

Slouch By Jim Earle



"Have you noticed that it's the same ones whose rides leave early whose rides leave late for coming back?"

President compared to English prime minister

By DAVID BRODER

WASHINGTON — In the column-writing business, you learn quickly to cherish — and never to ignore — coincidences. One morning last week, a visiting British member of Parliament remarked that Ronald Reagan struck him, not as the "king of Capitol Hill," perhaps, but at least as prime minister. Barely three hours later, Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Calif.) told his colleagues in the House Democratic caucus that the main reason for their miseries in the first eight months of the year was that "the Republicans basically have moved to a parliamentary system, with all the discipline that involves."

If both a visiting parliamentarian and a leader of the opposition (Coelho is chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee) can see Reagan in prime ministerial guise, then it might behoove even the dullest columnist to examine the proposition.

I have done so, and my conclusion is that thinking of Reagan's government in parliamentary terms does give you some interesting insights — but it is basically a mischievous notion.

The distinction between a presidential and a prime ministerial system of leadership is simple. (I speak with authority, having just looked again at a very useful book called "Presidents and Prime Ministers," which Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman edited and the American Enterprise Institute published last year.)

The prime minister is first among equals in a cabinet system, sharing collective responsibility with cabinet colleagues for the formulation of national policy. Cabinet policy becomes government policy through the ratification device of a disciplined party majority in the parliament; if discipline fails, the government falls, and everyone faces the voters. It is that simple.

The president, on the other hand, has sole responsibility for the formulation of executive branch policy. But his ability to make his policy government policy depends entirely on his political skills in persuading the independent legislators and the often recalcitrant interest group/bureaucratic alliances to go along with his plans.

In those stark and oversimplified terms, it is easy to see why both the British M.P. and Coelho might independently remark on the "prime ministerial quality" of Reagan's presidency. Clearly, he is sharing the responsibility for basic policy formulation with this cabinet. He said he would

have "cabinet government," and he is doing so. He is guided by his ministers — Stockman and Meese, by Baker and Regan, by Haig, Weinberger and Watt.

That was the point the visitor from Westminster noted. What Coelho focused on was the extraordinary degree of discipline that congressional Republicans have accepted — or imposed on themselves.

Much has been written about "defecting Democrats" giving Reagan his budget and tax victories in the House.

Broader voting statistics Coelho collected from Congressional Quarterly and displayed to the caucus bear out the point. Through the August recess, House Democrats had a party unity score (on all the roll-calls on which the Democratic and Republican majorities diverges) of 69 percent. That was as high a score as they have had in the last 15 years; it was one point below the unity score for Lyndon Johnson's "miracle Congress" of 1965; it was seven points higher than the score they had in 1974, facing crippled Richard Nixon and unelected Jerry Ford.

But the House Republican party-unity score this year was an extraordinary 79 percent, higher than in any year in the 1960s or 1970s and 10 points higher than the GOP average for those two decades.

So both Coelho and the British M.P. are right — in one way. But they are also fundamentally wrong, because the Reagan-Republican, prime ministerial/parliamentary system is purely a political artifact, with nothing to sustain it in the written or unwritten constitution of this land, as there is in Great Britain.

It exists only because Reagan has forged what are for now powerful personal and political bonds to his cabinet and his party in Congress. He has led them by force of personality and by maintaining his hold on public opinion. But those bonds can be sustained only if his economic program surmounts the current wave of skepticism and his leadership continues to be proved in the budget and foreign-policy tests that lie immediately ahead.

He is only as secure governmentally as he is strong politically.

What Richard Rose wrote remains true: "In the cabinet system, a prime minister's problem is how to give direction to a government that is already there, that is, organized and capable of collective action. In America, by contrast, there is no collective authority ready at hand for the president's use ... A president is required to create government."

Remember White House promises

By JERELYN EDDINGS

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Some congressmen are remembering White House promises and near-promises that seem to be slipping out of the administration's focus in light of the continued budget frenzy.

And they are concerned — they always term it "concerned" — with the new developments unfolding.

During this summer's budget debates, President Reagan and his top aides did a lot of listening, a good deal of nodding and made a number of promises about applying budget cuts evenhandedly.

They won the support of moderate Republicans from the Northeast and Midwest partly on the strength of those promises — along with a some heavy-handed political pressure.

As a result of discussions with moderate and liberal Republicans, whose support he needed on budget votes, Reagan backed off some attempts to cut social welfare programs such as fuel assistance to the poor and Medicaid.

The moderates thought they had rescued some federal funds — at least for fiscal 1982 — as a result of those negotiations.

The administration also said publicly and privately that it would not spare the Defense Department from the next batch of budget cuts. It took a little longer to identify waste at the Pentagon, but they knew it was there and they would apply the same standards to the cutting military waste as they did to domestic waste, fraud and abuse.

Of course, they wouldn't take any steps that would damage national security. And the moderate Republicans didn't want them to. They just didn't want their constituents to suffer unduly while the Pentagon prospered.

Now, with administration plans for a second round of 1982 budget cuts to meet its original goal, those Republicans are "concerned" that the administration is backing off their summer understanding.

Reagan recently announced plans to cut \$2 billion from defense as part of an effort to trim another \$16 billion next year. For the next three years, he proposed a \$13 billion reduction in military spending, when domestic programs may be asked to cut about \$75 billion.

The "gypsy moths," a group of about 30

moderate House Republicans, say aren't buying that. They say the administration must cut \$9 billion next year — or they may not support the package.

They went along with \$35 billion in domestic spending reductions this year — some of them had to swallow — but they are letting the president know they expect the evenhandedness promised before.

"We would be very concerned if administration were to say those promises made in the spring were invalid," said Rep. Carl Pursell of Maryland, a leading "gypsy moth."

They say they believe the administration is floating trial balloons when it is delaying cost of living increases for recipients of Social Security, food stamps and other benefit programs.

And they refused to respond to a trial balloon. But the gypsy moths are making it clear they would like to see the latest ones.

What they would like, instead, is an administration to remember what the moderates saw as commitments and come with a more balanced package.



It's your turn

Aggie football team has Polish Power

Editor:

With Gary Kubiak, the great quarterback of the Aggies this fall, I think of the many great Polish-American football players of the past: (e.g.) the immortal bronks, Nagurski of Minnesota University and Chicago Bear's fame. Nagurski, who was All-American, both as fullback and tackle, is rated by many experts as the top football player of all time.

Johnny Lujack, is rated the greatest quarterback of all time, at Notre Dame, and another Pol-Am-Vic Janowicz, was among Ohio State's best ever. Alex Wojciechowicz is probably the best of all time at Fordham University and Steve Bartkowski is among the greatest from the University of California Bears. The Pittsburgh Steeler linebacker, All-Pro Jack Ham, who is of Polish descent, is one of Penn State's greatest, along with Pro Hall of Fame's Chuck Belnorik. Other all-time Polish football stars include Frank Tripucka, Dick Modzelewski, Ed Danowski, Bill Osmanski, Walt Michaels, and Frank Gatski. Also, Bill Swiacki and Ron Jaworski.

Nearly 300 Polish-Americans have been pro football players over the years.

If Kubiak lives up to his potential, the Texas Aggies could be nationally rated this fall.

I humbly say — Polish Power!

Joe Kowalski
Ashlabula, Ohio

Funding appreciated

Editor:

The members of Company E-2, the Mascot Company, would like to express their

sincere thanks to the residents of Mosher and Spence halls who raised more than \$400 to help cover travel expenses. Reveille and Drew Laningham, the Corporal, and enabled them to attend Boston College game. It is only through support of present and former students Rev is able to represent Texas A&M conference, away games. The sacrifices these girls made is more than can be paid for by any student. Again, our thanks.

Mark F. Martin
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