

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I think I liked it better when registration was less personal."

Making deals better than starting fights

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The negotiations between Dan Rostenkowski, the Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Donald Regan, the stockbroker-magnate turned Reagan administration Treasury secretary, on the shape and size of the new tax bill are really a meeting of two worlds. Regan has a deserved reputation as an executive as tough as those bulls he made famous in his Merrill Lynch TV ads.

But tough on Wall Street is one thing, and tough in the 32nd Ward, on Chicago's northwest side, where Danny Rostenkowski learned politics as a youngster in Richard J. Daley's machine, is something else.

Daley practiced a politics that was disarmingly simple. He kept it simple because a great many of his lieutenants did not have first-class intellects. Daley taught his people a few basic rules and showed that, by applying them consistently, you could amass great power. Understanding a couple of those rules will help you understand what Dan Rostenkowski is about, as he meets his first major challenge as Ways and Means chairman.

One rule is: Don't give up your base. When he was in his 20s, Rostenkowski inherited the 32nd Ward committeeman's job from his father, who had held it for 20 years. He still has it. He went on the public payroll at 24, when he was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives. He has not been off the payroll since. From the state House to the state Senate to the Congress in 1958 — and all the time holding down the committeeman's job that gives him control of city hall and county building patronage and lets him keep an eye on any ambitious upstarts at home.

The second rule for that kind of politician is: Don't overreach yourself. Rostenkowski made that mistake once, in 1970, and the scars are still there. The story is one he tells himself. It seemed like a safe bet, his backing the late Hale Boggs of Louisiana in a tough contest for majority leader of the House in return for Boggs' promise to appoint Rostenkowski as whip or deputy leader.

Boggs won, but when he tried to keep his promise, he was overruled by House Speaker Carl Albert, still simmering over an incident at the 1968 Democratic convention when Rostenkowski — acting under

orders from Lyndon Johnson and Daley — wrested the gavel from Albert's hand and did what Albert was unable to do, gavel down the anti-war, anti-LBJ, anti-Daley demonstrators.

With Albert, Rostenkowski mistakenly underestimated the desire for revenge. And while his eye was on the whip's job, he neglected to protect his base. He was blindsided by Tiger Teague of Texas, who ousted him from the leadership job he had previously snared as chairman of the House Democratic caucus.

Had the deal with Boggs gone through, Rostenkowski and not Tip O'Neill would in all likelihood be Speaker of the House today. It took Rostenkowski 10 years to recover from that mistake — and if you know anything about him, about the 32nd Ward, and the Chicago machine, you know that whatever happens, he is not going to let Ronald Reagan show him up in his first test as Ways and Means chairman.

That does not mean Rostenkowski has to win over Reagan. It just means Reagan can't whip Rostenkowski in public, humiliate him, roll over him. It means, in all likelihood, that if Reagan wants to deal, he will find in Rostenkowski an old-fashioned politician who knows how to deal.

In preparing for that moment, Rostenkowski has followed his two rules. He has protected his base. He had O'Neill give him a 23-12 Democratic majority on Ways and Means — almost literally beyond Reagan's reach. He put forward a one-year tax-cut bill as an alternative to Reagan's three-year plan. But that was just a bargaining chip for the negotiations now under way.

As this is written, the outcome of those negotiations is uncertain. There is still a lot to be tied down.

But Rostenkowski is not likely to push his luck as he did in 1970 by trying to grab more than can be had. He has met Reagan and he has been impressed with him as a political foe, impressed in a way that he never pretended to be by Jimmy Carter. "He's a warm guy — and he's smart," he said of Reagan after that first meeting. He also said, "I promise I won't surprise you, Mr. President."

Others may argue economic theory or fight about where we are on the Laffer curve. Dan Rostenkowski's 29 years as a legislator tell him he's better off making a deal. As they say in Chicago, "Why fight? There's enough for everybody here."

Blue collars could be next fad

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Harvard Business Review, a rural-tinged publication if ever there was one, raises the specter that the blue collar is going the way of the horse collar.

In case you don't know what way the horse collar went, read on.

"The only horse collars you see nowadays hang on old rusty pegs in barns," the magazine says. "Some probably reside in museums in the West; the rest, unused, have been thrown away. Because horses no longer do farm work, farmers don't need horse collars."

Maybe farmers no longer need horse collars, but sports writers do. It would be very difficult to describe scoreless innings in baseball games without saying the teams were "horse-collared."

Even so, there is no doubt that horse collars have fallen into widespread disuse.

Two encyclopedias and an unabridged dictionary I consulted had no listings for horse collars. Horse latitudes, yes. Likewise entries for

horse mackerel, horsenettle, horseradish, horseflies, horseweed, horsetail and even horsefathers.

But of horse collars, these reference works tell us nothing. Unless you happened to read the magazine article mentioned above, you probably are not aware of the importance of horse collars in the onward and upward march of agriculture.

It was the invention of the horse collar, the magazine tells us, that made possible the rise of the horse as "a primary energy source on the farm."

"Prior to that time, farmers had tried putting an oxen's yoke on horses, but it didn't work because it blocked the major blood vessels, choking the horses," it says.

Very well. Then came the invention of the tractor, which pretty well did in work horses.

In 1910, around the time the first farm tractor appeared, there were 26 million horses on American farms. After that, the number started "dropping faster than tractors could come off the assembly lines."

Widows and orphans who had invested their life savings in horse collars were, of course, wiped out. And now Harvard Business Review suggests a similar fate is about to befall the boys who moved off the farm and took tractor factories.

"What will happen to blue-collar workers when robots take over their jobs?" the magazine asks. "Will there be nothing left (of the blue-collar era) but some old clothes on a peg and mementoes kept around in museums?"

A good question. I wish I knew the answer. Anyway, here is a hot investment tip to ponder:

Once blue collars become museum pieces they undoubtedly will have a rising market value. They may even become fadish.

Unless I miss my guess, some la-de-dum luminary will be bringing out a line of blue collars.

All that will be needed to complete the line is a hard hat.

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Lefever, Senate have trouble

By JUAN J. WALTE
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Ernest Lefever's warnings that "the Russians are coming" is not everybody's view of the world in the early 1980s, particularly not of most Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

But if the panel rejects Lefever as President Reagan's top human rights official it won't be mainly because of his strongly held conviction that the Soviets are the worst rights violators and greatest threat to peace.

After all, the policy views expressed by Lefever to the committee follow generally those of his two superiors — Reagan and Secretary of State Alexander Haig.

So, why all the commotion surrounding his nomination?

To be sure, the strong opposition to, and just as strong support for, Lefever by more than a score of congressmen, private citizens and groups was centered on his view of "quiet diplomacy" for authoritarian (most friendly) regimes as against public condemnation of totalitarian (mostly communist) regimes.

But those witnesses don't vote for confirmation. Senators do and it was clear after two days of hearings that an alleged conflict of interest rather than ideology is what will decide Lefever's fate in the Senate.

That involves Lefever's Washington-based Ethics and Public Policy Center, the

Nestle Corp. and — almost as a sideline — the controversy about the use of breastfeeding substitute infant formula in the Third World.

Lefever was questioned at length about a \$25,000 contribution from Nestle to his center and his center's reprint of an article which sided with the view of infant formula manufacturers — of which Nestle is the largest.

He denied any connections between the Nestle contribution and the center's article. But he failed to convince key Democrats and the confirmation hearings will be reopened this week to address only this issue.

Briefly, in September 1980, Lefever's center reprinted a Fortune magazine article about "The Corporation Haters" on the anti-Nestle boycott because of the use of infant formula.

Lefever acknowledged that in March and August 1980, his center received \$25,000 in contributions from Nestle and

that he received a mailing list from Washington lawyer (Thomas Ward) who he described as "an occasional contributor to Nestle."

But Lefever may have touched a nerve when he compared contributions to his center to political contributions. "Just like politics," he said, "senators and other officials receive contributions from many sources. He stressed that even if Nestle gives us none, or a million dollars, I have proceeded and written my own independent article (in the Wall Street Journal) because I happen to believe the issue is important."

"Anybody who knows me at all knows that I am not in any way for sale or rent," told Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., in a lengthy and heated exchange.

He challenged the committee to provide evidence of an alleged conflict of interest. None was presented at the May 18 hearing but by issuing a challenge he may have sparked the follow-up sessions this week.

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