

Alice in Washingtonland:

By Art Buchwald

Capitol

Alice was walking down Pennsylvania Avenue when the March Hare asked her, "How would you like to go to a White House press briefing?"

"What's a White House press briefing?" Alice asked.

"That is where they deny what they have already told you, which is the only reason it could be true," the March Hare said.

"It sounds like fun," Alice said.

The March Hare brought Alice into the press room. A chess pawn was standing at a podium.

"Who is that" Alice asked.

"That is the press secretary. He talks in riddles. Listen."

"Why are transcripts better than tapes?" the press secretary asked.

"I don't know the answer to that one," Alice said

to the March Hare. "Why are transcripts better than tapes?" she shouted to everyone's surprise.

The press secretary looked at her with cold blue eyes. "I refuse to comment on that."

Alice looked confused. "Why did he ask us a riddle if he can't give an answer to it?"

The March Hare said, "They don't tell him the answers; they just give him the riddles."

"What a stupid thing," Alice said. "Why is everyone writing in their notebooks?"

"They write down everything he says even though they don't believe him."

"Why don't they believe him?" Alice asked.

"Because he makes things up. He has to or there would be no reason to have a briefing."

White House Make-Believe

Punishment

The press secretary spoke again. "All the evidence is in and it proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the king is innocent of all crimes, ergo, ergo, ergo, et cetera."

"But what about the evidence the king refuses to turn over to the committee?" a dormouse asked.

"That is not evidence," the press secretary replied.

"If there was further evidence to prove the king guilty, he would have gladly given it to the committee. The fact that he hasn't turned it over means regretfully there is none. It's as simple as that."

"It doesn't sound very simple to me," Alice said.

"Why can't we hear all the tapes?" The Mock Turtle asked, "so we can decide for ourselves who is innocent and who is guilty."

"The press secretary replied, "If you heard the tapes it would only prove the innocent are guilty and the guilty are innocent and it would serve no purpose but to confuse you. Besides what you would hear is not what you have read and what you have read is not what you would hear, so it's better not to hear what cannot be read. Isn't that perfectly clear?"

"I feel I'm back at the Mad Hatter's tea party," Alice said.

"Now I will give you some important news today," the press secretary said. "This is on the record. 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe: All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths out grabe."

Everyone wrote it down.

"What did he say?" Alice asked.

"Nothing," the March Hare replied. "He's just stalling until he can go to lunch."