

When Good Guys Lie

*Misleading the public is no way
to make the world a better place*

BY GLENN HODGES

I THOUGHT I'D SEEN IT ALL WHEN PARENTS started leading their kids around by leashes in the shopping mall. Then a woman and her leashless toddler came into the shoe store where I worked. The little boy walked a few feet away from his mother, to look at a shoe or something, and his mother shrieked, "Get back here! Some man's gonna snatch you!" Terrified, the boy ran and wrapped his arms around his mother's leg. He was safe.

It was 1984, the apex of the missing children scare. Fifty thousand children a year were being abducted by strangers, we were told—equivalent to three per state every day—from shopping malls and front yards, bus stops and playgrounds. Parents were fingerprinting their kids and engraving ID numbers into their teeth. Insurance companies offered abduction insurance. The Sharper Image sold bright yellow transmitters so parents could track their stolen kids.

Then, in 1985, the *Denver Post* won a Pulitzer Prize for showing the whole thing was a hoax. The real number of stranger abductions was, at most, a tenth what everyone was claiming, and stereotypical kidnappings (incidents where children were not quickly released) were probably closer to two or three hundred a year. Most missing kids—roughly 95 percent—were runaways; almost all the rest had been "abducted" by non-custodial parents.

The 50,000 figure began with John Walsh, father of a six-year-old boy whose 1981 kidnapping thrust the issue of missing children into prime time (literally—the 1983 TV movie "Adam" probably did as much to elevate abduction hysteria as anything else). After Walsh testified in a congressional hearing that "50,000 children disappear annually and are abducted by strangers for reasons of foul play," it became the statistic of record. Missing children advocates, the news media, members of Congress—all cited it as fact.

Where did Walsh get the number? It was a "guesstimate." He said he concocted it after talking to missing children organizations across the country. He wasn't much of a statistician, but he sure knew how to get attention. "No child is safe from the sick, sadistic molesters and killers who roam our country at random," he said. Now Walsh is the host of "America's Most Wanted."

By the spring of 1986, pictures of missing kids had appeared on three billion milk cartons. They must have had a hard time finding enough children who had actually been abducted; I remember seeing pictures of "children" who were over 18 when reported missing and well into their twenties by the time they joined me for cereal. That struck me as ridiculous and a little funny; seeing that toddler clutch his mother in terror did not. In 1987, a Roper poll found that 76 percent of American children feared, above all else, being kidnapped.

Now, more than ten years after the number has been thoroughly debunked, the scare lives on. Companies still offer kidnapping insurance; parents and children still eye strangers with suspicion. A child told ABC News in 1994, "I don't like strangers. I'm afraid they're going to shoot me or something, or poison me."

When it comes to the shaping of policy debates, misinformation is all too common, and most of us know it. We have learned that half the stuff that comes down the pike is agenda-driven, misleading, and often flat-out wrong. But we tend to reserve our critical faculties for those we already mistrust. When the Heritage Foundation says \$5.3 trillion has been spent on welfare since the sixties, or when Philip Morris says cigarettes are not addictive and don't cause cancer, we recognize the agenda and judge accordingly. But where we have sympathies, we lack skepticism. Why did a baseless statistic for abducted children run unchal-

lenged for years, dragging policy-makers and public attention along by the collar? Because no one's *for* child abduction.

Most issues break down along some sort of ideological lines, and both liberals and conservatives tend to trust their own. Those of us on the middle to left side of the political spectrum are apt to trust environmentalists, social service advocates and other left-leaning crusaders to give us the straight dope. That may not be wise. We assume that noble ends inspire noble means, but that is not necessarily the case. The noblest war can inspire acts just as gruesome as the most debauched land grab.

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It is important to realize that when someone has an agenda—and who in Washington doesn't?—information is tactical, and very malleable, material. And when the cause seems most important and urgent, the temptation is high for researchers, interest groups, policy makers, and the media to exaggerate problems and distort findings to attract attention and force action.

Bait and Switch

Outright invention, like Walsh's kidnapping number, is rare in the policy arena; it's too easy to rebut. What's much more common is deceptive labeling of arguably accurate data.

Every fall People for the American Way releases a report called "Attacks on the Freedom to Learn," which purports to highlight the growing problem of censorship in America's public schools. In tandem with the American Library Association's "Banned Books Week," PFAW is the source of scores of news stories on how closed-minded parents and religious zealots are targeting our best literature—*Of Mice and Men*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, *The Catcher in the Rye*—for elimination from public school libraries and reading lists. PFAW's press release this fall exclaimed that "Public education weathered a record-breaking 475 attacks on curricula, library and textbooks, student expression, and other components of public education in the 1995-96 school year."

But what PFAW classifies as an incident of "attempted censorship" is a single complaint, usually

from a parent, who in many cases thinks a certain book is inappropriate for his or her child's age group. Most of the books PFAW describes as threatened have had no more than a half-dozen complaints nationwide, and it's not necessarily the classics that are drawing the most ire.

In the 1994-1995 school year, according to PFAW's 1995 report, the two most frequently challenged books in U.S. schools were Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* and *More Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, which include tales like "Wonderful Sausage," about a butcher who gets such culinary raves for his ground-up wife that he embarks on a town-wide sausage-making rampage, collecting children and, for good measure, "their kittens and puppies." But the report's 30-page introduction, which winds up being the main source for news stories, makes no mention of Schwartz's

books. Meanwhile, *Of Mice and Men* and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* get four mentions each. It's a classic bait-and-switch. When you think of censorship, you don't imagine a university professor complaining that his first-grader is too young to read stories about murder and dismemberment.

Distorting the debate over what is or isn't suitable reading material for children certainly has its repercussions, but the most tangible consequence is probably extra checks from direct mail solicitations (PFAW's annual "censorship" report is a fundraising centerpiece). When social science research uses the same tactics, however, the consequences can be much more serious.

By the time I finished college in 1989, it was taken as a given that one out of four of my female classmates had been victims of rape or attempted rape. Thanks to a 1987 study that quickly became conventional wisdom, sexual assault was seen as a crisis of epidemic proportions. Upon closer examination of the study, which had been produced in conjunction with *Ms.* magazine, it was clear all was not as it had seemed. Seventy-three percent of the women who had been defined as victims of rape did not themselves think they had been raped, and 42 percent of them—to the bewilderment of the researcher, Kent State professor Mary Koss—continued having sex with the men who had "raped" them. Half of these women labeled the problem as "miscommunication." It turns out Koss had decided on a definition of rape that many people, including the victims, did not share.

An earlier study, in 1982, came to similar conclusions—that 1 in 3 women would be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes—but again, about half the women did not consider their experience rape. But when University of Washington researcher Margaret Gordon used a more straightforward definition of rape for a 1981 study, she found that only 1 in 50 of the 1,620 women she randomly surveyed had been raped or sexually assaulted. (When she was conducting her rape study, Gordon told the *Toledo Blade*, “I felt pressure to have rape be as prevalent as possible. I’m a pretty strong feminist, but . . . the really avid feminists were trying to get me to say that things were worse than they really are.”)

Many studies fall somewhere in between Koss’s and Gordon’s, and it’s a legitimate arena of contention. Rape has traditionally been vastly underreported. But swinging the numbers to the other extreme has problems of its own. As a 20-year old University of Michigan student told the *Toledo Blade* in 1993, “It makes a big difference if it’s 1 in 3 or 1 in 50. If it’s 1 in 3, that’s something you could reasonably expect would happen in your lifetime. I’d have to say, honestly, I’d think about rape a lot less if I knew the number was 1 in 50.” Another student said, “The numbers scare me a lot. I find myself sitting back and saying, ‘Should I count on having this terrible experience sometime in my life?’”

But fear is only one consequence. Transforming debatable studies into steadfast slogans—one in three will be victimized—universalizes the problem: All women are equally vulnerable. But it’s poor and minority women who are at the highest risk, and middle-class white women—especially college students—who get most of the support services. According to the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Crime Survey, black women are more than twice as likely to be raped as white women, and low-income women are raped five times as often as high-income women. Meanwhile, as community rape crisis centers are habitually underfunded and short-staffed, their well-funded university counterparts in some instances may have little reason for being: Many universities—even large state

schools—report fewer than one rape or attempted rape each year. There may be a significant underreporting problem, but when reported rape victims in non-university settings go begging for support services, the situation smacks of misplaced priorities. Instead of “taking back the night” on college campuses, energies might be better spent volunteering at local rape crisis centers.

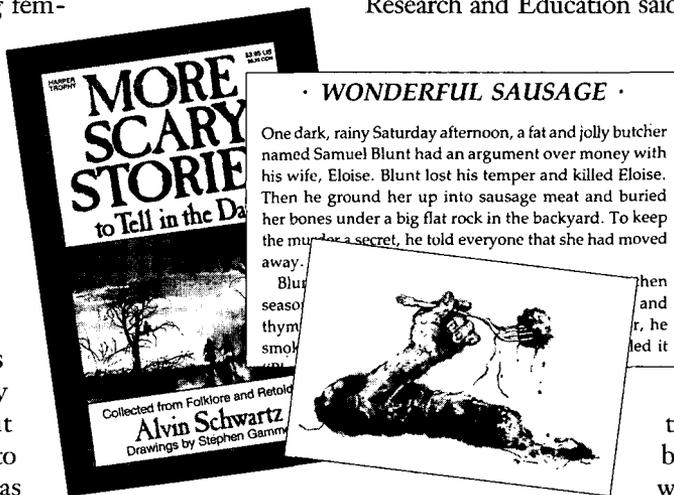
Inflated and misleading numbers can not only lead to the wrong solutions; they can lead to no solutions. When the National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education said there were 375,000 babies

born each year who were exposed to drugs while in the womb, Washington threw up its hands. Douglas Besharov, a professor at the University of Maryland School of Public Affairs, says that when Congress was debating how to address the problem of “crack babies” in the late 1980s, it was immobilized by the immensity of the problem.

The 375,000 figure, Besharov says, “had a chilling effect on Congress. I was floating around there, testifying at hearings, and you could just watch their faces blanch.” Meanwhile, he says, the real number was one-tenth that figure—closer to 35,000. It turns out the larger statistic counted babies whose mothers ingested alcohol or a drug at any point in their pregnancies. In other words, a wide net was cast to make the problem seem larger than it really was. And almost a decade later, Besharov says, there’s still no federal program to address the problem of children born to drug addicts, and “a big reason is people thought it was too big to deal with.”

If I Can Get AIDS, Thank the CDC

But it’s when the federal government—the closest thing we have to a final authority on everything from budget numbers to information on crime and disease—lies in the service of a greater good that the policy consequences are perhaps most severe, and the betrayal of trust most pronounced. In May 1996, *The Wall Street Journal* revealed that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) had since 1987 deliberately misled the public about the threat of AIDS. Concerned that a disease that primarily threatened gay



men and intravenous drug users would fail to garner public concern and congressional largesse, the CDC made a conscious decision to cast the disease as an equal-opportunity threat. "As long as this was seen as a gay disease or, even worse, a disease of drug abusers, that pushed the disease way down the ladder [of people's priorities]," said Dr. Walter Dowdle, a virologist who helped create the CDC's anti-AIDS office in the early eighties. Public-service announcements featured the clean-cut son of a Baptist minister saying, "If I can get AIDS, anyone can." But they left out the fact that he was gay. Similarly, the CDC neglected to mention that a young woman featured prominently in its ad campaign had been an I-V drug user.

Meanwhile, as Americans came to see AIDS as the nation's single greatest health threat (despite being only the number-11 killer), according to a 1992 Gallup poll, the disease made no significant inroads into the general heterosexual population. It did continue spreading, however, among homosexual men and intravenous drug users and their partners.

In its defense, the CDC says there were still a number of unanswered questions about the direction AIDS was taking in 1987. But many of those questions have been resolved now. According to the *Journal*, unpublished CDC research concludes that "the most effective efforts to reduce HIV infection will target injecting drug users in the Eastern seaboard, young and minority homosexual and bisexual men, and young and minority heterosexual women and men who smoke crack cocaine and have many sexual partners." Yet the CDC is still focusing much of its public education campaign on people with the lowest risk of the disease: middle-class heterosexuals.

The most devastating consequence of the CDC's errant public information campaign has been the misdirection of AIDS prevention money. In California, only 9 percent of the state's AIDS prevention funds targeted gay men between 1989 and 1992, despite the fact that they represented 85 percent of all AIDS cases, according to a University of California-San Francisco study. And a UCSF epidemiologist concluded that \$1 million can prevent 150 new infections if targeted toward high-risk groups, versus only two or three if targeted to low-risk populations.

Now, the CDC is finding itself caught in a trap of its own creation. Though it can no longer escape the conclusion that the most effective prevention efforts will target the most at-risk groups, 10 years' worth of programs designed to target the population as a whole don't want to go gently. Oregon's HIV program manager, Robert McAlister, told the *Journal* that many of

the state's community AIDS workers "are unwilling to acknowledge that youth who are truly at risk [are] young gay men." As a result, most prevention funds are still targeted at low-risk heterosexuals. Twenty percent of the CDC's \$584 million AIDS prevention budget goes toward HIV testing. But of the 24 million federally funded tests given in 1994, only 13 percent were for gay or bisexual men or I-V drug users.

For all these downsides, though, here's what the CDC did get: The year after the CDC began its campaign, federal funding for AIDS research nearly doubled, to \$655 million in 1988, and CDC's prevention budget more than doubled, from \$136 million in 1987 to \$304 million in 1988. Both those figures have since doubled again. Dishonesty pays.

And exposing it often doesn't, as Michael Fumento learned with his 1990 book, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*. A few years too far ahead of the curve, he argued that AIDS in the United States was still—and was likely to remain—a disease primarily afflicting high risk groups, and that the American people had been suckered into believing something different. And he got creamed. He was attacked by activists, pilloried by colleagues, fired by his employer, the *Rocky Mountain News*, and embargoed by bookstores. The huge Waldenbooks chain didn't order any copies until Fumento attacked the company on C-SPAN. Fumento's publisher, Basic Books/HarperCollins, let the book go out of print after selling only 12,000 copies. As the Basic Books representative who sold to Waldenbooks in New York told *The Washington Monthly* in 1993, "Look, it was going against everything we know about AIDS, about anything anybody reputable was telling us. Why buy a book like that?"

This kind of groupthink mentality is not unusual: Debunkers of a good cause's bad information are often labeled bad guys. After Dave Murray, the research director at the Statistical Assessment Service, a Washington group that tries to challenge faulty stats, wrote a report challenging missing children figures, he "got e-mail left and right." Murray says he was told, "The agony of Polly Klaas is on your hands. Don't you think child abduction is a tragedy? What's wrong with you?"

Airing on the Side of Caution

Sometimes dishonesty is as much what you don't say as what you do. In November, *The Washington Post* reported that for years the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) kept quiet the fact that air bags could injure and even kill passengers, especially small children, in automobile accidents.

Why? Apparently because NHTSA was working feverishly to make them mandatory equipment in all US cars and didn't want anything to derail the plan. It was more important to get the public on board in favor of air bags than it was to tell them the whole story of the costs and benefits.

Studies from as early as 1969 showed air bags might injure or kill passengers, but it wasn't until 1991, after the first deaths started rolling in, that NHTSA considered warning the public. And that was only after some hand-wringing. After an October 1991 meeting in which NHTSA and auto industry officials discussed the "half dozen or so" deaths that had so far been caused by air bags in low speed collisions, a NHTSA memo recounted agreement "that the potential for bad press in these few cases could cause a lot of harm to the public's positive perception and receptiveness to air bags." It wasn't until four years later, in November 1995, that NHTSA warned the public about the danger of air bag-induced injuries and deaths. Now there have been approximately 50 such deaths, 30 of them children.

What the *Post* did not report was that NHTSA was not the only one to have put PR concerns ahead of public safety. When NHTSA finally proposed its rule requiring warning stickers on automobile visors in 1993, a number of auto safety advocates (all strong air bag proponents) pushed for mild warnings to avoid alarming the public. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety argued that "the proposed warning could mislead the public by implying that air bags can cause fatal or serious injuries that would not have occurred in a comparable vehicle without an air bag," even though that was exactly the case. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety actually said there wasn't a need for a permanent label, that a warning in the owner's manual would suffice. "It would be counterproductive to present this information by way of unnecessarily alarming statements," AHAS argued.

Not surprisingly, opponents of mandatory air bag laws are seizing upon this affair as ammunition. It's too late for them to derail the federal mandate, but look for this story to become part of the permanent lexicon of anti-regulatory crusaders. It would be a shame if this were to tip the balance against a valuable safety mandate down the road. Federally mandated seatbelts have saved countless lives, and air bags are credited with preventing roughly 1,100 deaths to date.

Aiding and Abetting

Crusaders who withhold the whole truth, mislead, and exaggerate often unwittingly strengthen their opposition and weaken their own cause, especially

when they're claiming the moral high ground. No one seems more prone to this than environmentalists, and it's on the biggest and most contentious issues that the problem is most pronounced. The worst-case scenarios for global warming and overpopulation, for instance, foretell changes so catastrophic that most other concerns would be rendered virtually moot. Some people, looking at those high stakes, throw caution to the wind and use everything in their arsenal, no matter how loosely tethered to scientific data, to get people's attention and force action.

On a 99-degree day in June 1988, as the nation sweltered through the latest hot, dry summer in a decade of record high-temperature years, climatologist James Hansen appeared before Congress and proclaimed that he was 99 percent certain the earth was in the midst of man-induced global warming. "It's time to stop waffling so much and say that the greenhouse effect is here and is affecting our climate now," Hansen told reporters that day. Newspapers had a field day, and Hansen's colleagues had conniptions. After all, concern over global warming was barely a decade in the making, and 10 years of high temperatures do not a climate change make. "The variability of climate from decade to decade is monstrous," oceanographer Tim Barnett told *Science* in 1989. "To say that we've seen the greenhouse signal is ridiculous."

Most climatologists believed there just wasn't enough data to make a conclusive judgment. Only a decade earlier, after 30 years of relatively cool temperatures, climatologists feared we might be entering a new ice age. Though there was certainly reason to believe in 1988 that global warming was a real possibility, even a probability—atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, had increased 25 percent since the 19th century—there was no way of knowing yet whether the higher temperatures of the '80s were a trend or a statistical blip.

Even Stephen Schneider, a Stanford climatologist who has been at the forefront of the push for action against global warming, thought Hansen made a mistake by overstating the case. While Hansen's assertions got the attention of the public and Congress, "there was a risk of severe credibility loss for climatology if nature rolled a cold, wet summer or two soon, and this was quite possible," Schneider wrote in his 1990 book, *Global Warming*. Meanwhile, the '90s have seen some record-hot years (notably 1990, 1991 and 1995), but it's also had some cooler ones. 1992 and 1993 were cooled by sunlight-reflecting particles from the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in the Philippines, and 1996 is looking to go down as a relatively cool year

too. None of this is inconsistent with global warming models, but in bringing scrutiny to individual years instead of a longer-term pattern, Hansen risked confusing the public over the issue; he also “gave ammunition to his detractors,” as Schneider wrote, a take that is shared by many, including MIT atmospheric scientist Kerry Emanuel.

Emanuel says Hansen’s statement polarized the issue between “people who had the strong feeling that global warming’s a serious problem, and it’s happening, and another camp that felt equally sure that it wasn’t a serious problem—when in fact a rational, somewhat dispassionate view would say, hey, this is a

of a fawning public, he upped the ante: Thanks to overpopulation, 65 million Americans, and 4 billion people worldwide, would die of famine in the 1980s.

That didn’t happen, of course. But more than a quarter century later, overpopulation remains a potential problem. There are now 5.7 billion people on the planet, 2.2 billion (63 percent) more than in 1968, and the potential for conditions to significantly worsen—via overcrowding, pollution, disease, famine, etc.—sometime before the population levels off at between 8 and 12 billion is a real one. But much of the public’s attention and emotions have already been captured and squandered by overemphatic predictions. Now, more tempered predictions about potential future overpopulation problems are that much easier to dismiss and attack. Ehrlich himself has become a straw man for that part of the “brownlash” that sees no problem with a growing population, and that is successful at convincing others there is no problem.

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serious issue that needs to be looked at.” Now, thanks at least in part to premature alarmism, there’s a consortium of scientists, think tanks, and journalists who have set out to blow holes in the case for global warming, even as the evidence supporting global warming has continued to mount, and the scientific consensus has continued to thicken. “I think the truth will out,” says Emanuel. “But it’s probably been delayed.”

Exaggeration invites opposition. “I tell that to my environmental colleagues all the time,” Schneider says. “You can’t change what you believe to be the credibility of the case. And you don’t need to have a case 100 percent proved. The truth is bad enough.”

Tell that to Paul Ehrlich. In his 1996 book *The Betrayal of Science and Reason*, co-authored with his wife Anne Ehrlich, the Stanford biologist attacks the fast-growing “brownlash” movement that he says is trying to discredit environmentalists with unscientific arguments, false information, and *ad hominem* attacks. He does not seem to realize that the alarmism employed by himself and others has made an effective backlash that much easier.

In 1968, Ehrlich announced in his best-selling book *The Population Bomb* that “The fight to feed humanity is over. In the 1970s, the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now.” In 1970, flush with the attention

When asked about his failed predictions by *Stanford* magazine in 1990, Ehrlich had this to say: “Everyone wants to know what’s going to happen. And you never know what’s going to happen. So, the question is, Do you say, ‘I don’t know,’ in which case they all go back to bed—or do you say, ‘Hell, in ten years you’re likely to be going without food and water’ and [get] their attention?”

Yet Ehrlich takes the high road against environmentalists’ “unscientific” detractors in his latest book. “[W]e and our colleagues in environmental science make no claim to perfection, only to doing science as it should be done and to having our work constantly reviewed by peers so that it represents more than our own idiosyncratic opinions.” He says scientists shouldn’t be blamed for making predictions that don’t pan out. He’s right; the problem is, his predictions haven’t been especially scientific. No scrupulous scientist will state as absolute fact that something *will* happen if he in reality doesn’t know if it will or not. Responsible scientists, environmental or otherwise, add the necessary caveats: This *may* happen; that *might* happen.

But overstating your case is a seductive option when you realize that “mays” and “mights” don’t necessarily make the front page. Diane Dumanoski, an environmental reporter for the *Boston Globe*, told this story to David Shaw of the *Los Angeles Times*: In 1991, a Harvard scientist was predicting a “very high probability” that

an ozone hole would develop in the Northern hemisphere by the turn of the century, and Dumanoski wanted to get the story on the front page. Her editor, however, didn't think a "probability" merited page one, and told her if it wasn't a sure thing, the story would go inside. So she called the scientist and "negotiated something that really wasn't accurate . . . something much balder than was true," as she told Shaw. She got her piece on page one, and it said there would be an

ozone hole. Meanwhile, a Northern hemisphere ozone hole remains to be seen (and few expect to see one).

At a conference in 1990, Dumanoski said, "There is no such thing as objective reporting. I've become even more crafty about finding the voices to say the things I think are true. That's my subversive mission." Yet, ironically, the Ehrlichs praise Dumanoski in *The Betrayal of Science and Reason* as one of the "responsible electronic and print journalists who regularly offer

Who's Who

BY SUSAN THREADGILL

For those who hoped that women in Congress would set a good example of how to balance work and family, **Clara Bingham's** new book, *Women on The Hill*, is not brimming with glad tidings. **Rep. Cynthia McKinney** left her nine-year-old son behind in Georgia. It's hard to squeeze quality time from the crowded schedule of her weekends in the congressional district or his four or five visits a year to Washington. "He doesn't like me in this job," McKinney tells Bingham. "He would rather have a regular, average, ordinary mother." **Patty Murray's** family has gone back home. Murray, who had pioneered in letting **Pam Norick**, a staffer who is also a mother, work a four-day week, has told Norick the family-friendly schedule has to stop and that she has to leave if she can't work every day.

Of course, if you're in the camp that thinks women should adapt to congressional culture rather

than try to change it, you won't be troubled by those stories. And you'll be heartened by Bingham's characterization of **Pat Schroeder** as turf-obsessed—a trait the men in Congress have spent decades perfecting.

Former White House lawyers **Mark Fabiani** and **Jane Sherburne** are said to have been dissatisfied with **Bruce Lindsey's** "social visit" description of Riady-Huang meetings with the President. Is this why they have left the White House? Insiders tell us no. Fabiani has an inner-city revival project in San Diego that he is reported to be excited about. And Sherburne had other problems besides Lindsey. She didn't get along with White House counsel **Jack Quinn**. And the person to whom she reported, **Harold Ickes**, is leaving soon. But so (as we learn just as we go to press) is Quinn. Maybe Sherburne should reconsider.

After CNN's **Mark Feldstein** exposed the Hoffa gang's attempt to regain control of the Teamsters, **Jimmy Hoffa Jr.'s** aides, according to Feldstein, "Threatened to investigate me and smear me in Washington. I even have a tape of a Hoffa lawyer saying I will 'burn in hell' for the story."

The recent appointment of **Lanny**

Davis, a former law partner of **Ron Brown's** and of the legendary lobbyist **Tommy Boggs**, to replace **Mark Fabiani** on the President's special counsel on Whitewater shows the White House is willing to forgive mistakes by a friend. Davis, who has known Hillary **Clinton** since their Yale Law School days, subsequently played a role in selecting both **Zoe Baird** and **Janet Reno** to be attorney general. Few of today's White House insiders regard either choice as brilliant. Baird's nannygate problems cost the President dearly in the administration's early days, and Reno, who is thought by most White House insiders not to be tough enough on any crimes—except those possibly committed by the Clintons—is said to survive only because she is widely admired among the general public.

The financial troubles of **Joseph E. Cosby**, one of Washington's more prominent bookers of speaking engagements has left a lot of his prominent clients feeling stiffed. Among those aggrieved are **David Broder**, **Cal Thomas**, **Arthur Schlesinger Jr.**, **George Plimpton**, and **David Brinkley**. The biggest loser—to the tune of \$50,557—appears to be **Jesse Jackson**.

Why was **Tony Lake** replaced by **Sandy Berger** as National