

Laurel, Hardy in Washington

by Arnold Sawislak
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Remember this? Whenever Laurel and Hardy found themselves in some horrendous situation, Oliver Hardy would deliver the classic line: "Now you've gotten us in another fine mess, Stanley."

Hardy often was as responsible as Laurel for the fiasco at hand, but many people have a fixed image of the cringing Laurel as hopelessly incompetent because the loudly assertive Hardy always said so.

This spring in Washington, it looks as if President Reagan is trying to play Oliver Hardy to Congress' Stanley Laurel.

This is a different scenario than last year, but both reflect the "no fault" syndrome of American politics. No one in the White House or on Capitol Hill has taken responsibility for a mistake in government since John Kennedy took the blame for the Bay of Pigs.

In 1980, Reagan blamed the Democrats who had dominated Washington for "stagflation" — rising prices and a slack economy. He said his plan for tax and budget cuts (with the exception of defense spending increases) would stimulate business, thus producing more tax revenues and restrain inflation.

He got most of what he demanded from Congress and inflation (except for interest rates) did recede. But business slumped badly and a new specter appeared — a prospective federal deficit of \$100 billion or more.

The administration reluctantly accepted this sea of red ink, but not even some of Reagan's loyalists in Congress could swallow it. Idea to cut the

deficit began appearing like crocuses through the late winter snow.

One obvious idea was to cut spending even more. Reagan proposed that for domestic programs, but would not accept cuts in defense spending. Another way would be to increase selected taxes or to suspend the big income tax reduction due this summer. No way, said the President.

As the budget picture came into focus (Reagan forecast a \$91.5 billion deficit but a lot of people think that is wildly optimistic), the President told his critics to propose a better solution: "Put up or shut up."

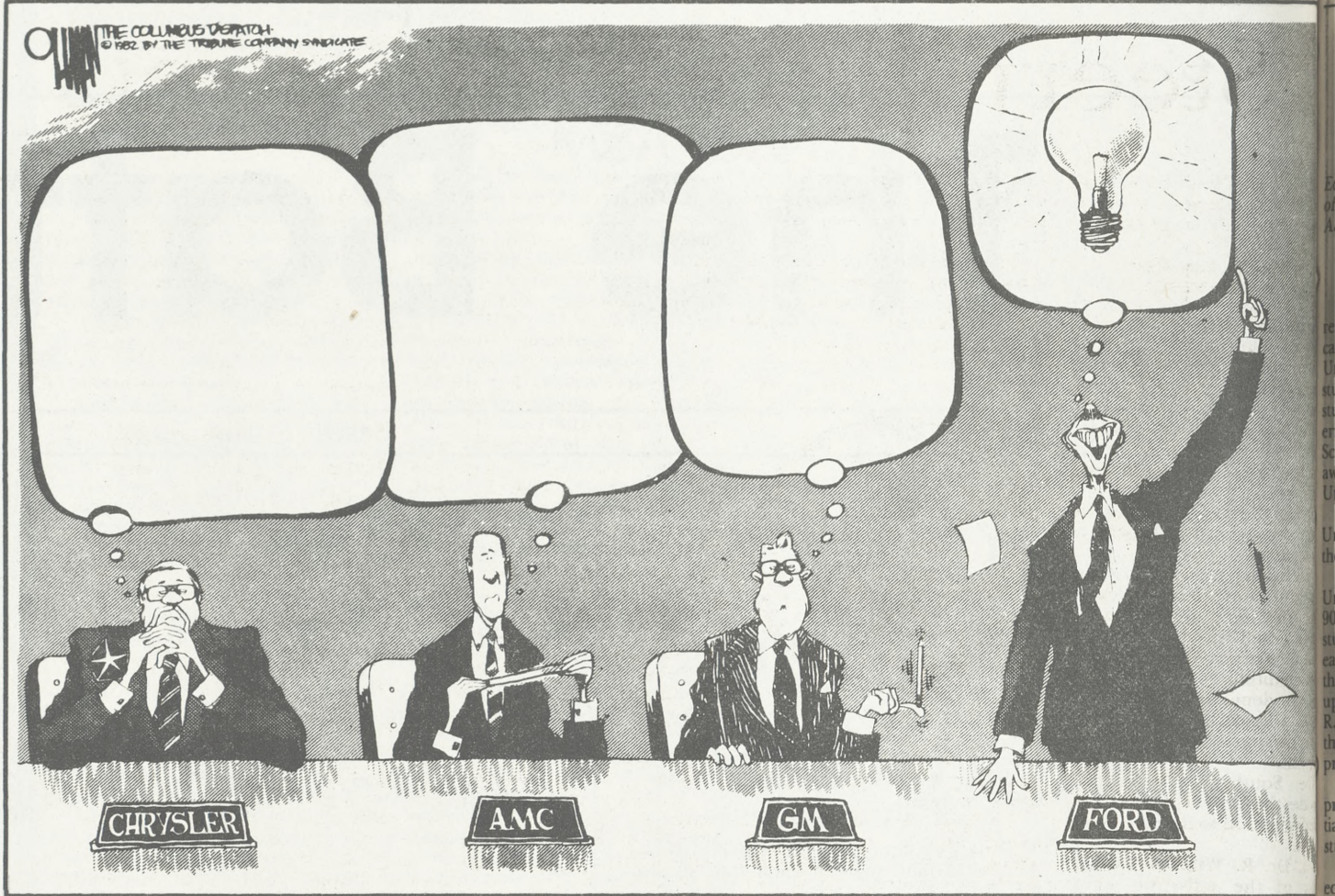
And that is where Congress gets cast in the part of Stan Laurel.

If it increases taxes or suspends the scheduled cut, Reagan can blame it for robbing the people and ruining his recovery program.

There is only one way out of this for Congress. It has to get Reagan to propose whatever changes in the budget-tax mix that will be needed to reduce the deficit to some acceptable level.

If both the House and Senate were controlled by the Democrats, it would be easy for Reagan to let Congress stew and take the flak for either action or delay.

But the Senate is run by the GOP and Reagan demonstrated last year that he can beat the Democratic leadership of the House if he really tries. So now he, or at least his friends on Capitol Hill, risk being stuck with at least some of the blame for the "fine mess" his programs seem to have produced. What with congressional elections coming in November, the President may have no choice but to give up the part of Oliver Hardy.



Reagan, not appointed officials should speak on current issues

By David S. Broder

WASHINGTON — House Minority Leader Bob Michel was in an unusually expansive mood when he met with reporters for breakfast last week. For 25 minutes after the formal session had been adjourned and the remains of the scrambled eggs had been cleared away, the Peoria Republican sat around schmoozing about his job, the Congress and the Reagan administration.

He said so much that we had a surplus of copy. One of the items that didn't make the papers was his disclosure that he has urged President Reagan to deliver a television address pretty soon on the defense needs of the country.

Reagan needs to spell out his strategy and the way the weapons systems he is recommending fit into the overall design, Michel said. "Not just in terms of a Russian threat," he added, but in enough specifics that the unemployed workers in Peoria can understand why the President thinks we have to spend these extraordinary sums for new arms.

Otherwise, he implied, Reagan can expect to see Congress slice the defense buildup to save some of the budget-threatened domestic programs.

Some of us at the table thought back to Reagan's evident nervousness about explaining arms policy last fall, when he quickly lateraled to Defense Secretary Cap Weinberger the task of answering White House reporters' questions about the rationale for the MX-missile and the B-1 bomber decisions. We wondered about Michel's assumption that Reagan

could make everything make sense.

But if a president has a reputation as the Great Communicator, then it is not surprising that his supporters want him to exercise those talents on behalf of embattled projects.

There is more to it than that, however. What his well-wishers see is that the public is beginning to lose its sense of where Reagan is leading the country — and why. The vision and purpose he communicated so well in 1981 have been blurred by the consternation over his budget deficits and by a series of ill-coordinated statements and actions by administration officials in vital domestic and international fields.

Reaganism has lost its focus, and the President has to redefine it.

Press conferences don't help. Reagan's imprecision in answering questions adds to the misgivings. So why not do what he does well: give speeches to put the main goals of his administration back in focus?

Exactly that suggestion was made in print last week by one of the President's leading academic cheerleaders, Harvard political scientist James Q. Wilson.

Writing in *The American Spectator*, Wilson said Reagan has erred in putting so much emphasis on cutting the size of government. "The size of government is important in some ways," he concedes, but what really matters to most people "is that government, whatever its size, follow right principles."

Wilson says that Reagan ought to address in "major and sustained pres-

idential remarks," at least four topics.

The first is defense, including the use of military power and the obligations of military service. The second is the question of income maintenance: defining the "safety net" and setting realistic criteria for including and excluding certain programs and beneficiaries.

The third is the environment: what resources need to be developed, which are to be preserved, and how the distinction will be made. And the fourth is the issue of race relations: how equality of opportunity will be protected without the tools Reagan has rejected, like busing and quotas.

"At present," Wilson says, quite correctly, "each of these four issues is being managed by lesser officials, on the basis of imperfectly understood criteria, in ways that lead the press and much of the public to see the matters in narrow partisan terms."

Wilson says — again correctly, I think — that these questions are inherently important for the President to delegate. He himself — and not his appointees or subordinates — needs to define the terms of public debate.

Implicitly, it seems to me, both he and Michel are urging Reagan to involve himself more fully, not just in articulating policy in these areas, but in thinking through that policy within the administration.

They are asking him to be presidential, in the basic sense of that word. Coming from them, it is advice he cannot afford to ignore.

Slouch By Jim Earle



"He's so desperate for mail that he's even considered changing his name to 'Boxholder.'"

Letters: Teaching the world a lesson about torture

Editor:

This letter is addressed to Perez de Cuellar, Secretary-General of the U.N.

Khomeini's regime in the past three years has taught the world a lesson about torture, terror and a destruction of Islam and Iran, that is both stark and undeniable: as a means of organizing trepidation and providing for the well-being of a citizenry, Akhondism (the role of the clergy) is a failure. The result is a society that perversely manages to combine contradictory vices: profligacy on the part of collective and scarcity for the individual; Draconian control and hopeless inefficiency; laziness and zealotry; cynicism and dogmatism; subservience and bullying. Khomeini is a demagogue.

In Iran, there are over 30,000 political prisoners in doleful conditions. This is more than three times the numbers held by the Shah's bloody regime. How long will these atrocities continue, and who will put an end to it?

Presiding over this disaster is an entity that calls itself the Iranian Republican Party (IRP), a euphemism that the founders of Khomeini's regime adopted in 1978.

We ask for your support in seeking an end to the atrocities perpetuated by the IRP. In keeping with the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, we ask all heads of states, governments, parliaments, political parties, media, councils, unions, and democratic forces of the world to condemn the widespread torture and executions by Khomeini's regime. We petition the U.N. to send their

own delegation, and a delegation from Amnesty International, to Iran, in order to investigate these violations of human rights. Finally, we request that a Red Cross delegation be sent to Iran to treat those who, at present, do not receive first-aid.

Dr. Bill Edwards
The Telecommunications Society

Freedom of speech question

Editor:

MSC Political Forum, a nonpartisan organization, planned a program featuring Gus Hall, who is and has been General Secretary of the Communist Party USA since 1959. (Hall canceled due to illness.) This is an indictment of those people who feel that freedom of speech should be reserved for only those who believe as they do.

Members of MSC Political Forum spent large amounts of time and money attempting to make the public aware of this program. Others, it seems, have spent considerable time and effort removing and vandalizing the advertisements. Thursday night a banner hanging on the MSC walkway publicizing the Gus Hall program was cut down and stolen. The walkway banner area is reserved for University approved programs and is important to inform students and faculty of this University of programs and events of all kinds.

Political Forum sponsors programs from across the political spectrum. Americans have always prided themselves on their right to freedom of speech and the protection of this right for others. Has freedom of speech disappeared from the Texas A&M campus? This program is not designed to convert, only to inform. If anyone has any comments they should attend the program and then voice their opinion, instead of cowardly vandalizing advertisements in the dark of night.

Personally, I despise the entire concept of communism, but it is not my position to decide other peoples' opinions for them.

Gary L. Hickman

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 21 other signatures.

Letter tells true story of Taps

Editor:

For a long time now, I have felt that something needed to be said about the apparent apathy in attending Silver Taps. I never really knew though, just how to express my concern for this problem, while also expressing somehow, the experience of Silver Taps itself. Well, now I don't have to. The article written by Ross Rutherford expressed everything I've ever wanted to say about the beauty and solemnity of Silver Taps and how little it asked of us as people and

Aggies. For those who didn't or haven't yet read his article, please take the time to read it. (Battalion, March 5, 1982 pg. 2). It's Aggies like Ross Dale Rutherford that make me so proud to be a part of this

great institution.
Gig'em Ross

Darrell Pickard
Dunn H.

The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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