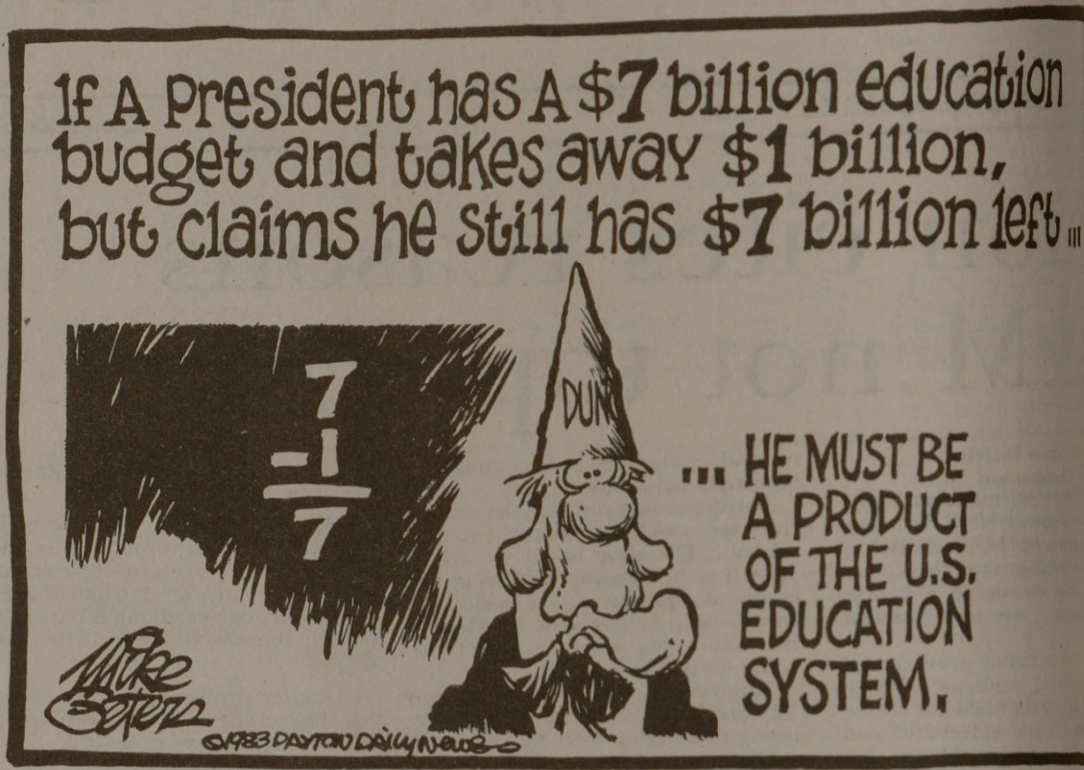


opinion



Reagan tries to mend fences with minorities

by Helen Thomas
 United Press International
 WASHINGTON — It's fence-mending time at the White House with blacks, women and hispanics.

In recent days, President Reagan's top aides have moved to shore up his sagging support among minority groups in view of the very large possibility that Reagan will run again.

Reagan has not yet announced whether he will seek re-election and may not give the word until fall. But some of his strongest supporters such as Sen. Paul Laxalt, R-Nev., believe that if there is no announcement to the contrary by the Fourth of July, it is pretty certain the president will be a candidate.

Reagan's polls in recent months show

that he is not as popular with women as he is with men. His opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment has hurt him with working women.

He did not have the black vote in 1980, and not much has been done to enhance his image on that score since he came into office. On civil rights, the Reagan administration's Justice Department has slowed down enforcement in anti-discrimination cases. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights said earlier this week that it was "disappointed and concerned" that Reagan had not appointed more blacks, women and Hispanic Americans to full-time, high-level positions in the federal government. Using data provided by the White House, the panel said there had been "a sharp drop in appointment of blacks," down to 4.1 percent,

compared to 12 percent in the Carter administration.

The commission also said that 8 percent of Reagan's appointees were women compared to 12 percent by President Carter. "We are aggressively pursuing" the appointment of more women and blacks, deputy press secretary Larry Speakes said in response.

White House aides argue that Reagan has appointed 1,000 women; some 200 blacks and 130 hispanics to top policy-making positions. The most prominent women they cite are Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to hold that position; Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole and Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler.

Another woman in a key role in the administration is Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Heckler, who was an ERA advocate as a Massachusetts congresswoman, says she believes Reagan's record "is a good one. There's more to be done though, and more will be done."

The White House seems to think the same thing. It had been assumed that Faith Whittlesey, who heads the public liaison office, would be put in charge of rounding up the female vote for Reagan, but her insistence that there is "no gender gap" is not the look the political advisers want at this stage.

As a result, deputy chief of staff Michael Deaver has been put in charge of efforts to coordinate the drive for the

women's vote. Chief political adviser Howard Rollins has begun a dialogue with black Republican leaders, and he says it is an uphill battle. He is dealing with a group of 15 leaders and got an earful. He expects there will be more meetings as the campaign approaches.

Although Reagan has made black appointees in the White House has a black Cabinet secretary — Pierce of the Department of Housing and Urban development — high visibility or is a mover and shaker.

The president has made a number of Hispanic appointments, but they do not feel there have been enough. Reagan aides admit they have been cut out for them.

No guarantees offered when investing in a child

by Art Buchwald
 The Department of Agriculture has just reported that it will cost \$80,260 to raise a child born this year until it reaches age 18. That seemed like a lot of scratch to Carter Brown, a friend of mine, who is expecting a child very soon. So he went down to the department to see what he was going to get for his money.

"Is it really going to cost me \$80,260 to raise a child until it's 18?" he asked the man behind the desk.

"It's a bargain," the man told him. "Eighteen months ago, we projected it would cost \$134,414. But that was when we included an 8 percent inflation rate.

Our \$80,000 figure is based on no inflation dollars."

"What does the \$80,000 cost include?"

"Just the bare-bone items, such as \$17,000 for food, \$27,000 for housing, \$13,000 for transportation and the rest for miscellaneous items such as medical costs and shoes."

"Aren't there any items that you failed to include in your report, so I won't be surprised?"

The man looked at his list. "Well, in the early years of the child's upbringing, you'll probably be able to stay within the \$80,000 figure. But as your offspring goes into its teens, you could get into serious financial overruns."

"Such as?"

"The department did not include in its report the cost of such teen-age necessities as hi-fi equipment, movie and rock concert tickets, sports equipment, computers, weekend parties, guitar lessons, Christmas, arcade games and insurance."

"Why not?" Brown asked. "They seem to be as essential as food, housing and transportation."

"Because we have them down as options. Some parents prefer a stripped-down child, and others prefer to add everything that's on the market."

"If I pay the basic price of \$80,000 to raise a child for the next 18 years, plus all

the extras that you've mentioned, is there any guarantee it will turn out all right?"

"There is no warranty with the price whatsoever. You pay your money and you take your chances. We don't guarantee anymore that when it gets to be 18 it will be able to read and write. Frankly, you'll be lucky if it volunteers to cut your lawn or do the dishes once a week. And if you think for 80 grand it's going to clean up its own room, you're living in a dream world."

"It sure seems like a big investment to get so little in return."

"The department is not recommending that you have a baby. Our job is just to report what it will cost you to raise one.

The \$80,000 is our official figure. Other items I tipped you off on are not official, based on my own experience. The father of three teen-agers I include the price of collect long-distance calls during the first 18 years because he didn't want to scare you."

"So if I add in all the extras I can wind up spending \$200,000," my son said. "Well, I guess \$200,000 is an unreasonable sum of money to invest until a child reaches 18 years old."

"It's actually a steal," the man said. "When your kid reaches 18, it's a cost you that much just to send it to college."

Generic products may force changes in merchandising

by Dick West
 United Press International
 WASHINGTON — Two national sales reports this spring indicate that buying habits in America may be changing.

One compilation from figures supplied by the major tobacco companies showed that their cigarette sales dropped about 1 percent last year, with another decline expected this year.

Aha! you may be exclaiming to yourself. This must mean an equivalent number of people stopped smoking.

Don't be too quick to jump to that conclusion.

The other report shows that sales of generic cigarettes increased more than 200 percent during 1982.

From the latter figure we can surmise that a goodly number of smokers didn't actually kick the habit; they just quit buying name brands.

Similar switches are happening all over. The breakfast food industry, for example, reports that consumers are buying more generic cereals, which they presumably soak in generic milk.

Could this be the coming trend in retail merchandising? If so, it will be interesting to see what happens in the twined cotton pants business.

In recent years, as we are all acutely

aware, regardless of how we dress, one of the biggest splashes in the clothing industry has been made by designer jeans. Here we have demonstrated what a little snob appeal will do for what was traditionally a proletarian garment, primarily identified with the working classes.

The prime attraction of generic products would appear to be conspicuous humility, or snob appeal in reverse.

Will the more forward-looking, fashion-conscious stores start replacing their designer jeans with generic jeans? Might it become possible to buy a pair of denim trousers that doesn't have a label prominently displayed on a protuberant part of the anatomy?

More likely, the label will be as evident as ever, but in keeping with the generic custom will simply put the word "jeans" in large letters.

That way, nobody will get the mistaken impression that you are wearing blue slacks.

Probably the most disturbing element of the generic upsurge is what it might do to advertising.

For better or worse, the Madison Avenue boys and girls have made their mark promoting brands. Touting products that carry only generic designations could require a whole new set of skills. It is one thing to pick up cartons labeled

only as "cigarettes," to select cereals whose contents are identified as "corn flakes" and to try on pants labels stamp them merely as "jeans."

Building an advertising campaign around such items is quite another entirely.

Generic acceptance doesn't just float out of thin air, you know. It takes genius to exploit the commercial possibilities of products in the lower class.

Some of the airlines have cut prices by offering "no frills" service, which is vigorously advertised. If enterprising carriers now start offering generic flights, it could add a new dimension to the aviation wars.

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Letters: SWAMP explains bagel sale, Pornocon I

Editor:

Tuesday I submitted an announcement concerning SWAMP's first summer meeting for the Around Town column. Because you felt the activities we are planning are tasteless you deemed it necessary to eradicate references to them. SWAMP is a recognized student organization dedicated to the fertilization of dialogue pertaining to pertinent problems.

Only with your help can we establish this dialogue.

The announcement was supposed to mention our plans for a Born Again Bagel sale and PORNOCON I.

Perhaps I should have elaborated on these items. We hope to provide a more appropriate atmosphere for the fountain evangelists by selling bagels. ("They were good enough for Jesus, they are good enough for you.") With people out there eating bagels, the evangelist will have a chance at saving countless souls which would otherwise burn in hell.

Also, the bagel sale will help us raise money for PORNOCON I.

Discussion of pornography is conspicuously absent on this campus, yet pornography can be purchased all around campus. The effects of pornography and the way in which we are to deal with it are important topics. By sponsoring PORNOCON I, we will present as many perspectives as possible on the issues surrounding pornography and the attempts to censor it.

Only by intelligently dealing with such an issue can we hope to provide a basis for Aggies to make the tough decisions which lay ahead.

Kirk Kuykendall

Slouch By Jim East

"Of course I might be wrong, but a bagel on TV doesn't turn me on."