigns that lurk in the wings, Americans go about their business with hope and optimism tempered by sober recognition of wide-spread unemployment and funding cuts in some federally-supported programs which took decades to achieve and which, most citizens believe, are worth their cost.

Program cuts include tax credits for energy-saving improvements which have effectively reduced oil imports (and thus lowered our balance of payments to foreign countries) and broken the united front of OPEC nations, bringing down gasoline prices to more than cover the 5-cent per gallon federal tax to be imposed on April 1. The program also saved hundreds of dollars each for many thousands of individuals who participated in beefing-up home insulation and taking other energy-saving measures. Why kill it?

Slashes in funds available to protect endangered species now threaten the extinction of (to name but a few) the American crocodile, the California condor, the ivory-billed woodpecker, the Everglade kite, the black-footed ferret, Bachman's warbler, the blue pike, the red wolf, and the Ridley sea turtle. For this, we can thank James Watt, Secretary of the Interior. Although sworn to support programs created to save these, and other species, from extinction, Watt has frozen funds to 39 states. The result? Recovery teams are disbanding, and critical habitats the government once planned to help states purchase are now moving into the private sector and are slated for development, mining and highway construction.

Tax cuts scheduled to begin in July 1983 (according to David S. Broder of the Washington Post Writer's Group) have reduced projected federal revenues "under current economic assumptions" by more than one trillion dollars over 1984-88. The lost revenue would have erased the total federal debt Reagan inherited when he took office. Worse yet, the tax savings for families with incomes of \$10,000 will amount to \$120 a year, while families with incomes of \$80,000 will reap

savings of \$15,250 annually. This is fair and equitable treatment for all Americans?

Since Reagan took office, we have witnessed an inexorable decline in chances for world peace. Secretary of Defense Weinberger has orchestrated a campaign of fear from day one. First, we were told we face a growing Communist threat from Latin America. Strangely, however, that threat faded to a shadow when the Israelis invaded Lebanon to drive out the PLO. With the Middle East relatively quiescent at the moment, the problems of El Salvador are now being reheated for our consumption. Must we accept such an obvious ploy as part of our menu?

In the last two years, relations between the United States and both the Soviet Union and Mainland China have deteriorated. Through his play upon our natural fears, Weinberger's paranoia has proven contagious. Even our alliances with the friendly nations of western Europe are strained seriously, for those countries recognized that America seems willing, at this time, to sacrifice them in any nuclear war with Russia in order to save its own skin.

If, in truth, the economic crisis is bottoming out, now is the time for Americans to get a grip on less pressing, but nonetheless vital questions of where this administration is leading us; to see clearly how our citizenry is being manipulated to unravel the fabric of past accomplishments (accomplishments that took decades to achieve). Once destroyed, the material headway in which we once took pride will flutter in shreds and tatters.

Congress stands on the threshold of an opportunity to restore sanity to our national and international approaches to problems we must all address if the world is not to be dragged through a period of chaos equalled only by the Dark Ages. With the support of the American people, Congress can revive our hope in the future.

Our responsibility is to send our Congressional legislators the messages they need to reverse the current trend to undo most of the fine programs that have given strength to our nation in the recent past and can assure our well-being in the long-term future.