

Opinion

Understanding complex rules of political games

As the polls were closing Saturday for the state primaries, I was at the headquarters of one of the gubernatorial candidates. As it was becoming increasingly apparent that this candidate was not going to win, I asked I. Canwin, his campaign poster hanger, what went wrong.

Craig Renfro
Columnist

Casting a dejected glance at the final tally, Canwin replied, "I don't know what went wrong. We spent nearly \$1 million, made several TV commercials, shook thousands of hands and had several \$200-a-plate campaign fund luncheons. I just can't figure it out."

Feeling somewhat sorry for him, I told him that somebody had to lose and that, after all, it didn't matter whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

"But that's the problem," Canwin retorted. "We did play the political game, and we played it to perfection. Well, almost to perfection."

"From the beginning you want to choose the right person to be a candidate for governor. You have to choose a

person that the people can trust. You can't get just any bum off the street to come in and be governor. You need someone who can smile a lot, even when it's 90 degrees."

I agreed with him. People *do* like to see smiling politicians. It makes them feel that everything is going well and that we aren't really experiencing oil revenue shortfalls, high unemployment and inflation.

"But there must surely be other ways to measure a candidate's political worthiness besides the fact he smiles a lot," I said.

"You must be an eloquent speaker," he replied. "If he can talk about budget cuts, tax hikes and other political rhetoric in a way that the people think they understand, but really don't, then that is certainly a bonus."

I still didn't quite understand the system, so I asked him to give me an example of such skillful speaking.

"Well, of course you understand that I am not the speech writer, but I'll give it my best shot," Canwin said. "You start off with something like this. . . . 'And if elected governor I promise to do every-

thing in my power to keep this state strong and financially prosperous. I promise not to raise taxes and I promise to seriously look into the problems and issues that may adversely affect this great state.'"

"So it seems to me that what a candidate has to do is make a lot of beefy promises that he really can't be held responsible for," I said.

"Well, in a way that's true," Canwin said. "You want to make your promises ambiguous so that if you are elected and the people do demand responsibility you can say you were misquoted or taken out of context."

"Tell me what else it takes to make a successful politician. So far it seems all you have to do is have a good personality and a silver tongue," I said.

"One of the most important things is to criticize the incumbent's track record. The current governor has a list of mistakes that would make any opponent smile," Canwin said. "First of all is the collapse of oil prices. You can really lay the blame on him for not anticipating that crisis."

"Secondly you can criticize him for

his tax format. In 1982 he promised no new taxes, and then in 1984 he backed a \$4.6 million sales and gasoline tax hike. Those are the kinds of things any political opponent will look for in an attempt to make the incumbent look bad."

"But, how can you pick on those sensitive issues, when that situation could arise no matter who is in office?" I asked.

"Who said politics were fair? You do anything you can to win, and bringing out policy mistakes is one of the best ways."

"What other ways are there to put the incumbent in a bad light?" I asked.

"One way is to make up some type of political scandal," Canwin said. "It doesn't have to be much, just something to the effect that the current administration is wasting money."

"You mean something like the fact that they spent \$3 million for a new airplane, when they should have been cutting down administrative expenses?"

"That's it," Canwin replied with a smile. "Now you're beginning to get the hang of it. But there's more to it than that. Name calling is another way to get

in a shot at an opponent."

"So if you call someone a 'neff scumball', that's a way of attracting votes?" I asked.

"Well that's close," Canwin said. "Some people might think that's an unfair tactic. They might prefer something more subtle — like 'tax waster' or 'budget cutter'."

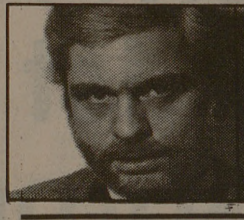
"I think I'm finally beginning to understand this game of politics now," I said. "But tell me how you are going to learn from this year's defeat?"

After giving the question a few minutes of thought, Canwin replied, "I think that for the next election we just have to start smiling more, spending more money, and who knows maybe by 1990 the governor will have made so many mistakes that the people will be ready for a new politician to make some different ones."

Craig Renfro is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Deaver makes good ethical punching bag

One of the more interesting places to be these days would be inside Mike Deaver's head. There, thoughts and questions must ricochet: What did I do wrong? Why me? What is this all about? Is this a nightmare and, if so, when do I wake up? The answer to the last is clear: Not yet. Michael, not yet.



Richard Cohen

The fact is that Washington is having a jolly good time punching around Mike Deaver now that it has him out in the open — away from his protector, Nancy Reagan, and her protector, the president. The man is being pummeled by the press, by his fellow lobbyists and by present and former members of the Reagan administration. Deaver, it seems, is one of those guys who forgot to be nice to subordinates. Now the munchkins are munching on him.

For just a second, put yourself in Deaver's place. You tell yourself that you're not the first person to go from government to public relations. The town is full of people like that. And you're not the first to do so from the Reagan administration, either. Many former Reaganites are now consultants of one sort or another and some of them represent foreign governments. Deaver may have South Korea, but Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly, another firm with Reagan connections, had the Philippines government under Ferdinand Marcos. Need some ladies' shoes?

Maybe it's the money. Billings of more than \$2 million in the first year of business is more than enough to attract envy, but then Deaver is not the first person to get rich in Washington. Robert Keith Gray, the chairman of Ronald Reagan's inaugural committee and former Eisenhower White House aide, makes what we used to call a nice living. His firm has grown tremendously in the last several years and he, too, represents foreign governments — Turkey and, for a while, Angola. No one writes much about him.

Okay, maybe it's the publicity. Deaver posed for a *Time* magazine cover in which he was shown seated in a limousine, talking on the phone with the Capitol in the background. "Who's This Man Calling?" *Time* asked on the cover. *Time* provided no answer, but everything about Deaver suggests that it was the president. He is one of the few people who can get Reagan on the phone.

That's what makes him unique.

And that, in a nutshell, explains the entire Deaver imbroglio. Sure, there might be a matter of law involved — whether Deaver ignored it and met too soon with White House aides, whether he cut a deal with Canada while still in the White House. But these are misdemeanors: Canada and acid rain is not exactly Libya and atomic weapons. These allegations amount to a device to make the moral and personal case against Deaver. We all pretend we are talking about the law. But we are really talking about the feelings we all have for someone whose career, we think, amounts to nothing more than attaching himself to someone more important — and then exploiting that relationship.

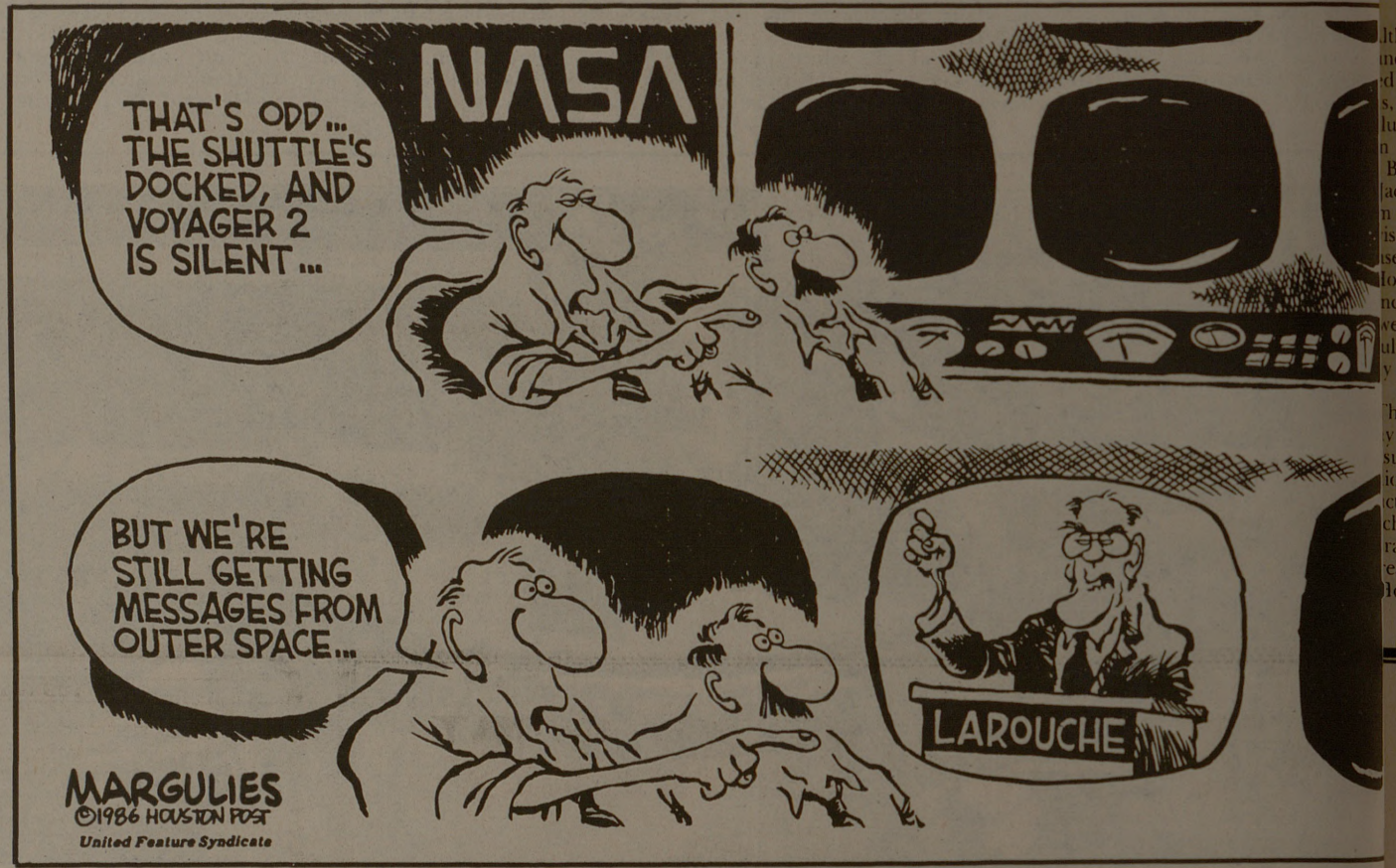
When he appeared on the "McNeil-Lehrer News Hour," Deaver said he was valuable for his ability to "strategize." Maybe. But to the rest of the world, Deaver's value is his relationship with the Reagans. His is a totally reflected glory. He commands the same respect and loathing as a boss's son who conducts himself as if he built the company.

That is where the comparisons to Clark Clifford are way off the mark. Clifford may have started as an aide to President Harry S. Truman, but his value to clients amounted to more than proximity to a former president. Years after being a Truman aide, Clifford became Lyndon Johnson's secretary of defense. No one can imagine Deaver doing the same.

Ironically, Deaver's problems are compounded by the president's age and popularity. The more popular Reagan is, the more people will be outraged by what they see as Deaver's exploitation of him. And the older he gets and the more "detached" Reagan becomes, the more people will resent someone who claims the president's imprimatur — who flourishes the president's daily schedule. It is name dropping on a grand scale: Let's see, if it's 2:45 then Ron's napping. (When it comes to Deaver, Ron certainly is.)

The law is important and Deaver's alleged violation of it is worth the time and attention of the news media. And maybe Deaver personifies something about Washington that is worth being concerned about — the role of money. But Washington is really out to get Michael K. Deaver for reasons that make it still a town not that different than most others in America: It's simply disgusted.

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U.S. trading in biblical law for man's arbitrary rules

"In this situation of this Assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark, to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Light to illuminate our understandings. . . . I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an Empire can arise without His aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that 'except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this. . . ."

Mark Schulz
Guest Columnist

This is what Benjamin Franklin said to the Second Continental Congress and its president, George Washington, after several weeks of work on the Constitution had produced little fruit. He went on to motion for daily prayers in order to invoke "the assistance of Heaven." In describing the role of religion in the founding of our country, historian Dr. Frank Humphries said, "the founders of the republic invoked God in their civil assemblies, sought guidance for their political actions from their religious leaders and recognized the precepts of the Bible as sound political maxims." Americans for Biblical Government wishes to see America return to this spirit of our revolution.

ABG recognizes from history that many of the founders of our nation were strong religious men, and their belief in absolute truth as found in the Bible profoundly affected the forming of this nation. We know that not all the founding fathers were true biblical Christians, but even the main two — Jefferson and Franklin — were greatly influenced by the Christian faith.

When Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, he appealed to the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" and "the Supreme Judge of the world" to validate the Declaration. He said men "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," and a government's job is to secure these rights. Notice that he did not say, "we have reasoned that we should have certain liberties." Unalienable implies a

Democracy alone is not enough to insure liberty, as the majority tyrannize the minority. If the state or the will of the people become the giver of liberties, then they may choose to remove these liberties anytime it is to their benefit. But if a government can be held accountable to a higher authority by any citizen, liberty is guaranteed.

higher authority than man's opinion.

Non-theists insist that common sense or man's reason is all we need to base our laws and freedoms on — that no higher standard is needed. Common sense is invaluable when used to apply truth in particular situations, but man's reason, apart from moral absolutes, has led to the slaughter of millions in the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia, Nazi Germany and in other nations where the state is elevated above the Bible's moral standards.

Democracy alone is not enough to insure liberty, as the majority can tyrannize the minority. If the state or the will of the people become the giver of liberties, then they may choose to remove these liberties anytime it is to their benefit. But if a government can be held accountable to a higher authority by any citizen, liberty is guaranteed.

Our country has some serious problems today. ABG feels it is because our country is trading in biblical-based law for the arbitrary decisions of man. Some of the results of this new mentality are a

welfare system that encourages laziness and family break-up, a medical community which leaves handicapped babies die and a society where convicted murderers walk the street after five years in prison.

Of special concern to ABG is the increasing loss of religious and other freedoms. As you read this column, parents are in jail for teaching their children

home. Churches increasingly are harassed by the IRS and other governmental agencies. Home bible studies closed down by the use of zoning ordinances. More and more people wish to see freedom of religion practiced on Sundays behind four walls.

We believe that religious freedom is this country's greatest strength. If we lose that freedom, others WILL follow. ABG in no way stands for a state-sponsored religion or denomination, stand for a nation in which people choose to worship God as they please, not worship at all. But we also believe that our liberties are best protected if we acknowledge where these liberties came from, and if we hold to the standard right and wrong that goes with the George Washington said, "True religion offers government its surest support. We challenge every citizen to read, study the Constitution and Declaration of Independence in light of the intent of the founding fathers."

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