

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"There he is! He's the one that wrote the program that gave us our fall schedules."

Can Reagan save us from hazardous fall?

by David E. Anderson

WASHINGTON — National policy debates are conducted with symbols and metaphors — verbal shorthand that is the politician's equivalent of the demonstrator's placard.

Sometimes such metaphors stand for or summarize an entire administration, as in Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Other times they summarize a complex set of programs and proposals with an overarching goal, such as Richard Nixon's Project Independence, which sought to describe his administration's energy policy.

But as William E. Davis, director of the National League of Cities' Office of Policy Analysis and Development, points out, not only do these metaphors describe, they also "greatly influence the nature and direction of our thinking about public policy issues."

Davis made his comment in introducing a recent study by his colleague at the League of Cities, William R. Barnes, of one of the Reagan administration's most popular metaphors — the "social safety net."

The safety net metaphor was first used by the administration in its "Program for Economic Recovery" of Feb. 18, 1981, which noted a number of economic security programs for the poor already existed, and asserted:

"The President believes that the essential social safety net must be maintained."

"Indeed," the plan added, "the President's budget reform plan is animated by and must be understood in terms of its motivation to preserve and maintain those social safety net programs that represent the accrued permanent consensus of the American people over the past five decades."

Almost everyone now agrees the safety net is in shreds and the administration has backed away from its commitment to preserving — in its mixed metaphor — the "core" programs of the net.

This, however, is of less concern to Barnes

than that the metaphor essentially misdirects the policy debate over the poor and the programs aimed at alleviating their needs.

"The 'social safety net' is misnamed and thus misleading," Barnes argues. "For the most part, the problems that poor people face today are at least as 'economic' as they are 'social.'"

And it defines the problem incorrectly, according to Barnes.

"The image conjured involves a person falling, say, from a tightrope or from a burning building," he said. "It implies that people fall out of the economic system."

"The reality is that large numbers of people are structured out of the primary economic system — to use the metaphor, they never got 'up' or 'in' enough to fall 'down' or 'out' at all," he said. "Our economy is constructed such that many people being and remain at or below the level of the 'net': can one fall up into a safety net?"

Barnes said that because the metaphor incorrectly defines the problem — by failing to understand the realities of poverty and the position of the poor relative to the economy — it is hardly surprising that it does not help us very much in figuring out solutions.

"A 'net' is intended to 'catch' people who 'fall'; this is indeed a worthy endeavor," Barnes said. "but such a net does not address the needs of those who are already 'down,' who remain 'down' for a long time or who need help to move 'up.' The very metaphor itself tells the poor that the problems are not the stuff of this policy debate."

Barnes has a couple of metaphors himself to suggest for the debate: "floors" and "ladders."

Those metaphors suggest that the goals of anti-poverty programs are to ensure that all households have at least a minimal standard of living, that is "to establish a 'floor' below which no American household will fall," and to create 'ladders,' programs by which people can climb up to and above the 'floor' and out of dependency.

Bureaucracy: 'I'm so confused'

Governments can discuss cutting all the red tape associated with running a burgeoning bureaucracy, but unless a person comes face to face with it, they may not be aware of it.

I've never had much problem with the bureaucracy at Texas A&M University because I've never had to deal with it in my three years here. But, I'm making up for it my senior year, and I've lost the battle each time.

I realize attempting to get a loan at the beginning of school is a trying experience, so I decided to play it smart and take out a senior-ring loan during the summer. After putting in my application, I returned on the appointed day to get my loan.

I was told three times to come back at other times because the loan office wanted to fill tuition and book loans first. When told to come in the first day of school, I patiently waited in line 30 minutes, dreaming of the ring I wanted to order. However, I was informed my loan application had been lost and that: "anyways, the office had decided to wait until next week before handling ring loans, so it didn't really matter."



I'll drop the issue of the lost loan application to concentrate on what's bothering me — the lack of communication on this campus.

At the loan office — why didn't they inform ring loan students in the beginning to wait until next week? It would have saved them the problem of having to look up our applications each time and then orally tell us we couldn't have it yet. And we wouldn't have to tie up already long lines that other loan-seeking students were trying to get through. A sign on the door would have sufficed nicely to say they weren't giving out any ring loans.

I can't place the blame on just having mer, the lack of communication was obvious among the various departments and colleges themselves.

Paperwork — inevitable when dealing with institutions — can be aggravating those having to fill it out, but something wrong with the way the institutions communicating when the paperwork confuses those who hand it out, and one can decide on what form is the correct one.

It only makes the people caught in the middle angry and confused and can lead them to avoid going to the institution for the help the institution should be performing.

I know there are officials and officials that do communicate, and I've appreciated their help over the years — however when someone goes to another area of bureaucracy that doesn't communicate, its problems may be the only things one sees.



PSST, MENACHEM... I THINK GENERAL SHARON NEEDS A REST

Move over — that's my seat

by David Fisher and John Ryan

Battalion Staff

Ah, the first day of class has come and gone once more. One of these days, we'll finally get all our classes in one building. It'd be nice if we could talk them into counting it as our P.E. classes because we sure get in shape with all that class-hopping.

But that's not what we're here to ramble about today. Have you ever paid attention to people and their habits in choosing a seat? Choosing a seat for the semester can be an interesting proposition. This ritual takes place at the start of the semester and involves a variety of people and methods. It's easier to put them in categories, so here goes.

Front row people: There are usually two types of people in this category — the ones who want to butter up the teacher in an effort to help their grade and the ones who just can't see too well. What can we say about the ones who can't see well? But for those who try to help their grade by counting the freckles on the teacher's face, hopefully he has some exotic disease and sprays the front row when he talks. One can usually count on these people to keep the class from progressing very well, because they ask the teacher some question of little importance or no relevance every five minutes to further remind the teacher of their presence and name.

Backrowers: No, that's not some new swimming stroke. These are the ones who would just rather not be there, so they find a quiet place to in which to hibernate for the semester. They can be identified by the proverbial answer of: "Could you repeat that please?" when called on to answer a question. They can usually be counted on not to get in the way of the normal flow of the class because you rarely know that they are present, unless they snore loudly.

Date-hunters: You can easily spot these people by the fact that it takes them fifteen minutes and three seat changes to get next to the most attractive member of the opposite sex in the class. These people usually resemble a bird dog on point to the intended game. They frequently stand in the back of the classroom picking out their intended quarry when 80 percent of the seats in the classroom

are open. The worst of this species, though, is the one who walks in front of the class so everyone will look at them, and then heads for their victim. Their conversations to the person sitting next to them usually work into the boyfriend/girlfriend status within their first two sentences, to determine the usefulness of sitting next to that person any longer.

Those who cooperate to pass: These are the ones who holler at some old acquaintance all the way across the room so they can have a seat saved for them in a close proximity to that person. Then, they trot around the room to beat off anybody who might try to steal the coveted seat near their friend. Some of these people form little study groups to help them pass. The only problem is that sometimes the

teacher catches on, and they have to suffer the embarrassment of watching the teacher tear their exam to shreds in front of the class.

Plain old students: These are the ones who just try to blend into the fabric of the class and hope they don't get seen or called on. They can usually be counted on to study hard and try to make good grades. We can't tell much more about them because we haven't found them.

Well, those are the seat seekers. Now you know what to watch out for when you found your seat and someone sits next to you and looks at you like they want to hang their head on their trophy wall. So have a good semester and good seat seeking.

Berry's World



"It seems Poland isn't the ONLY place where dissent and anger continues."

The Battalion

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