

Viewpoint

The Battalion

April 21, 1977

Jimmy Carter stars in 'Let's change our mind'

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — If I can manage to keep a straight face, this is going to be a serious commentary on President Carter's decision-making habits. Serious analysis is what the customers of this page want, and that's what you're going to get.

In his press conference last Friday, President Carter used the word "predictable" four times in talking about his economic, energy and nuclear-arms-control policy. (Here, now. Stop that giggling. This is serious stuff.)

It's long been a favorite word of his, an adjective describing the kind of government policy he says will promote "stability" (another favorite) and "efficiency." (Someone lead that gentleman out of the room, and tell him not to come back until he has control of himself.)

The President wanted us to know he still favored "predictability" — even though he had suddenly scrapped the key element in his economic stimulus package and dropped half the water projects from his "hit list" of public works projects targeted for extinction.

Small-minded people may charge Carter with inconsistency, but at the moment that's so easy it's scarcely sport. At his last meeting with Democratic congressional leaders before the Easter recess, he told them it would play hob with working families if Congress didn't deliver the \$50-a-person rebate Carter had promised. Before those same congressional leaders returned from Easter, Carter himself had canceled delivery of the rebate.

(The lady who shouted, "Who killed the Easter Bunny?" is permanently dismissed from this policy seminar.)

Some say Carter's reversal is almost the mirror-image of the flip-flop on economic policy Gerald Ford performed in his first months in office. Ford told Congress in the autumn of 1974 it should raise taxes to "Whip Inflation Now." Luckily, it didn't, and two months later, with the recession under way, he was back asking for a tax cut.

For the last six months, Carter has been "Mr. Stimulus," waving his arms around to fan the economic fires. But now he has ducked into the White House phone booth and come out as Captain Burns the Inflation-Fighter, with his magical, rhetorical ray-gun, which stops price hikes dead in their tracks and keeps wages within invisible guidelines.

Republicans, being small-minded, will attempt to compare Carter's policy adjustments to the Ford flip-flops, which Carter rightly ridiculed in the campaign.

In fact, Carter was dead-right when he said last September that "the most disastrous of the Nixon and Ford (economic) errors was the deliberate attempt to raise energy prices." And he is right today in proposing that all of America's energy prices rise to the OPEC cartel level. That is called situational ethics, or adaptive economics.

For us, class, there are two important lessons to be learned from the \$50 misunderstanding. First, teacher was wrong when he told you about Carter's tenacity in fighting for any position he has taken.

Teacher has now learned from his White House contacts that the President will fight like the devil for those things he truly believes, but not when he is "queasy" about the policy himself.

If you want to know what Carter truly believes, as distinguished from what he recommends just sort-of, the answer is that he truly believes in what he thinks up himself. He did not think up the rebate, it turns out.



The rebate was the economists' baby, out of Brookings by Schultz, not something home-grown in Plains. So Carter felt relieved, not embarrassed, when he abandoned it on the Senate's doorstep.

The trouble is, that reduces the list of truly-believable items in Carter's catalogue almost to none. Presidential policies are rarely one-man constructs. It's hard to believe Jimmy Carter thought up the whole SALT package himself one morning while shaving. Or that the wellhead gas tax idea just popped out his mouth during a conversation with Rosalynn.

But if he only fights for what he really cares about, and he only cares about what he conceived himself, then the stubborn "old South Georgia turtle," as he's been called, may turn out just to be a pussy-cat in disguise.

We must be prepared for that possibility. Second, we must remember that the open administration is still capable of great secrecy. I know, class, that all of you saw "A Day in the Life of President Carter" on NBC Television and read "A Day in the Life of President Carter" in Time magazine. It's easy for you to get the impression that our President is a fellow who lets the press in on everything.

This may be a jolt, pals, but he didn't even clue in the whole Cabinet on his plan to ditch the rebate. Some of them were as surprised as thee and me to get the news.

We're not quite back into Richard Nixon's "shocker-of-the-month" phase, when Nixon spoke only to Kissinger and Kissinger spoke only to God. But when Carter gets policy-queasiness, he likes his privacy. So we must be prepared for future surprise. Class dismissed.

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Letters

Ticket appeal doesn't add up

Editor:

Beware folks, they are after you. Who, you ask? Why the campus police and their little parking ticket books.

I came home to find a statement of my "account" with the police. It seems that I had received four tickets and only paid two of them. Thus I owed \$20.00. I went down to talk to them for I felt there was some error.

They told me at the front desk that I should talk to the assistant Chief. I waited for him. He greeted me with that traditional Aggie greeting, "You got the tickets, why don't you pay them." They pulled my file.

I tried to explain to him that two of the tickets were my fault and I had paid them within seven school days as instructed on the violation notice. However, I felt that there were circumstances to be explained in relation to the other two.

First, one of the tickets, I never received. However, my judge, jury, and executioner standing in front of me said I did in fact receive it because he had the carbon copy in his hand. I guess he never heard of rain or wind or people who pluck tickets from windshields and place them on their's so passing officers think that the car was already ticketed.

My next pending offense was a ticket which I received on the golf course parking lot. If you are out practicing and you don't sign in, indicating you are playing a round of golf, and they come by, well the rest you can figure out. By the way the sign at the entrance of the lot says, "For golf patrons Only." They never mention a parking permit is needed. I should note that I sent this ticket back in to the police with an explanatory note within the seven-day limit. But this didn't count.

At this point I found out some interesting facts concerning parking at the golf course. It seems you need a University permit to park on the lot even if you are playing a round for which you have paid green fees, even if you have paid for a season pass and you are playing. It seems that any time you bring your car on campus you need a parking permit.

How many alumni who do not have parking permits and play golf at our course receive tickets. And what about the other members of our community who pay to use the facilities — do they receive citations?

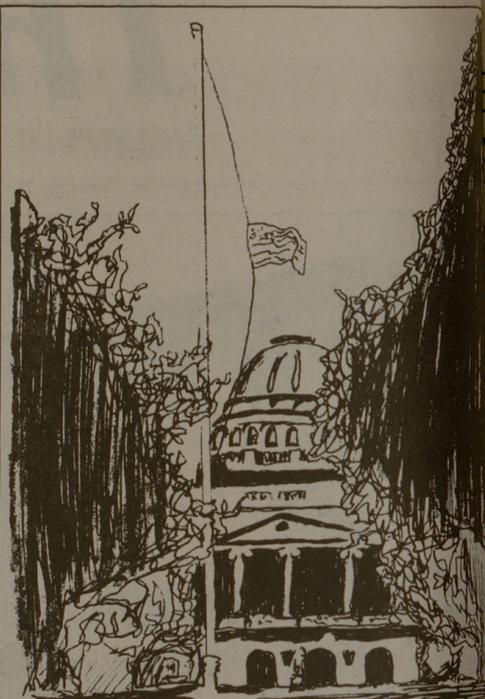
How come people who pay to see events in Rudder Tower park without permit but the golf course is different? People using this facility (in this case a student) must not only pay for the use but also the parking.

Anyway, I left the office paying \$15.00. \$5.00 for a dubious ticket, \$5.00 for a ticket I didn't receive and \$5.00 late charge for either a ticket which was answered within the correct period of time or for a ticket which was not received and thus could not be paid in time.

Somehow it just doesn't add up. —Bennett Lass

Correction

Regarding Debbie Hicks' letter to the editor, "Grading policy needs review" in Tuesday's Battalion, a statement that "Approximately 21 per cent made A's" should have read "Approximately 2 per cent made A's." The Battalion regrets the error.



MUSTER SONG

We gather here to mark the day
Aggies proudly stand
To honor those who've gone before
To the promised land.

Each name is called upon the roll
Comrades answer "Here!"
Trumpets sound their sad goodbye
To those we held so dear.

All heads are bowed in silent pledge
Never to forget
While rifles fire their last salute
Echoes answer yet.

To their memory we'll be true
We will take their place
One for all and all for one
Ever in Thy grace.

We'll meet again another day
Reunion while we pray
To ask Thy blessings on each one
On this Muster Day.

Aggie Muster Day.

Margaret Rudder
1976

The Battalion

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