

1-800-OLDE IDEAS

By Al Kamen

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House Speaker Newt Gingrich has never been short of new ideas. Just last Sunday, on "Meet the Press," he suggested setting up an 800 hot-line number so folks could report Medicare abuse.

"You give us a call," he suggested, "and if you've proved that . . . there's fraud or there's a level of waste that is just flagrant mismanagement, we'll give you 10 percent of what you save."

A dynamite idea. That's probably what Congress thought in 1863 when it voted to give citizens a right to sue people who defraud the government. Health and Human Services Secretary Donna E. Shalala, testifying to the Senate Finance Committee yesterday, said she didn't "know what kind of history he studies," but "we actually have on the books a law that allows Medicare beneficiaries to receive 10 to 30 percent of recoveries." HHS already has an 800 number for Medicare fraud.

Shalala said the government has received more than \$240 million since 1988 and \$25 million went to the people who blew the whistle.

But Gingrich did suggest something that would be new. "I would not have a problem, as a matter of philosophy, if we put together a national park trust fund and asked people to pay a dollar to visit Yellowstone and the dollar went straight into improving the national parks."

It already costs \$10 per car (\$4 a head if you're hiking in) to visit Yellowstone. The park service collected \$51 million in entrance fees last year. But the money did not go directly back to the parks.

The speaker's suggestion backs a park service proposal to increase fees at some parks and impose fees for the first time at others. The service goes one step further, suggesting that all of the increase not only go to national parks but actually to the park where it is collected.

A version of this failed to pass in the House when the Democrats were in control. It may not do better this time. Seems when Interior Department folks were to testify this week, Rep. James V. Hansen (R-Utah), chairman of the House subcommittee on national parks, disinvented the department.

1-800-YOU ARE WIRED

■ Incoming CIA director John M. Deutch won't have to wait long for controversy. There are rumblings that the agency, looking for meaningful work in the post-commie world, is promoting a new communications operation for all U.S. embassies overseas. There are now two separate operations, one run by the State Department and another by the spooks. The idea would be to merge them and save bundles of money in the long run. But the question is: "Who is going to be in charge?" The non-CIA folks have a queasy feeling about all this.

Banished to a Classified Locale

■ Speaking of the agency, there is sad news to report. Two of our favorite secrecy classifications—WNINTEL or "Warning

Notice—Intelligence Sources or Methods Involved" and NOCONTRACT, meaning "Not Releasable to Contractors/Consultants"—"are no longer authorized for use," according to acting director Adm. William O. Studeman. "The markings . . . have clearly outlived their usefulness," he said in a memo last month to "Intelligence Community Executive Committee Principals."

Not to worry. For another three months, as a little transition, you can still use golden oldies like NOFORN, "Not Releasable to Foreign Nationals," or ORCON—that's not for termite control but for "Dissemination and Extraction of Information Controlled by Originator." After the transition, those terms will be out.

Good old PROPIN, for "Caution—Proprietary Information Involved," is fine, and there'll still be plenty of classics like Secret and Top Secret and the codewords for the various "compartments" (as in SCI, or "Sensitive Compartmented Information"), which are themselves classified, to take care of all your needs.

In Red Square, Russians Tighten Grip

■ The Russians may be making nice on camera in Moscow, but things got a little tense there yesterday for one White House aide. Seems press aide Jeremy Gaines ran afoul of Russian guards at Red Square when he escorted some of the press pool around. "For a few minutes, there was a standoff as the Russian guards refused to allow them to return to the motorcade," said the pool report distributed by the White House.

Gaines "attempted to explain that we were properly credentialed White House press . . . but he was forcibly restrained by one large soldier who pushed him backward with a hand to the chest," according to the pool. "The *coup de grâce* was delivered by a second soldier, who applied a different kind of pressure to the intrepid Mr. Gaines' private parts."

"That got my attention," young Gaines said later. His heart and mind followed.

It's Official . . .

■ John P. White, director of the Center for Business and Government at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and a former assistant secretary of defense, will be the nominee for deputy secretary of

defense. Speaking of the Kennedy school, former Indiana representative **Philip R. Sharp (D)** is to be the new director of the school's Institute of Politics. Sharp has been a lecturer at the school since retiring from Congress last year.

Richard W. Roberts, principal assistant U.S. attorney here, No. 2 in the office, has been named chief of the criminal section of the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department.

Washington labor lawyer **Lance Compa** has been appointed deputy director for law and economics of the Labor Secretariat, based in Dallas, one of the four organizations to be set up under side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement.