
Tilting at Windmills



One of the reasons designer and brand names are now on the outside of clothing is that in modern America people tend to define themselves by their taste. This is particularly so in the big cities, where, if you want to impress that interesting-looking man or woman at the crowded party, you have to flash your taste badges fast. Of course, when the flashing is done too aggressively, it turns into a series of put-downs that may intrigue but might alienate the other person. A marvelous example of the latter occurs in Diane Keaton's first scenes in *Manhattan*. She is obviously interested in demonstrating that she is more sophisticated than the people she's talking to, and it's great fun to laugh at her. A more subtle form of self-definition in terms of taste comes near the end of the film when Woody Allen recites the list that identifies him: Groucho Marx, Mozart's "Jupiter Symphony," Louis Armstrong's recording of "Potato Head Blues," Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, Willie Mays, Cezanne's still lifes of fruits. In contrast to Diane Keaton's, Allen's list is charming. You think exactly what you're supposed to think: what a wonderful interesting man this must be to have this delightful mixture of enthusiasms. The problem is that it's still badge-flashing. In the early scenes you thought Woody knew what was wrong with the gang at Elaine's. What develops, however, is

that he simply knows how to play their game better than they do. . . .

Last year my wife and I were entertaining an out-of-town couple who were interested in getting an inside view of our national problems and what the government was planning to do about them. So we invited a mixture of journalists and public officials to dinner. At the end of the evening, the couple said it had all been delightful, but they hadn't heard a word about politics or government—Washington real estate had dominated the discussion all evening. Well, if anything, the situation is worse now. One wonders if anyone is tending to the government as the incessant trading in real estate consumes everyone's attention. Certainly, all those involved in the real estate game have an interest in not doing anything about inflation. Indexed salaries and pensions are what fuel the home-buying boom, because real estate mortgages are one of the best places to shelter ever-growing personal income. . . Just to give you an idea of what's going on, one out of three houses sold in Washington this year has gone for over \$100,000. One out of ten has sold for over \$200,000. Of course there are always a few losers in any market, but even they tell us something about what is going on. One

of them is Rep. Stewart B. McKinney of Connecticut, who has purchased 19 local properties at a cost of \$612,000. McKinney says, "One of the reasons I lost money is because I am in this friggig job," which presumably forced the congressman to become distracted from time to time from his real estate empire. . . .

The current rage for the roman a clef threatens to totally confuse modern history. Was J.P. Morgan the man described by Edgar Doctorow? Were the real Rosenbergs essentially the same as the people depicted in *The Public Burning*? The latest novel to raise this sort of question is *The Whole Truth* by John Ehrlichman, where a character the reader is supposed to recognize as Sam Ervin is revealed to be an evil old fraud who makes behind-the-scenes deals with a White House under congressional investigation. Is that what you really think of Ervin, Mr. Ehrlichman? And do you really know, as your book suggests, that George Gallup doctored poll results to suit Richard Nixon? Then why not make your accusations openly?

The *Body Forum*, a new magazine that crossed my desk recently, takes one back to the days when the relationship between advertising and editorial content was unashamed. In its July issue for example, there is an advertisement on page 14 with a headline reading, "How to Best Use Biotein H-3 to Regenerate Hair Growth." On page 15, there is an article praising Biotein as a way to stop hair loss. . . .

In his attempt to get to know the rank-and-file government employee better, Jimmy Carter invited 13 of them to the Oval Office in May. His reward: the American Federation of Government Employees has filed an unfair labor practice complaint against the President, alleging that he violated federal labor-management rules that

require the government to negotiate with union representatives. . . . It used to seem that weighty seriousness was an inescapable part of political discourse, at least in the magazine world. We like to think a change for the lighter began with the arrival of *The Washington Monthly* in 1969. Certainly such a change is happening today—at the *New Republic* under Michael Kinsley, the *Nation* under Victor Navasky, and the *American Spectator* under R. Emmett Tyrrell. . . . That women care less about femininity today is well known. Still I was somewhat taken aback to find Barielle Nail Strengthener Cream selling itself as "based on preparations developed to strengthen horses' hooves." . . . There's always something to worry about. The British magazine, *New Statesman*, is rumored to have the list of Washington journalists who received gifts from Ardeshir Zahedi, the Shah's ambassador to the United States. Zahedi was supposed to have had \$50,000 a month to spend on gifts to journalists and public officials. . . . Boston public schools now have a per pupil cost to the taxpayers of \$3,898. The cost of private day schools in the Boston area averages \$2,785 per pupil. . . . In California, similar figures have led to the next Proposition 13, a proposal on the ballot next year under which a parent would receive a voucher worth 90 per cent of the per pupil cost of public education and be free to use it in public, parochial, or other private, independent, or experimental schools.

My most cynical anxiety about book reviewers—that they don't read the books they are reviewing or that they do so with blinding prejudice—was confirmed by Joe Klein's review of *Confessions of A Muckraker* in the May 29 *New York Times Book Review*. Klein says the book "is written in the jaunty, often painfully trite style that Pearson and Anderson popularized over the years." All of you who read the excerpt in our April issue, entitled "The Fall of the Republicans,"

know that the book is written in a style that is James Boyd's alone, somewhere between baroque and rococo with a touch of Mark Twain thrown in. . . . I always try to rise above jealousy, envy, and related emotions. This is particularly so with my fellow magazine publishers, where temptation—"those bastards are stealing all our ideas"—is great. But sometimes I fail. Regular readers know that one such failure is inspired by the *National Geographic's* tax-exempt real estate and low postage rates, juxtaposed with its high-salaried and high-living staff (white-coated waiters in the executive dining room, etc.). But I grow purplest when I contemplate the *Smithsonian* magazine. Let me explain. All of us in the magazine business look for inducements to get readers to subscribe. Sometimes we offer a free copy of our magazine, sometimes a free book. But consider what the *Smithsonian* offers: Free or discount tours, lectures, and discussions, with free parking and a "private buffet at the National Mu-

seum of Natural History," serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The dinner costs \$4.25 (children \$2.90) and the *Smithsonian's* advertisement for it displays chefs with *toques blanches* presiding over tables laden with cuts of roast beef, melons, strawberries, crepes, and champagne. One is curious how all this is financed. Certainly the meals and most of the events take place in government-owned buildings. Anyway, I would very much like to be able to offer the readers of *The Washington Monthly* a \$4.25 roast beef dinner the next time they're in town.

David E. Mann is our new hero. He is the assistant secretary of the Navy for research who has just embraced an old *Washington Monthly* cause, the smaller submarine. He says a six-volume Navy study shows that smaller nuclear-powered missile-firing submarines would cost 30 per cent less than the Trident. And if the Navy

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For those investigative journalists who passed up the opportunity I offered them to pursue the connection between Vietnam and the copper-centered coin, I offer one more chance for fame and fortune. Who were the secret backers of the Ayatollah Khomeini? Who had the most to gain from the disruption of Iranian oil production and the resulting world shortage of petroleum? The oil companies? James Schlesinger? No. It's the Japanese car companies. In January they had 500,000 Subarus, Toyotas, Mazdas, Hondas, and Datsuns ready for sale in the United States. A statistician for *Ward's Automotive Reports* is quoted by *The Washington Star's* Leonard Curry as saying, "There must have been a bunch of crazy optimists back in Tokyo." Now what self-respecting conspiratorialist would accept that explanation! . . .

I find myself in the embarrassing position of having a kind word to say about one oil company, Mobil. Its president, William P. Tavoulaareas, has opposed Carter's decontrol program, urging the industry to forego price increases on oil already under production and recommending decontrol only for newly discovered oil. While it may be that Mobil has less to gain from raising prices on old oil than some other companies, its position on decontrol still represents a vitally important step toward truly constructive thinking by big business. The main way out of our present economic mess is incentives that are precisely tailored to create new plants and new production. Although I reject the goal of energy independence—I think we should keep our oil in the ground and use rationing to reduce demand and force down OPEC's prices—those who do accept that goal should realize that Tavoulaareas has a better way of attaining it than Carter.

Richard Ofshe, who shared credit with Dave and Cathy Mitchell for the Pulitzer Prize won this year by the *Point Reyes* (California) *Light*, made this gracious observation to *The Washington Post's* Paul Grabowicz:

"Where else in the country would you get two people like the Mitchells, with MA degrees in journalism from Stanford University, working with myself, a professor from the University of California, on a paper like this? It wouldn't happen in some jerkwater little town in Indiana."

If there is a key intersection in the government at which the public interest is most likely to be sacrificed it is where the self-protecting bureaucrat and the self-promoting assistant secretary meet. As we have pointed out from time to time, the cabinet secretary is so busy conning the press, the president, and the congress that he has no time left to run his department. This executive function is performed by his assistant secretaries, so it is they who actually have the day-to-day job of leading and inspiring the bureaucracy. The problem is that the standard assistant secretary is not a politician who sees his future as dependent on the overall performance of his department

Answers to last month's puzzle:

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and the administration of which he is a part, but a badge-collecting meritocrat who goes from job to job every two years or so, adding to his list of distinguished credentials. The practical problem is that he is interested only in performing in his present job for the year or so it takes to stir up the admiring talk that will bring the next offers. As he chooses and negotiates among these offers, his department suffers for his attention, his focus is no longer on it, so that by the time he has left for his next step up the career ladder, the department is in a shambles and he is often described as having left one step ahead of the sheriff. This second year in power is also often marked by extensive travel in the manner of the lame duck congressman who comes to feel the public owes him such rewards after all he's done. . . .

In addition to the small submarine, there is another long-time *Washington Monthly* cause that seems to be gaining wider acceptance. It is reform of the civil service. Jimmy Carter was the first prominent political leader to embrace it, but now he has been joined by the mayor of New York City and the governor of New York State. Both Koch and Carey are, like Carter, moderate reformers. But Malcolm Forbes, the editor-in-chief of *Forbes Magazine*, recently indicated he might be ready to go even further than *The Washington Monthly* and support a complete restoration of the spoils system. As most of our readers know, we favor an even mix between civil service and political appointees. But we would welcome Mr. Forbes' planting his flag at a more advanced position so we could assume the unaccustomed mantle of moderation.

I hope Forbes, Carter, Koch, and Carey saw the recent support for our position in this item from *The New York Times*: "... since the advent of the Civil Service, the Election Board is the only agency left that is—by order of law—politically divided, politically appointed. Paradoxically, it gets better marks for service than many municipal offices that are staffed through the 'merit system.'"

Carter complains about the public's refusal to believe what the government says about the energy problem. To help him understand why the people aren't more trusting, we offer this excerpt from an article by Merrill Brown that appeared in the business section of *The Washington Star* in early May:

"Federal officials admit they have collected only a small portion of the 'tens of millions of dollars' President Carter told the nation last week was already in federal coffers in connection with oil pricing fines. Although Carter said the funds would be used for federal programs to aid the poor, most of the money will never reach the Treasury and is, in fact, earmarked for refunds to consumers and oil industry concerns.

"A fact sheet distributed by the White House on President Carter's energy message last week says the Department of Energy has 'already collected \$60 million' in connection with the oil overcharge cases and that the money will be used to aid low-income people victimized by high energy prices.

"When asked about the \$60 million figure, one high-placed DOE official who declined to be identified said: 'I haven't the slightest idea where he got that from.'

"Another official, Paul T. Bloom, who heads DOE's Office of Special Counsel, said in an interview that only 'a couple of million dollars' is actually in the Federal Treasury as a result of the pricing violations." . . .

There is a nice touch of legislative sophistication in Ted Kennedy's regulatory reform bill. One of the great obstacles to such reform is that the congressional committees overseeing the regulatory agencies have become wedded to the status quo. Kennedy's bill provides that if committees don't act on a reform proposal within a certain time, the proposal will go directly to the floor for action by the entire House or Senate, whose members may have less stake in keeping

things the way they are. . . . Marion Barry, the District of Columbia's mayor, has proposed a payroll tax to finance completion of the local subway system. This proves that Barry has never run a business. Otherwise, he would know that payroll taxes—the social security tax is one—can kill. Taxes on net income, on the other hand, cannot destroy a business. If you don't have a profit from which to pay the tax, you don't have to pay. It is unfortunately true of many liberals like Barry that their knowledge of business is so slight that they don't understand the difference. . . . Another problem businessmen have is a lack of employee empathy. In other words, their employees seldom put themselves in the bosses' shoes even when the boss is a relatively benign individual or organization. Take Antioch College, which was recently faced with bankruptcy and had to delay payment of faculty salaries for a few days. Did the professors offer to make sacrifices—did they even offer suggestions—to help the school out of its predicament? Of course not. They merely expressed "outrage" that the checks were delayed.

Philosophers have observed that sometimes bad motives produce good actions. One current example of this is that I'm sure all those illegal aliens I favor would have the borders slammed in their faces if it weren't that the Washington elite sees them as the answer to the servant problem. . . .

According to David Burnham of *The New York Times*, who seldom gets things wrong, the Justice Department and the CIA are refusing to give Congress information about the disappearance of uranium from a nuclear plant at Apollo, Pennsylvania. If you read John Fialka's article, "The American Connection: How Israel Got the Bomb," in our January issue, you know that what is being hidden is evidence that Israel got enough uranium to make several nuclear bombs. Why should this information be kept

from Congress? To spare Israel the embarrassment? . . . Because of the twice-a-year cost of living raises, 2,900 federal retirees now make more than anyone presently employed in the civil service. To paraphrase Nicholas Von Hoffman, only the United States government would give more money to those who don't work than it pays to those who do.

When did the federal bureaucracy turn into the lethargic, self-protective monster it is today? The tendency to become lethargic and self-protective has always been there, but the federal bureaucracy did not become monstrous in size until the 1933-1945 period. But then it was inspired by the struggle to defeat the depression and win the war, and by an exciting leader, FDR. The decline, it seems to me, began with the end of the war and the death of FDR in 1945. Truman may be remembered fondly today, but in the late forties he was not perceived as an exciting and challenging leader by federal workers. The loyalty program he established in 1947 was the first step toward making them value caution and keeping out of trouble. Then came the attack from Congress, from William Jenner and Joseph McCarthy, the Who Lost China mob. The defeat of Adlai Stevenson, who seemed to reawaken the idealism that had been dormant under Truman, in 1952 was the final blow. Eisenhower was not one of them. The result was that the ritualization of self-protection, the sense that the people at the top didn't share your goals, didn't understand or didn't care about your ideas—unless your ideas were Red, which meant you would be fired—all this became habitual in the fifties.

By the time Kennedy arrived, this bureaucracy had become set in its ways, and any flurry of ardor that may have stirred under JFK or in the first years of Johnson's Great Society was snuffed out by Vietnam and Watergate.

—Charles Peters

Memo of the Month

MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INSTRUCTION AND INFORMATION MEMORANDUM OERT 79-1

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH

EXPIRES: December 31, 1979

Executive Secretaries of NIH Initial Review Groups DATE: January 15, 1979

FROM : Associate Director for Extramural Research
and Training, NIH

SUBJECT : Extension of INSTRUCTION AND INFORMATION MEMORANDUM OERT 77-5,
Documentation Requirements for Summary Statements Involving
Multi-project Applications (4500)

The expiration date of Instruction and Information Memorandum OERT 77-5, Documentation Requirements for Summary Statements Involving Multi-project Applications (4500) is hereby extended until December 31, 1979 and modified as follows:

Substitute the following paragraph for Section IV - Distribution of Copies of Summary Statements:

In addition to the normal distribution of Summary Statements by the IRGs, a copy of Summary Statements for all IRG approved "P" applications and those "R" (except R25) and S06 applications which involve multi-projects shall be forwarded to the Data Processing Section, Statistics and Analysis Branch, Division of Research Grants, Room 120, Westwood Building, at the same time the other copies of Summary Statements are distributed.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of the IRG review and evaluation of each sub-project within a multi-project application. The resulting recommendations by the IRG on each sub-project are essential to the BIDs in making final pre-award funding determinations.

Finally, when preparing Summary Statements for applications involving sub-projects, one of the prescribed optional formats must be used for documenting the evaluation and critique requirements for each sub-project.

William F. Raub
William F. Raub, Ph.D.

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