

Slouch By Jim Earle



"He claimed that it violated his right to privacy because I knew his grades. Does he have a case if I'm his teacher?"

Reagan's world of high technology

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

Ronald Reagan's State of the Union message might as well have originated from Disney World's Carousel of Progress as well as from Washington's House of Representatives. Ronald Reagan seemed more interested in the promises of tomorrow than the problems of today. "In almost every home and workplace in America, we are already witnessing ... the first flowering of the manmade miracles of high technology," Reagan said. Unfortunately, the president may never more than sense the future.

By proposing a freeze on federal spending (meaning further cuts in social programs), the president would reduce our nation's capacity to lay a new industrial base for the future. With his 1984 budget are sure to come reductions in human-capital programs that would form the very foundation of high-technology development.

No natural evolution will produce a shift to a safe and happy computerworld. Enormous costs are involved in re-educating and restraining of workers for high-tech employment. California and Massachusetts are prominent leaders in this area, in part, because high tax bases support superb education and health service institutions which, in turn, breed and attract talented people. Only in this environment will high-tech businesses thrive.

"Aside from some of the rhetorical references to high tech in his speech," said Robert Reich, an economist at Harvard University, "there was no sense as to how we get from today's world to the high-tech world of tomorrow. In reality, the president was locking the door to high technology."

According to Reich, the government must provide job training for those in threatened occupations, and provide incentives to develop new businesses in regions hurt most by unemployment. Only

then will passage to the promised land be assured.

Indeed, the record shows that private industry won't underwrite the development costs without federal help. Boston's Digital Equipment Corp. plant, visited by President Reagan on Wednesday, was built with funds from the Economic Development Agency (EDA) as well as Boston's Community Development Corp. (Reagan began to phase out EDA in 1981). No other companies have followed Digital's lead in moving to a 40-acre industrial park in Boston's Roxbury district.

"A strong government must be active in putting up part of the cost of long-term investment in people, in capital, in new products and processes for high technology to make it," added Reich. "The risks and costs are too high for the private sector to do it alone."

No less fascinated by the promises of microprocessors, the Democratic Party, in its videotaped response to the president's speech, sounded only slightly more realistic. While proposing strong commitments to job training and public-private investment, they embraced a similarly vague notion of business "breakthroughs" that would bring about recovery.

Of course, even with government cooperation, microelectronics won't solve the unemployment problem.

The W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research reported this week that robots will eliminate 13,000 to 24,000 jobs in Michigan while creating only 5,000 to 18,000 new job openings.

No politician can accurately predict the future and then prescribe a best course for a nation. And even Reagan admitted that "we have a long way to go." Yet in the search for high-tech security, Reagan seems mesmerized by the end and ignorant of the means.

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White House media relations

by Norman D. Sandler
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Relations between the White House and the news media have been on a roller coaster for years. But at midterm, President Reagan has raised new questions about their symbiotic and sometimes combative co-existence.

Such questions always are vexing for two institutions that so depend — and use — one another.

But deputy White House press secretary Larry Speakes himself raised the level of debate last week by accusing the media of a "steady denigration of the president."

"My question to you," Speakes said in a speech, "is can the modern presidency survive the modern media?" Reagan enjoyed a much talked-about "honeymoon" for much of his first term — not because reporters went easy on him, but because he appeared to be making progress toward the goals of his presidency.

Well into his second year, Reagan battled Congress on issues ranging from spending cuts to tax hikes to the sale of AWACS radar planes — and won.

But all good things must come to an end. After 20 months, impatience with policies that failed to end the longest recession since World War II and the worst unemployment since the Depression weakened Reagan's political muscle.

His defeats at the end of the 97th

Congress were untimely and compounded by Republican losses in the November elections.

As Reagan neared midterm, the budget process — normally completed by early January — labored on, beset by indecision and indications that political realities would force him to "stray the course" rather than "stay the course."

Coupled with a lower approval rating lower than his predecessors, this produced a rash of critical midterm assessments. Reagan complained he was up to his "keister" with public airings of what he and his advisers were doing in private.

Even after issuing new guidelines for contacts with reporters and embarking on an public relations offensive to show Reagan as compassionate, concerned and in control, some in the White House still complain of a lack of direction.

One aide says decisions about where Reagan should go and what he should say are made too hastily. Print reporters complain, with merit, that the White House caters to television images in planning Reagan's outings.

Part of the problem is that Reagan is at times his own worst enemy. The "Great Communicator" in fact has been spotty in his recent speech deliveries, even when aided by teleprompter.

The other part of the problem is how the White House handles his gaffes.

The most recent example was his trip to Boston.

Until minutes before his departure, Reagan was home free. The network

news would show just what his imageshapers wanted: Reagan with his job trainees and hoisting a beer in a blue workingclass neighborhood.

But as he rambled on in response to a final question from high-tech business executives, Reagan raised the idea of abolishing the corporate income tax.

The president of the United States who had just sought to demonstrate concern for blacks in Roxbury and winging stiffly in Dorchester was suggesting massive tax relief for corporate America.

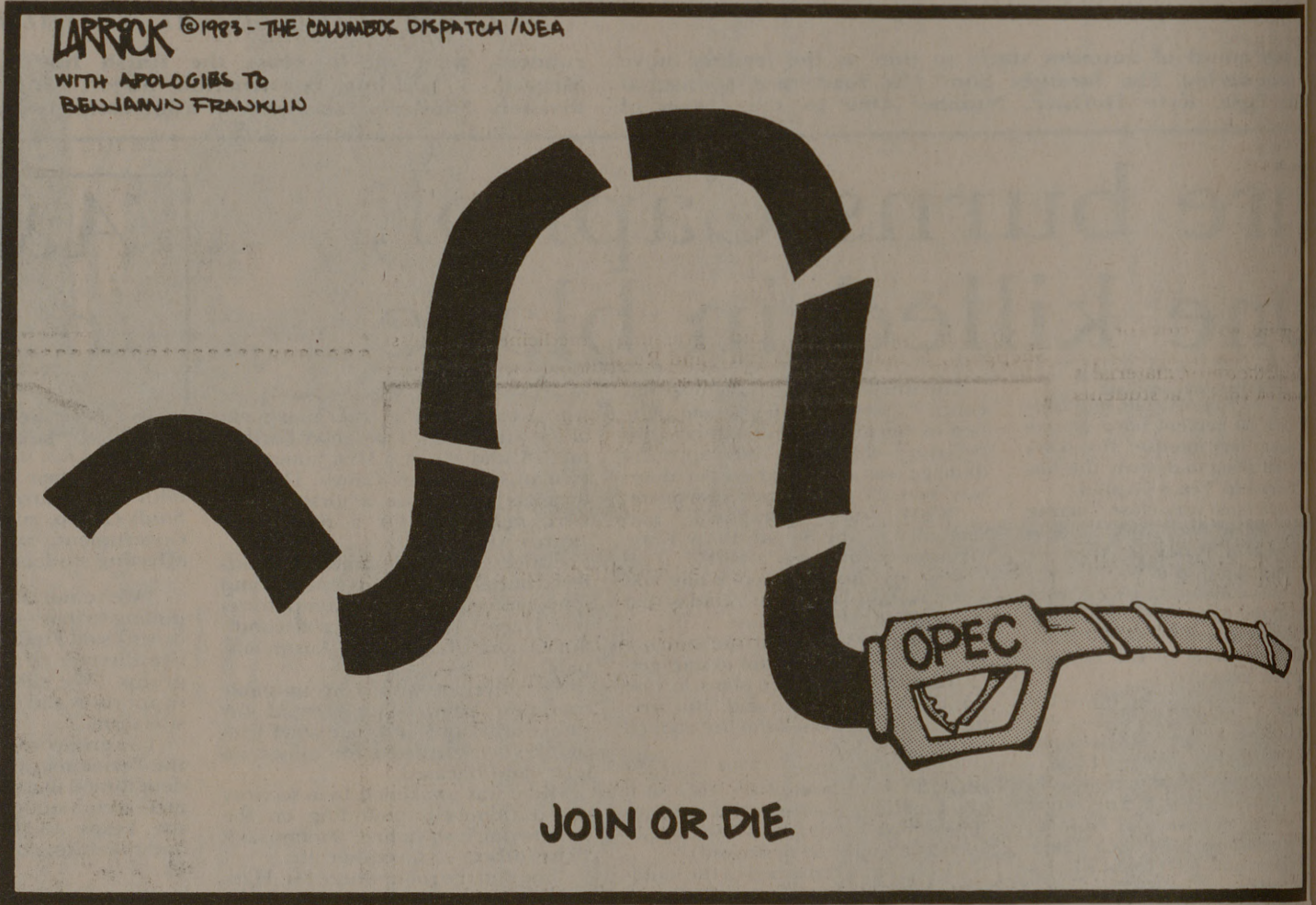
The off-the-cuff remark altered a complexion of the Boston visit. The White House, sensing political trouble first hedged in explaining the remark then made the mistake of pretending it did not exist.

Then Speakes made another all-too-common mistake: He tried to deflect attention from Reagan's own blunder by attacking the media.

Speakes said reporters, knowing Reagan made the statement off-the-cuff, should have softpeddled the remark "rather than licking your chops and pinning your hands and doing backflips."

Speakes has the unenviable task of having to face reporters seeking clarification of Reagan's impromptu and sometimes confusing remarks. But refusing to address them needlessly raises tensions.

Perhaps overly protective presidential assistants should rely more on Reagan himself to straighten out the tangles sometimes creates.



Pray for spring budget thaw

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — If a science may be said to have a "state of the art," that phrase surely applies to cryogenics, the study and theory of low temperature phenomena.

In President Reagan's State of the Union message, it was evident the state of the art had reached the point of freezing government programs.

But, as has since become clear, the budget is only one state in which art dwells. We also have seen cryogenics at work in international relations.

Just last week, there was a renewed effort to put Congress on record as favoring a nuclear weapons freeze. OPEC leaders tried to freeze world oil prices. And from Jerusalem came Prime Minister Menachem Begin's assertion that Israel could never freeze Jewish settlements in occupied territory.

"It is impossible to freeze the settlements as it is impossible to freeze life itself," Begin said.

Since some disciples of cryogenics claim living matter can be preserved for future use by freezing it, I'm not certain Begin's analogy was valid. One upshot is plain, however.

If Begin doesn't freeze the settlements, the United States may freeze arms shipments to Israel.

As for me, I favor the "zero option" formula.

If it is prudent for Reagan to insist that any arms control treaty with Russia include a total ban on deployment of

medium-range missiles in Europe, I say it is equally expedient to freeze the deployment of all freezes. Several benefits would immediately accrue.

First, and perhaps foremost, freezing freezes would eliminate the danger of freeze proliferation, which has threatened to get out of hand.

Already, in recent days, we have seen a bipartisan Social Security commission endorse a freeze on this year's cost-of-living benefits.

Meanwhile, Reagan's proposal to freeze various social programs has produced counter-moves to freeze segments of the military budget, which the Pentagon argues is frost-proof.

What we have here, obviously, is a rampant case of freezereep. If continued at current rates, the freeze escalation soon will prevade all sections and levels of national life.

What mainly bothers me, however, is whether the freeze movement can be contained within these borders.

When Britain, France, West German, Japan and other industrialized nations see the United States freezing indiscriminately, will they not be tempted to freeze some of their own programs?

A freeze on imports, followed by a freeze on exports, is one possible development. Which would play havoc with world trade.

And if the developed countries start freezing their programs, will not the so-called Third World members feel bound to take emulative action?

I can foresee, for example, a freeze on non-alignment, thus further complicat-

ing the already complex East-West situation.

Admittedly, a freeze on free trade would be a rather drastic measure. The way the state of the art is expanding, zero option may be the only means of avoiding a new Ice Age.

Berry's World

