

opinion/editorial

People voted for Reagan, not aides

President Ronald Reagan's manner of conducting his presidency has drawn quite a bit of media attention over the last month.

When the leader of the most powerful nation on earth steps out for a four-week vacation, he takes much of the news with him. So, lacking real news, the media collectively chooses to report about the news that isn't being made.

All presidents have been judged by their style as well as the content of their presidencies. The public judges a president primarily on those who preceded him.

Many people were upset by the informality that Jimmy Carter brought to the White House. Wearing blue jeans, participating in Willie Nelson concerts and curtailing of "Hail to the Chief" seemed to irritate people who liked the idea of an imperial presidency.

But, beginning with his inauguration, Reagan

showed he was determined to restore the White House with formal traditions.

So after a politically satisfying first six months, Reagan ventured off to California for rest and relaxation.

That Reagan decided to take a vacation is a moot issue. He is 70 years old and was wounded in an assassination attempt just five and a half months ago.

He has also campaigned effortlessly for his budget and tax cut proposals which passed through Congress handily.

The problem lies in his choosing to take a whole month off and how the government functioned while he was off chopping wood.

When the U.S. Navy fighter pilots shot down two Libyan planes who fired on them, Reagan was notified of the action some five hours after it occurred.

Questions were raised about the degree to which Reagan was being informed on world events. It's clearly a worthwhile concern considering the way Reagan has been managed by aides at press conferences.

And now that Reagan has returned from Fantasy Ranch to the real world, he's bound to face questions on who was in charge of what while he was away.

Delegating power is his style. It was his style in California and, judging from the way he campaigned, it was an expected managerial procedure.

But it was Reagan and not aides Ed Meese and Jim Baker that people voted for last November. He may be able to get his job done in his 9 to 5 workday, but considering his shallow thought process on important issues, it might be better if he spent more time studying his index cards.



Trench-coated man in alley sells water in flask illegally

The scene: A town in Nebraska. The time: the year 1997. A high school-aged male is walking down the street late at night. Suddenly, his stroll is interrupted by a whisper.

"Hey kid, c'mere a minute," says the voice.

"Come where?" says the kid.

"Over here," says the voice. "In the alley."

pat clark

The kid, eternally gullible, walks carefully in the direction of the alley. Soon he sees a silhouetted figure.

"Who are you?" the kid asks.

"Never mind who I am," says the voice. "I've got something here you might be interested in."

"What do you have?"

"You'll have to come closer," says the voice. "I don't want to talk too loud."

The kid's interest is peaked. He creeps into the alley. Soon he can distinguish that the voice is coming from a small, stocky man in a trench coat.

"Don't worry kid. I'm not going to hurt you. If it came down to a fight you could probably beat me to a pulp."

The kid could see that that was the case, which made him feel more relaxed. "Okay," he says, "what have you got that I would be so interested in?"

"This," he says. He opens his trench coat and reaches into an inside pocket. He produces a sealed clear plastic container from the pocket and hands it to the kid.

The kid examines the plastic bottle. He can tell that it contains liquid, probably clear liquid. "Vodka?" "Look," he says, "I can get alcohol anytime I want to."

"Shhh, not so loud," says the man in the trench coat. "It's not alcohol. Open it up and have a sip. It won't hurt you."

The kid is feeling pretty brave by now; he's also pretty curious. He unscrews the cap and slowly tilts the bottle to take a sip.

"It doesn't taste like anything," says the kid.

"It's not supposed to," says the guy. "It's water."

"Water? To drink?"

"Sure."

"But that's illegal!" the kid says.

"That's why we're in this alley."

"How did you ever get drinking water?" asks the kid. "Is it imported?"

"Nope. Home brew. I tapped into a coal-slurry pipeline and boiled the water out."

"Is it safe?"

"Of course," says the man in the trench coat. "They used to drink it all of the time."

"Just drink it straight?"

Coke agrees to help blacks

Unless you follow the news media with unusual diligence, you may have missed the landmark agreement recently worked out between Jesse Jackson's People United to Save Humanity and the Coca-Cola Co.

william raspberry

And yet, that agreement could, with proper follow-up, be as important to black America as the boycott of the Montgomery, Ala., bus company a quarter of a century ago.

Under terms of the "moral covenant" announced on Aug. 10, following a little-publicized boycott of Coca-Cola, the soft-drink giant will:

- Increase the number of black-owned distributors from the present two to 32 within the next twelve months, while providing special training and other assistance, at a company-estimated cost of \$1.3 million.

- Identify bottling franchises that may become available and attractive to financially capable black investors and, in addition, develop a list of prospective black investors to whom the franchise opportunities will be referred.

- Seek a black person for membership on the corporate board.

- Establish a venture capital fund of \$1.8 million for blacks.

- Double the amount of advertising money spent with black-owned media, assign one of its product lines to a black advertising agency, quadruple the level

of deposit and loan activity with black banks and expand the amount of business done with black suppliers.

The total value of the package is estimated by the company at more than \$30 million.

Coke president Donald R. Keough described his company's response as "accelerating and enlarging our programs already in place" to give black America "a well-deserved piece of the action."

Jackson won't quibble with that description, but he goes further. "President Reagan cut the public economy, which affected blacks disproportionately. Then, with his emphasis on deregulation, he told the Congress and the private sector that they didn't have to provide affirmative-action help to take up the slack. In addition, his proposals for guest-worker programs and other devices to increase opportunities for foreigners further undercut opportunities for blacks. We have concluded that we have to become our own Equal Employment Opportunity Commission."

The enforcement lever is the \$140 billion blacks spend each year.

Jackson said Coke's first response, following the boycott-inspired resumption of negotiations that had broken down, was to talk primarily about hiring more black workers. That is important, he acknowledged, but not the heart of what he and his Selective Patronage Council (representing the 50 top American markets) had in mind.

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