

Opinion / San Francisco Examiner

Deserved renewal for Alioto

THE BOARD of Education has given Superintendent Robert Alioto a new four-year contract, with the explanation that "it is our belief that under this leadership the San Francisco public schools have made substantive improvements over the past seven years."

We have no quarrel with the board's 51 decision, but would have to say, looking backward, that we entertained some doubts, now and then, during the beginning stages of his superintendency.

Those were difficult times indeed, and Alioto was dealing with a divided and contentious board. All the while, he was not upon every occasion a model of reserve himself, being given to occasional displays of pugnacity and the abrasive response.

Board meetings were more disputatious affairs then, and, at one point, member Lee Dolson, now a thoughtful member of the Board of Supervisors, "suggested" that Alioto might want to resign, a recommendation that Alioto fortunately rejected.

It is probable that at that time the board and the schools' constituency of parents and teachers had fallen out of the habit of dealing with an outspoken, often blunt, superintendent, since his immediate predecessors were not strong administrators nor forceful in person.

In any event, San Francisco schools have progressed considerably from their low point in the past seven years, due in significant part to Alioto's professional leadership.

Faced with declining enrollment, the administration has accomplished the necessary but unpopular shutdown of 30 surplus schools and, regrettably enough, those affected, reduced the teaching staff by 1,200. The school

headquarters on Van Ness Avenue once bulged with an excess of administrators whose numbers have been reduced by 40 percent.

Student enrollment is up 2 percent this year to 58,432 — still far below the 1970 peak of 90,000, but the higher numbers indicate in part, at least, a return to the public schools from private academies.

Achievement scores have improved steadily and new schools playing extra emphasis on academic excellence have been opened. Likewise, the new High School of Business and Commerce is training new entries for The City's growing business work force.

Violence and truancy are down, although only a Pollyanna could claim that these problems are solved or have reached even tolerable levels.

Although Alioto has his critics, like any other public servant, and deserves some criticism now and then, the board's decision to extend his tenure was a commendable move, fortunately a wise appraisal.

The superintendent, by and large, has performed well under enormous difficulties and challenges, which sometimes expanded to crisis dimension, as on the occasion of a teachers' strike in which the parties seemed frozen in opposing positions. There is a good deal of success in meeting special challenges that stem from the amazing diversity, linguistic and otherwise, of the San Francisco district.

The awarding of his new contract recognizes accomplishments of the past and lends a wholesome continuity to the office. We hope for a productive partnership between the superintendent and the board during the present school year, and look forward to further improvements in the quality of San Francisco public education.

Another Schmitz blitz

YES, Virginia, Sen. John Schmitz is real. He really is down there in Orange County, and is not on film in some late-night comedy from the Charlie Chaplin era. He is a state senator, running for United States senator in the Republican primary next year, and he will get about as many votes as somebody running on the flat-Earth ticket.

Who he has in mind to be the dictator, if his gloomiest vision comes true, we have no idea. Somebody with a little mustache, perhaps? He says a "good military coup" may be necessary if the country wants to avoid war or internal

decay. This time he has gunned so far off to the right that we fear he may be over the cliff into a time warp, and that the dinosaurs even now may be devouring him.

If that is not the case, though, we must say that he has performed one service. He has shown that not all of the goofiness is in the Bay Area.

We knew that all along, of course, but now Sen. Schmitz has carried the prize to Southern California, where we presume it will stay for a while. With him at bat, Orange County has won the world series of crackpot politics.

Those people who 'get involved'

WE'VE RAILED against human indifference before — against people who turn their backs on muggings, against those who taint window-perched, would-be suicides, against the "I don't want to get involved" paralysis that cripples society. Hence, it's our turn to tout a couple of people who have upset our sometimes cynical view of the world.

Chris Sullivan was riding the Muni J line last week when he spied two toughs venturing their intellectual musings upon the seats. When he told them to stop, they said they'd get him. They did. They put him in the hospital with broken bones and battered skin, but with his honor in excellent shape.

Sullivan said he wouldn't do it again. We

hope that he doesn't have to.

Reginald Martin was watching television early Monday morning when he saw flames devouring the house next door. Although hobbled by a cast that cradled a broken leg, he raced outside, reaching the house before Oakland fire-fighters arrived on the scene, and ran in and rescued 16-year-old Trina Davis. The disabled young woman might have died had it not been for Martin's quick thinking and sheer courage.

"I just ran up there and got her," he said later. "I just happened right on in. I did it again. I'd do it for anybody. It's a human life."

Thanks, Martin. Nobody could have said it better.

Smith Hempstone / Prospects for Poland

WASHINGTON — With the fall from power of hard Communist Party boss Stanislaw Kania, the 18-month-old Polish crisis enters a new and dangerous phase.

Kania's replacement by Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski in all probability represents a change in style rather than substance as minister of defense, and, since last February, as premier, the 56-year-old political general has been closely associated with Kania's policy of seeking negotiated solutions to the problems of the party and the government with Solidarity, the independent trade union movement.

For that reason alone, Jaruzelski cannot have been Moscow's first choice to take over the job of Kania, in whom the Kremlin had lost all confidence. Complicating Kania's task was the fact that he never succeeded in gaining either the affection or the respect of the Polish people.

But if the 54-year-old Kania failed either to reverse the rapidly deteriorating state of the Polish economy or to gain control over Solidarity, at least he bought some months for Poland during his 14-month tenure, neither a Soviet

invasion nor an outright revolution came to pass.

Whether Jaruzelski will be able to do better remains to be seen. Internally, he starts with at least a couple of advantages: the army's prestige remains relatively high and, although he has been a member of the party since 1948, of the Central Committee since 1964 and of the Politburo since 1970, he is not perceived as a party lackey.

Yet Jaruzelski's room for maneuver remains sharply circumscribed. The Poles continue to demand that which the Communist system cannot provide: pork and freedom.

From the beginning, Moscow had had three options in Poland: to undermine, crush or accept the reformist movement. Because it was and is engaged in Afghanistan, eager to preserve the remains of detente and unwilling to assume Poland's staggering international debt of \$27 billion, the Kremlin chose the first option.

This strategy has worked to a degree. But the Communist Party has been unable to regain control of Poland.

The conundrum facing Jaruzelski is this: he needs greater product-

tivity to get Poland's economy back on something resembling an even keel, yet Polish workers are not willing to toil longer hours when there are no goods in the stores to buy with their additional earnings.

For 200 years, the fate of Poland has been determined by its geography. Now, with Communist East Germany to the west, Warsaw has long had options: internal disposition and security policy must meet the Kremlin's minimum requirements if Poland is to enjoy even a truncated form of independence.

That is one reality. Another is that Poland no longer can be ruled without the cooperation of Solidarity and the Catholic Church.

Hence the significance of the change from Kania to Jaruzelski. By committing the prestige of the army in such a seemingly hopeless situation, the Polish Communist Party is placing its last trump. If Jaruzelski fails, there is no fallback position.

And in the chilly economic climate of the fall of 1981, the prospects for pork are not good. Nor, with a short-handed knife of aid, to a sharp-headed king of the odds on freedom promising.

Mary McGrory / Irish ambassador's new challenge



WASHINGTON — As Sean Donlon's star turns at ambassador of Ireland was not like anyone else's, his savagery has been out of the ordinary.

The other night, at one of many "wakes" — this one at the home of Andrew Mulligan, a former captain of the Irish rugby team and press officer of the Common Market, guests were piped in by torchlight to the strains of "The Minstrel Boy." Inside, a harper plucked an ancient lament, duets were sung in Welsh and Irish. There were recitations, initiations and choral singing directed by the ambassador, who was touted as "a peacemaker." It was not your typical Embassy Row farewell.

Donlon, who is a mirthful 41, is involved in American politics up to his bushy black eyebrows. He had no example to follow. His predecessors moved about holding good will, taking up trade and tourism. Donlon led a crusade against terrorism in Ireland.

He went to Hibernian halls and neighborhood bars, where Irishmen and Irish women, with memories of 1916, yelled "Up the IRA" and "Brits Out" and firmly told them they were wrong.

He went head-on against Norad and the Irish National Caucus, president of funds for the fray. He took on Rep. Mario Biaggi, the Democratic congressman from the Bronx, who chairs the House Ad Hoc Committee on Ireland. At one point, Biaggi proposed a "peace forum" at which IRA gunmen would be invited to testify.

"These people," said Donlon,

"are helping those who are murdering Irishmen and Irishwomen." His activities naturally incurred the enmity of Biaggi, who lodged complaints with the former prime minister, Charles Haughey. In the summer of 1980, Donlon was summoned home and told he must make his peace with Biaggi or lose his job. Donlon declined.

In an unprejudiced intervention, House Speaker Tip O'Neill and Sen. Edward Kennedy sprang to his aid. They called Haughey in Dublin in the middle of the night and warned him that the disbanding of Donlon would bespeak an abandonment of the moderate course. The speaker reproachfully told the sleepy prime minister that "Sean is a beautiful fellow." Haughey backed down.

Last June, Donlon's good friend, Garret FitzGerald, was narrowly elected prime minister, and soon after, Donlon was called home and offered the highest post in the Foreign Ministry, that of secretary of the department.

He goes back at a moment that is as promising as any in the last 10 years of bitterness and mayhem. It is true that the hunger strike, which unleashed a flood of worldwide sympathy — and funds — for "the boys" is over. The IRA has returned to its inhumane violence.

The most recent example: An Ulster policeman was shot dead outside a Belfast maternity home as he was waving goodbye to his wife, who had just given birth.

What is hopeful is that FitzGerald has taken a historic first step toward the possible reconciliation of North and South. Speaking on Irish radio, he addressed the deep fears with which Ulster Protestants regard unification.

"If I were a Northern Protestant today, I cannot see how I could be attracted to getting involved with a state which is self-sectarian. Our laws and our Constitution, our practices and our attitudes reflect those of a majority ethos which are not acceptable to Protestants in Northern Ireland."

He was conceding that the Republic is a theocracy — birth control and divorce are forbidden — and admitting that it must change if peaceful progress toward unification is to be made.

He is the first Irish prime minister to give such assurances. The Economist of London called his move "wily daring" — he risks the wrath of Ireland's powerful hierarchy — and the initial response from Northern Ireland has been positive. The head of the Orange Order, the leading Protestant organization, the Rev. Martin Smyth, said "FitzGerald is at least opening up the debate" — which for him was a very great deal, as yet.

In the new post, Donlon will have principal responsibility for the North.

The Anglo-Irish talks between Haughey and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher will be resumed before the end of next year.

The American contingent could be vital. The hope is that Ronald Reagan, who boasts of being Irish and twice visited the embassy, will use his influence with Thatcher, his fiscal soulmate. He could help persuade her to find a political solution to the 70-year-old Irish problem.

The president has put his friend William Clark, the deputy secretary of state, in direct charge of the Irish question — we still, after several embarrassing starts, have no ambassador in Dublin. Clark will visit Ireland in December.

Donlon leaves behind a political network he helped to set up among pals on the Hill, the Friends of Ireland, with 100 members from both parties and House Majority Whip Tom Foley in charge.

They hope he'll be able to repeat at home the brilliant success he had here in changing people's minds. They know that in Ireland, it's much harder.

General Press Syndicate



Editor's mail box

What about those ads?

I am amazed at the size of The Examiner's mouth, as out of our side it proudly fulminates in an Oct. 17 editorial against the "dirty work" of porographic filmmakers, while out of the other side it daily advertises the efficacy of the same filmmakers.

Wouldn't The Examiner be far less hypocritical if it put its money where its mouth is and refused to tender for the porographic filmmakers by running their ads, even at the low of some garage bucks?

Cornelius McCarthy
San Francisco

A share of peace prize

I am delighted that the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

As director of Medical Volunteers International, I speak for those Bay Area doctors and nurses who donate their skills and time to bring healing and compassion to refugees in the camps of Thailand and Somalia. That those doctors and nurses who have labored in the healing of our less fortunate neighbors in the world community is due to the fact that the people in the Bay Area care enough to support their efforts.

The people in our community who have donated money and time to the Emergency Relief Fund International and Medical Volunteers International have earned, in part, a share of the Nobel Peace Prize.

I wish to express my thanks to

But Gorsuch isn't the only person in Washington who has

worried. President Reagan himself, I'm sure, is in favor of Gorsuch's plan, not only for its effect on the federal budget, but also for its impact on the business community.

Unfortunately, our president is only concerned about protecting the American people from hostile acts by foreign nations, and has little or no desire to protect U.S. citizens from an equally great domestic danger — air and water pollution.

I believe it's time we all bided Congress to persuasively inform Reagan that the American people want a healthy Environmental Protection Agency, a watchdog without teeth like the Pentagon without MX missiles.

Richard J. Martin
Hillsborough

Tough trio to follow

Ken Alexander's poignant editorial caricature of Golda Meir welcoming Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin to a less troublesome Oct. 20 was a touching tribute to great three ways of the Middle East.

I question, however, whether Meir's motherly advice to Sadat and Begin can ever be realized. She may tell them to "let somebody else do the worrying, but, had to say, just one can do it so well, and with the dynamic results, as the Egyptian, who made peace with Israel, of one-eyed general whose only vision was for peace.

Thomas H. Edwards
San Francisco