

EDITORIAL

Time to mind-your-own-business

Is the glass half-full or half-empty? As has been shown in the past, that depends upon one's perspective; whoever sees it as half-full is an optimist and potentially capable of positive action to fill the glass to its brim. Conversely, those who find the glass half-empty are pessimists, apt to end up with an empty glass, and probably destined to realize their own negative self-fulfilling prophecies.

In diplomatic circles, world powers watch and worry about escalation of the Iran-Iraq conflict. Most of our concern is for oil supplies even though our own country's oil imports derive from alternate sources. Our allies among western European nations depend to some extent upon Persian Gulf oil, and Japan counts heavily upon the Middle East for its supply. This nation's offer to intervene should the Straits of Hormuz be closed to oil shipments has been rejected by all the Arab countries.

Active American involvement is viewed by the Arabs as undesirable because it could trigger equal and opposite action by the Soviets to maintain the balance of power and to increase their influence in the Middle East, because Middle Eastern countries feel American support is less valuable now than they believed it to be prior to the Lebanese debacle, and because Washington's close ties to Israel raise suspicions about where our loyalties lie. Arab nations clearly choose to attempt solving their problems without our assistance. From this perspective, the glass appears half-full.

And, since Japan (and Western European nations, as well) might find other sources of oil (Indonesia, China, or Mexico, for example), availability of Gulf oil may be less essential to world peace and prosperity than we have been led to believe. The glass, again, looks half-full.

Conceivably, Middle Eastern nations, left to themselves to solve area problems, will reach agreement more quickly without American input. Minding-our-own-business may contribute most to the restoration of peace in the Middle East. The glass, if we quit tipping and spilling it, may even be more than half-full.

One additional observation needs to be made. Since Japan has most to lose if Gulf oil ceases to flow, it is in that country's interest to negotiate with Middle Eastern nations. Japan's constitution prohibits military action anywhere beyond its own domestic borders. Japan's geographic position, together with its own minimal arms production capacity, limits its value as anything more than a mediator between Baghdad and Tehran. Yet Japan's history, as the first nation to experience the horrors of nuclear attack, places her in a unique position to exercise diplomacy in today's global climate.

In a world threatened with self-destruction should nuclear conflict erupt, Japan, better than any other country on earth, may employ diplomacy...to establish a pattern for and to set an example of...using innovative techniques for settling present and future disputes between nations.

Surely better ways than warfare need to be found. No matter how sophisticated modern weapons and their delivery systems become, the ultimate result of releasing their awesome powers is precisely as primitive as when cavemen attacked one another with stones and clubs.

If, as a species, we are to survive the nuclear era, diplomacy **MUST** supercede stones and clubs, swords and guns, bombs and missiles. Then, indeed, will we have the prospect of viewing the glass brimful.