

opinion

Symbols become reality

by Arnold Sawislak
United Press International

WASHINGTON — When the Roman Catholic bishops passed their nuclear freeze resolution, a hard-boiled type at our post-work seminar in a place down the street summed it up: "It ain't nothin'. It's just a lot of symbolism."

"It don't do anything. It ain't like cutting off appropriations for the Defense Department," he growled.

There were, as it happened, a couple of soft-boiled types in the booth who took exception to this analysis and proceeded to give the first chap a dose of unshirted what-for.

In brief, they argued, symbolism can be exceptionally important in government and politics and a purely symbolic act or event often is the catalyst for more concrete action. They argued that while demonstrations against the Vietnam War in the 1970s may not have ended the fighting, they certainly had an impact on the actual events that led to that end.

The discussion didn't go much farther, but it could easily have gone into the many examples of symbols that have achieved their own reality.

The example that leaps to mind is the Emancipation Proclamation, which many Americans might identify as the

document with which Abraham Lincoln ended slavery in this country.

Not quite. The proclamation in 1863 ordered freedom for slaves only in the Confederate States, which at the time were in a shooting war with Lincoln's

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government. Thus, the proclamation was more of a symbol than a deed.

Not until the 13th Amendment was ratified in 1865 was slavery outlawed in the entire United States.

But it was the Emancipation Proclamation that is most often cited as the instrument of freedom for black Americans. In that case, symbolism became reality.

A more recent example of how symbolism affects action is the failure of every president since Gerald Ford to invite Nobel Laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to the White House.

The Russian writer certainly is more

distinguished and accomplished than many of the record-breaking balloonists, champion horse radish farmers and prime ministers of postage stamp principalities who do get Oval Office audiences.

Solzhenitsyn, for his own reasons, is an implacable foe of the Soviet regime and has made very clear that he does not think the West has taken a tough enough stance against it.

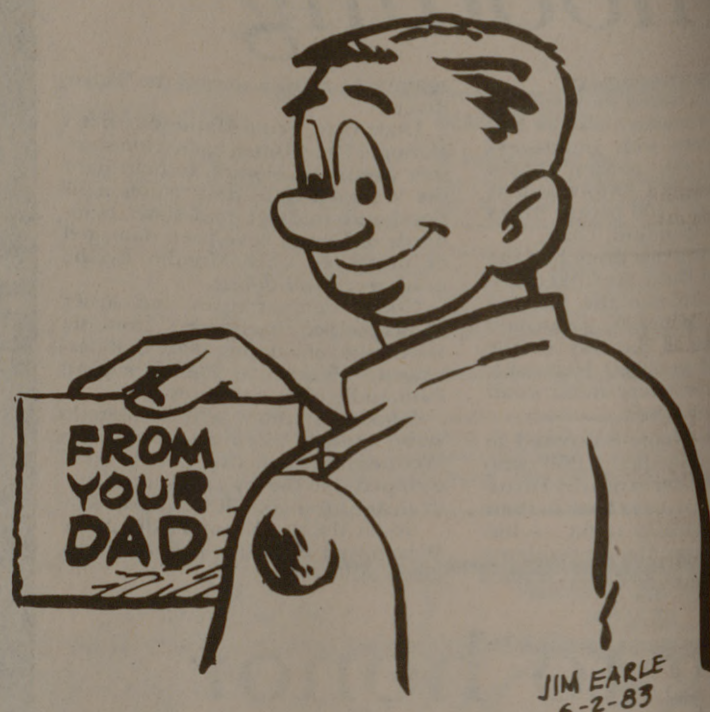
For their own reasons, many Americans who believe the only way to deal with the Kremlin is to nuke it have embraced Solzhenitsyn. He has become, as the saying goes, the "darling" of the hard-liners, and whether he wishes it or not, a symbol of their viewpoint.

The policy of the United States government is to oppose the expansion of the Soviet Union's influence and power without going to war. The style with which this policy is carried out may vary from president to president, but basically Ronald Reagan is trying to accomplish the same thing as Jimmy Carter.

It might seem silly to suggest that inviting an aging author to lunch at the White House would be taken as the signal of a change in basic foreign policy, but that is almost surely why Solzhenitsyn hasn't broken bread at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Slouch By Jim Earle

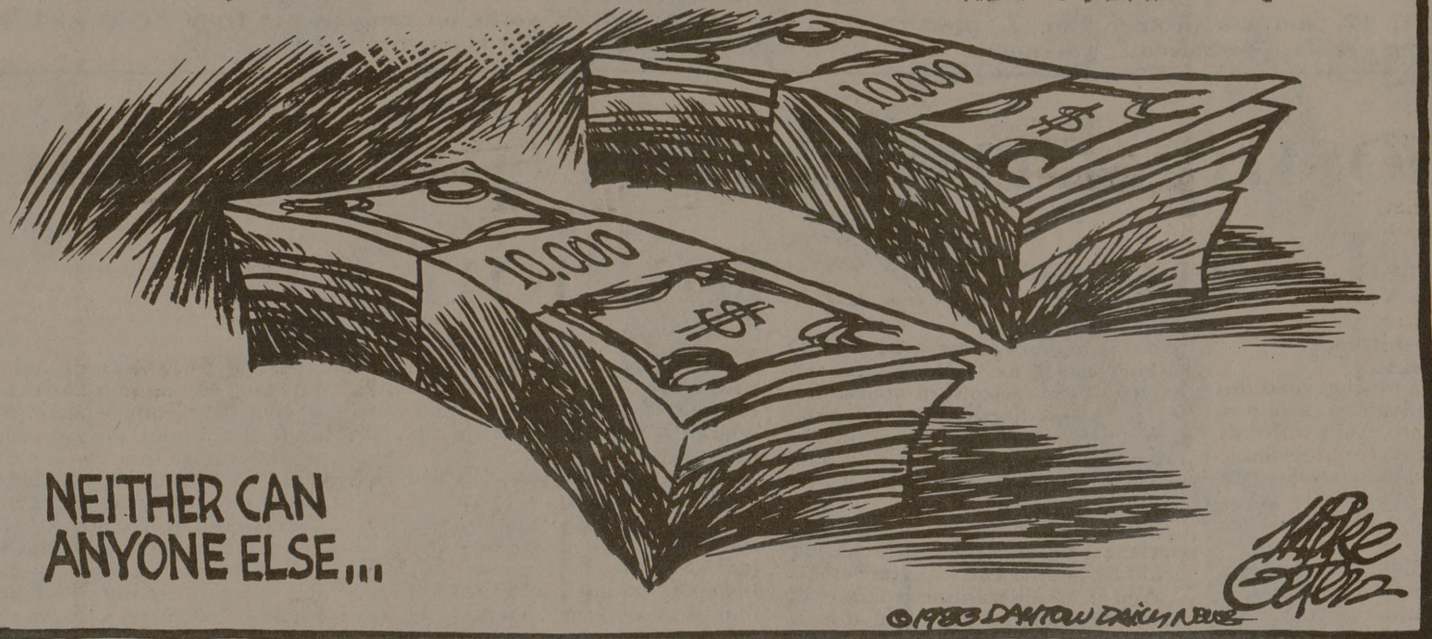
HAPPY BIRTHDAY ELIZABETH JUNE 2, 1965 - JUNE 2, 1983



"After doing this thing for 30 years, I guess he can get personal just once."

JIM EARLE
6-2-83

ONE OF THESE IS AN ILLEGAL, CONGRESSIONAL BRIBE TO INFLUENCE LEGISLATION - THE OTHER IS A PRIVATE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION... CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?



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Light at the end of the missile debate

by Dick West

United Press International

WASHINGTON — I was split right down the middle by the congressional missile debate.

So persuasive were speakers for both sides, I could see the wisdom of building new missiles, and also the wisdom of not building new missiles.

Then I heard it explained that building new missiles is a necessary prelude to meaningful arms control negotiations, and suddenly it all came together.

Not only did the "missiles for peace" picture become clear for the first time,

several other murky issues were illuminated as well.

Gun control, for example.

We'll never have a meaningful reduction in the number of shootings in this country until everyone owns a gun.

Once there is a pistol in every closet, assuring equality between law-abiders and lawbreakers, America will be ready for gun control legislation. Not a minute before.

Another controversy the missile debate can help us find the handle on is the report by the National Commission of Excellence in Education.

The commission, I gather, is 100 per-

cent in favor of educational excellence. But philosophies differ as to how to go about achieving that goal.

Some educational philosophers argue for higher standards for public school curricula. Others say the surest way of raising grades is to make the tests easier.

Now, judging from the arguments that seemed to prevail in the congressional missile debate, it may be a philosophy whose time has come.

So what if today's students lack basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics? As long as tests don't expose their ignorance, who is the wiser?

A similar point can be made with respect to the seemingly contradictory aspects of a new diet plan that stresses the importance of overeating.

"We're never going to have meaningful weight reductions in this country until everybody gets fat," a promoter of the plan told me.

I said, "A flab freeze wouldn't do it, huh?"

"Not for a minute," the unfit expert replied. "Freezing flab at present levels would only solidify the pounds that already are in place, usually around the hips and stomach. It provides no incentive at all for skinny people to lose weight."

"I think I've got it now," I said. "Once obesity becomes a universal condition, there will be an irresistible demand for weight control programs with teeth. Verification at the scales is essential."

"You've got it," she confirmed. "Once everyone is overweight, we can institute a 'bulldown' system. Folks will continue to eat too much, but for every pound they put on, they take off two."

"You mean..." I gasped.

"Exactly," she said.

That seemed to sum up the missile debate right there.

As soon as some country develops a case of missile anorexia, we'll know the disarmament talks are making progress.

House members' Br courage praised of

by Don Phillips

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Forty-one members of the House would be eligible for a medal today if such things were given for political courage.

They are the 41 who bucked the banking industry and a frenzied letter-writing campaign from millions of upset voters. They voted against legislation repealing the scheduled July 1 tax withholding on interest and dividends.

The pressure to go the other way was enormous. The banking lobby had staged a campaign that even many of its allies in Congress acknowledged was deceptive and filled with half truths and untruths.

The campaign was effective. It hit a chord in the American people, and millions of angry letters flooded congressional offices. Some of those letters clearly were from millions who were duped by the bankers and didn't understand the legislation. Some were from informed but angry folks who said they didn't want to pay for the sins of others.

But others, a surprising number, were from scoff-laws who even bragged that they had never paid taxes on their interest and dividends and didn't intend to, and would vote against anyone who tried to make them obey the law.

Under such pressure, 382 House members voted to repeal the withholding law.

Of those 382, some voted from honest conviction. It would be a mistake to think that all of them voted from fear. For example, Rep. Norman D'Amours, D-N.H., led the fight against withholding from the beginning, and Rep. Andrew Jacobs, D-Ind., who sponsored the final repeal bill, long ago proved his ability to think independently.

But it is clear that a majority of the 382 voted that way purely because of the pressure.

It also is clear that the 41 who voted "no" did so purely from conviction. There was nothing for them to gain from such a vote, and there is little doubt that all of them will lose something politically through lost votes or financially through lost campaign contributions.

The list of the "no" voters reads like a rundown of the moral leadership of the

House, the people who have proved they have guts on other issues. Almost all of the 41 are experienced legislators, and many are committee subcommittee chairmen.

They include the chairman and ranking GOP member of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee. Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill., member Conable, R-N.Y. Many of the members of that committee, in position to see the problems with cheating and to know all the facts withholding.

One of the Ways and Means members is a former banker, Rep. Fortney D-Calif., no stranger to fights with fellow bankers even before he got to Congress.

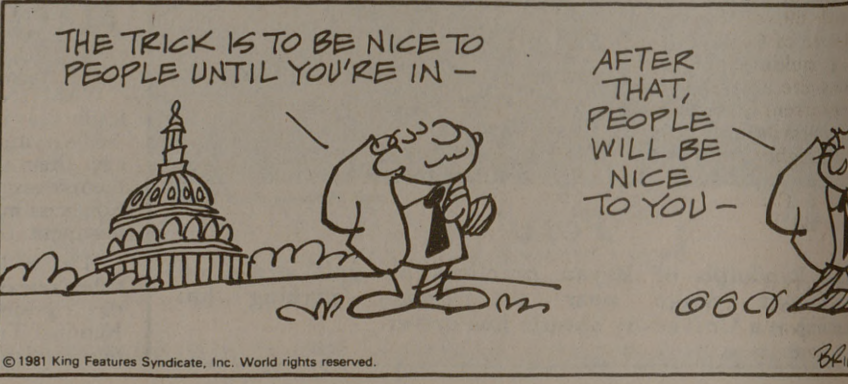
Thirty-two are Democrats and are Republicans. The highest ranking Democratic leadership is William Massey of Washington, No. 1 hierarchy. The only Republican is Rep. Jack Edwards of Alabama, chairman of the Republican Campaign and ranking GOP member of the influential Defense Appropriations committee.

There are three freshmen, Rep. Edward Berman, D-Calif., Sander L. Mich., and Sherwood Boehlert, R-Ill.

Most are no strangers to causes, stimes lost causes, including Rep. Edwards, D-Calif., champion of Equal Rights Amendment; Edward Key, D-Mass., leader of the nuclear movement; and David Obeyesekere, who has led the fight for reform of the House for more than a decade.

Some are among the most active men in the House — Reps. Henry Hyde, D-Calif., chairman of the subcommittee; Sidney Yates, D-Ill., of the keepers of the nation's moral sources as chairman of the Appropriations interior subcommittee; Edward J. Roybal, D-Calif., the most influential in the House on intelligence matters; chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; John Seiberling, D-Ohio, chairman of the Internal Security subcommittee; and J. J. Pickens, Texas, chairman of the Social Security subcommittee.

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The Battalion

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