



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

A statement of conscience uttered just before the Secret Service move in armed with Dr. Donna Shalala's Speech Code for the Nation:

Sitting around the office today, we were talking about all the different foods that might be served at the White House now that Hillary and Bill finally made the big time.

We all agreed on the kind of seasoning Bill needs to use on his food: saltpeter (potassium nitrate). —Richard Morgan
Little Rock

[December 14, 1992]

JAMA

(Journal of the American Medical Association)

More desperate measures taken on behalf of the failing planet Earth, this time by the gray lice who have finally subjugated the AMA:

In response to a growing number of members concerned about environmental issues, we are offering all of our members a chance to write a new kind of prescription for *JAMA* and a healthier planet.

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To write your prescription for a healthier planet and voluntarily waive your *JAMA* subscription, detach and mail this postage-paid card today. The money allocated from your dues will be diverted to other important AMA programs such as the National Coalition of Physicians Against Family Violence and Health Youth 2000, to name two.

[November 18, 1992]

Free Lance-Star

(Fredericksburg, Virginia)

An anonymous editorial writer sucks up to Hillary:

If President-elect Clinton lifts the ban on homosexuals in the military, Gen. Powell and everyone else all the way down the chain of command will only have to do what people in the military are trained to do: Follow orders.

That makes the military a particularly easy place to accomplish social change.

[December 5, 1992]

New York Times

A pained communiqué from the *Kultursmog*:

A front-page article on Nov. 30 described signs that the American economy may be recovering. It quoted business people and economists who were beginning to see signs of improvement.

The headline referred to "the Clinton recovery," and the first sentence referred to "the Clinton expansion." Although the article reported suggestions that part of the recovery was due to a psychological reaction to the election of Bill Clinton, most of the statistical evidence of improvement should have been more directly linked to the Bush Administration.

[December 8, 1992]

San Francisco Bay Guardian

In one of the last revolutionary organs left in the Republic, UC Berkeley Prof. June Jordan manifests the old "to the barricades" *esprit* in all its brass and heroism:

A few days after the election, my friend Sue was reading a Curious George book to her Emma, her daughter who is almost 2. Near the end of the book, a little boy's balloon gets caught in a tree. "Who do you think can get the balloon down for that little boy?" Sue asked Emma.

"Bill Clinton," Emma answered. Expectations are getting higher all the time.

[November 18, 1992]

City Pages

(Minneapolis, Minnesota)

On the correspondence page of a great metropolitan gazette, the highly respected Miss Maria Bamford suggests improvements for the real world:

I just wanted to say the article about Nike's natural woman ads ("Pretty on the Inside," 11/25) was just fantastic. I think it's great. There are all these women that are supposedly more powerful now because we are stronger physically when in fact we are spending four hours a day in the gym when we could be writing a book or making a speech or debating feminist aspects of life.

[December 2, 1992]

Washington Post

More of the same from one Richard Blow on his fellow 20-year-olds:

But don't blame us if we're a grim bunch—it's not our fault. Our earliest conscious years had a bleak backdrop: Watergate, gas shortages, inflation, the hostages in Iran. Things didn't get better when the free wheeling '80s rolled around. At a time when we were desperate for a leader, we got . . . Ronald Reagan.

The Gipper's prime lasted from 1981 to 1986, before Iran-contra and lame duck status hit home. Those were also the twentysomethings' formative college years. Reagan was popular among some students, who found him a welcome antidote to the anxious Jimmy Carter. But college students tend to be liberal, and for most of us Reagan was a reviled figure, embodying the opposite of all that mattered to us and not just because of his age. Insincere, hollow, anti-intellectual, Reagan championed hostile positions on the social issues we cared about—abortion rights, racial justice, gay and women's rights. He mocked government's ability to better people's lives, and cared little about finding a substitute. Yet, to be fair, it wasn't just Reagan we were angry at: It was the country, for electing him—not once but twice.

[December 13, 1992]

The Review

(Bainbridge Island, Washington)

Mrs. Sally Frease makes history:

There is a feeling that has been growing inside of me for a long time, and I feel now is the time to do something about it. I have a genuine dislike for Halloween. It's not the candy, or the costumes, or the pumpkins, but it's the "yucky" side of all of these things. There is enough evil in the world without giving it a day to celebrate itself. I know I am not alone in my opinion, but this year I want to do something about it in a positive way.

I would like my family to "celebrate" Halloween by GIVING treats door-to-door, rather than just getting them. It won't be wrapped candy, but rather something special we have made. . . . We will probably still dress in "good guy" costumes (it makes giving anonymous); we will probably take along a bag in case those to whom we give would like to give us treats; and we'll probably carve pumpkins (happy faces, not scary ones).

[November 1, 1992]

University of California Press

The long-awaited announcement of *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body*, by Karen Sánchez-Eppler, assistant professor of American Studies and English at Amherst College, just another proof that the American university is in the hands of the Vandals, the Visigoths, and the Huns:

In this striking study of the pre-Civil War literary imagination, Karen Sánchez-Eppler charts how bodily difference came to be recognized as a central problem for both political and literary expression. Her readings of sentimental antislavery fiction, slave narratives, and the lyric poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson demonstrate how these texts participated in producing a new model of personhood, one in which the racially distinct and physically constrained slave body converged with the sexually distinct and domestically circumscribed female body.

Moving from the public domain of abolitionist politics to the privacy of lyric poetry, Sánchez-Eppler argues that attention to the physical body blurs the boundaries between public and private. Drawing analogies between black and female bodies, feminist-abolitionists use the public sphere of antislavery politics to write about sexual desires and anxieties they cannot voice directly.

Sánchez-Eppler warns against exaggerating the positive links between literature and politics, however. . . .

[Spring 1993]

Associated Press

The sublime Miss Risa Denenberg ushers feminism from the realm of mere pest politics onto the lofty New Age plateau of performance art:

Risa Denenberg believes so strongly in a woman's right to abortion that she has had several, performed in people's homes, even though she wasn't pregnant.

The 42-year-old nurse practitioner waits until she is about to menstruate and then volunteers so small "self-help" groups can learn how to suction the contents of her uterus into a jar with a syringe and tubing.

"Everyone would go to the ends of the Earth to make you comfortable," she said. "I was never concerned anyone would do anything risky. There was a deep sense of awe and responsibility."

Denenberg, who lives in the Bronx, and hundreds of other women around the country regularly get together to practice menstrual extraction, a technique that a group of Los Angeles feminists developed in 1971 after observing equipment in an underground abortion clinic.

[December 14, 1992]

The Tennessean

(Nashville, Tennessee)

Paul A. Speer and Susan E. Avery issue a rebarbative little bull, demonstrating what happens when teacher's pet reaches adulthood:

As the holiday season approaches we submit the following declaration of wishes:

May the good work of building a new civilization proceed smoothly and efficiently.

May our cities be flawless in design and structural form, able to withstand any geologic, climactic [sic] or possibly even cosmic event.

May our education be practical and our information be free.

May we develop our agricultural skills with the realization that our future is to live with plants.

May we unite in the goal of survival for our descendants hundreds of millions of generations from now.

May we foresee and be prepared for all contingencies.

And may we make history that lasts longer than our solar system.

[November 22, 1992]

WATTENBERG

(continued from page 67)

intelligence help, and enhanced air defense. Christopher opposed the aid, lest it be perceived as being provocative by either Iran or the Soviets. For good measure, he suggested inviting the Soviets to join the U.S. in promoting a settlement to the conflict, in effect offering the Soviets parity in an area the President had declared a vital interest of the United States.

The internal debates, according to Brzezinski, reflected "conflicting" strategic views: "Brown and I were now firmly united in the view that the United States had to sustain its commitment to the security of the Persian Gulf, while Muskie and Christopher appeared inclined to use the Iraqi-Iranian war—arguing that the United States was neutral—as an opportunity to dilute the commitment made earlier in the year." Muskie hadn't been at the table when the commitment was made. What was Christopher's excuse?

Christopher's approach to the Iranian revolution—undermining the Shah's capacity to rule while displaying a haughty indifference to the consequences of weakening him—finds something of a parallel in the severe criticism meted out to the Los Angeles Police Department and its former chief, Daryl Gates, by his "Christopher Commission" report on the force in the summer of 1991. Compiled during the anti-LAPD furor sparked by the videotaped beating of Rodney King, the report added fuel to the public relations fire engulfing the department. Critics believe that in its crudely quantitative approach to the LAPD's use of force, its reluctance to acknowledge progress already made in confronting an array of problems and abuses, and its sweeping generalizations, the Christopher report caricatured the department as sadistic and racist, smeared a number of individual officers, and devastated officer morale at a time when the larger community that depends on the police could ill afford it.

The commission focused on forty-four "problem officers" against whom six or more "allegations" of excessive

(continued on following page)

force had been lodged. This method, according to Commander Rick Dince, obscured distinctions between substantiated and unsubstantiated complaints. Prior to recent reforms, the department, he explains, classified complaints as "sustained, not sustained (meaning we couldn't prove it or disprove it), unfounded (which means that investigation was able to establish enough evidence to believe it didn't happen), or exonerated (which means that it happened, but it wasn't misconduct, it was a necessary part of their job)." But such crucial distinctions did not survive the Christopher Commission's statistical sleight-of-hand. "To get numbers that were even close to the numbers they had listed as far as the number of complaints or allegations against an officer, you had to count the unfoundeds or exonerateds, even though they should only count those that are either 'sustained' or 'not sustained,'" Dince recalls. "I have to believe they took a series of incidents, whether proven to be guilty or not, and established that these were problem officers just by the sheer number of complaints they had accumulated."

The commission's use of the category "allegations" in the absence of explanatory background information was itself deceptive, Dince explains, because the same incident often involves multiple "allegations": "A personnel complaint by a citizen against an officer might involve one or more 'allegations' of misconduct, and there might be one or more 'allegations' of excessive force or improper tactics." And the commission refused to provide the department with the background data that would permit analysis of their murky numbers. "They did provide us with the names of the original forty-four, but they did not provide us anything more than the names."

The bottom line, according to Dince: "I know from my own personal involvement with that issue that of those forty-four they identified as 'problem people' at least half of those people do not qualify based on the information available as being potential 'problem officers.'"

So what? defenders of the report might argue—the report was analytical not disciplinary and did not publish the

names of the forty-four. True, the report did not name the forty-four. But the *Los Angeles Times* did, and it's safe to say that the list was not leaked to the paper by the LAPD.

In effectively equating complaints with guilt, Christopher's report established a precedent, argues Gates. "The Christopher Commission report will be the bible for every plaintiff's attorney who wants to sue the city of Los Angeles," he predicts. In a way, that's what he wants to see: "I keep hoping that some judge will allow this into evidence, so that Christopher and the rest of this commission can be brought in and required to prove the accusations that they made in that report."

Many officers agree with Gates's assessment that the commission report, in conjunction with the general drubbing that the LAPD took in the media following the Rodney King incident, had a "devastating" effect on police morale. Did the report and its ill effects on morale contribute to the belated LAPD response to the April riots? "I don't think there is any question about it, because everybody stood back and said restraint is the new order of the day," says Gates. "The Christopher Commission said we were too aggressive, and so a police officer is going to say, 'I'm not going to stick my neck out, because everybody says I'm too aggressive, they say I'm racist. I'm not, but that's what the Christopher Commission said we are, so there's no way I'm gonna stick my neck out.' Police officers are human beings; they react to this kind of thing."

After the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranians finally got serious about negotiating a deal to release the hostages. Christopher led the U.S. side in these indirect talks. In orchestrating the complex pattern of interlocking financial, legal, diplomatic, political, and logistical arrangements the agreement involved, Christopher performed with consummate professionalism, selfless dedication, and considerable ingenuity. Christopher has earned the high praise he has received for his personal role in this effort. While the hostage deal represents Christopher's crowning glory, it does not follow that it was a great moment in American foreign policy, even if Christopher thinks it was.

"I believe that we should grasp, as a central lesson of the crisis, the wisdom in seeking negotiated settlements to international disputes," he wrote. "In the end, it was not the force of our arms, but the force of our arguments—and our economic and diplomatic leverage—that ultimately prevailed."

But very nearly the opposite is true. The Iranians got serious only after the war with Iraq made their frozen American assets suddenly indispensable. Leverage? Warren Christopher was reduced to invoking the specter of the incoming President, feared internationally at the time as unpredictably trigger-happy. Lou Cannon reports in *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* that, according to Lloyd Cutler, "chief U.S. negotiator Warren Christopher warned the Iranian government through an Algerian intermediary that Reagan might be unwilling to approve an arrangement that freed the hostages in return for the release of frozen Iranian assets."

"I . . . take issue with those who contend we should never negotiate over hostages," wrote Christopher. "It is a mistake to equate talking with yielding. We can and should refuse, as we did in this case, to make concessions that might imply any form of victory for the kidnappers. We must resolutely resist the kind of outcome that could invite similar acts in the future." In 1985, he wrote: "There is scant incentive for others to copy the Iranian action in the future." This is debatable, and the counterargument consists of the hostages taken in Beirut throughout the 1980s. Whether the Carter Administration's handling of the hostage crisis "invited" future acts or not, it certainly did not deter them. And though the incentive might have been "scant" to copy the Iranian action, the same Iranian regime found the incentives sufficient to sponsor the same type of acts in Lebanon in the eighties.

"It was largely our respect for human life that made this a crisis," observed Christopher. "Our respect for human life also provides the essential context for any dealing with terrorists in the future." That view of the context shaped Carter's approach to his hostage crisis. And it made him a one-term President. □

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The Wanderer

Like the battery that claims to outlast all its competitors, *The Wanderer* has seen many of its competitors fall by the wayside since it first began publishing in 1867.

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At no time in the 125-year history of *The Wanderer* have the threats to the family, private property and individual liberty been more intense and more dangerous than they are today. A militant anti-religious attitude, promoted by secularists who seek to drive religion and religious convictions from the public forum, is gaining ascendancy at all levels of government and public education.

Yet as Joseph Sobran remarked on the occasion of *The Wanderer's* 125th anniversary:

“In spite of all the rhetoric of pluralism and secularism, we keep discovering that many of America’s political disputes are fundamentally — inescapably — religious. Is a human embryo, for example, nothing more than a shrimp, to be disposed of with equal levity, or is he a creature endowed with the stamp of his Creator?”

“We tend to forget that the Declaration of Independence, though a secular document, is not at all neutral about ultimate questions: It affirms that the secular is subordinate to the sacred, and that citizens of the Earthly City are primarily God’s creatures. *The Wanderer*, to which I am proud to contribute, is one of the few publications that firmly uphold the true American religious and political heritage: the understanding that the secular is only part of a greater reality, and that the state can’t do its job unless it remembers its place.”

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