

Editorial

Reagan needs uniform image to avoid confusion

Ronald Reagan announced last week that the United States would no longer receive oil shipments from Libya. Reagan must have been more than happy to deliver that message to Americans; after all, it seems OPEC has had a firm grip on America's throat for a number of years. But, suddenly it turns out that we can thumb our noses at not just any member of OPEC, but the loathsome Moammar Khaddafy and Libya. It fits right in with Reagan's image of "we aren't going to take any crap from anybody anymore."

Often forgotten, however, are the conditions that allowed Reagan not to take any crap anymore from Khaddafy. Most important among these is the world oil glut. The OPEC nations that a few years ago could pluck an oil price out of the air now find themselves undercut but non-OPEC nations and even members of their own

ranks selling below the OPEC price. It's easy to have Reagan's kind of unflinching principles when things like economic necessity don't get in the way.

In other matters of foreign policy Reagan has failed to show this same highly principled attitude. In his dealings with Taiwan, for example, Reagan has been considerably less pugnacious than the Reagan who said in the 1980 campaign that he would never sell Taiwan down the river.

He may not be selling them down the river, but he's also not selling them all of the war materials they want. Why not? Because he wants to maintain already weak ties with the People's Republic of China. Reagan doesn't say much about this issue of course.

Then there is the latest round of dealings with Jordan. Jordan wanted to buy some mobile land-based weapons systems from the United States. We wouldn't sell because

Jordan might use them against Israel. But when King Hussein decided to buy them from the Soviets, our concern for the safety of Israel decreased considerably.

The Reagan administration tried to get a foot back in the door at the last minute but already had lost the sale. Reagan has yet to comment about that one, too.

Reagan likes to play the tough guy, whether it's with the Congress, with the press, or with other countries. What's more, America loves it when he does; we loved it when he was tough in the westens, we still love it when he acts tough in the White House. But with the sporadic way Reagan uses the tough-guy stance, all he is liable to do is eliminate any chance of negotiation with our enemies, and confuse our allies. A man as concerned about his public image as Reagan seems to me would be best off presenting just one public image.

Legislation on contraception attempts to regulate morals

My sons says that sometimes it seems there are two kinds of people in the world — kids and adults. Kids stay kids forever and adults were never kids, and while I have assured him that this is not the case, I am beginning to wonder myself. The Reagan people, it seems — were never kids.

A case in point is the new regulation requiring that parents be notified if teenagers under the age of 18 seek prescription

be sexually active on the same basis as men — without the consequence of an unwanted pregnancy.

It probably would do no good to ask the supporters of this and similar rules and legislation what they have against women. It might accomplish more, though, to ask them about the intent of the new regulation. President Reagan, when asked about it at his recent press conference, simply said parents had a right to know these sorts of things: "Those young people couldn't get their appendix taken out without their parents' permission."

True enough. And while sex is not an appendectomy, no one disputes that in the best of all possible worlds parents should know when their children — male or female — are sexually active. But in the best of all possible worlds, parents should not have to rely on the government (or its agent) to tell them. They should not have to insist that some Planned Parenthood clinic that receives government funds slip a note in the mail.

Most parents fight like crazy for any information they can get about their children. It's a rough world out there, a world full of fast cars and booze and drugs and, of course, sex with its possible consequences — pregnancy and childbirth. Anyone can understand the desire to know as much as possible, to want the government, like some good neighbor, to pick up the equivalent of the phone and fill in some blanks.

The trouble is that it is asking the government, in particular a single program, to do too much. It is asking the program to make the choice between the desire of the parents to know and the need of the child to have contraceptive protection — in confidence, if need be. After all, the problem is acute. By age 19, almost 66 percent of all women have had sexual intercourse and account for nearly one million births and abortions a year.

It would be fine if both aims could be meshed, but in many cases they can not. The purpose of the contraceptive program is to cut down on the appalling rate of teen-age pregnancies with its attendant appalling toll of illegitimate births, abortions, school dropouts and cost to the taxpayer (75 percent of births to teen-age mothers require some form of public subsidy).

Other programs should encourage children to open up to their parents — and the other way around as well. Yet many of the same people who urge the adoption of the new rule are opposed to sex education in the schools. They contradict themselves so many ways it is a wonder they can walk — not to mention still talk about getting the government off our backs.

Anyone who was ever a child knows that the new rules will do nothing more than assure that some teen-agers, fearing the reaction at home, will simply not visit a clinic. Other than that, their behavior will remain the same. The results are predictable. Teen-agers who shy from letting their parents know they are sexually active will not become celibate. They will become pregnant.

Then their parents will know.

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Richard Cohen

contraceptives from federally funded clinics. The only exception to the new rule are kids whose parents are likely to beat or sexually abuse them. Otherwise, it applies to teen-agers seeking birth control pills, intrauterine devices or diaphragms.

It's obvious right off that the measure applies only to girls. They are the ones who use contraceptive measures requiring prescriptions and they are clearly the ones the sponsors of the new rule have in mind. If boys needed prescriptions to buy their contraceptive devices, this new regulation would have been hooted out of the halls of the Department of Health and Human Services before anyone could put it down on paper.

So it is the girls we are talking about and we should not be surprised. Much of the so-called social legislation being discussed in Congress is directed at women. In many guises and with much rhetoric, these proposals are nothing more than attempts to take away from women their ability to

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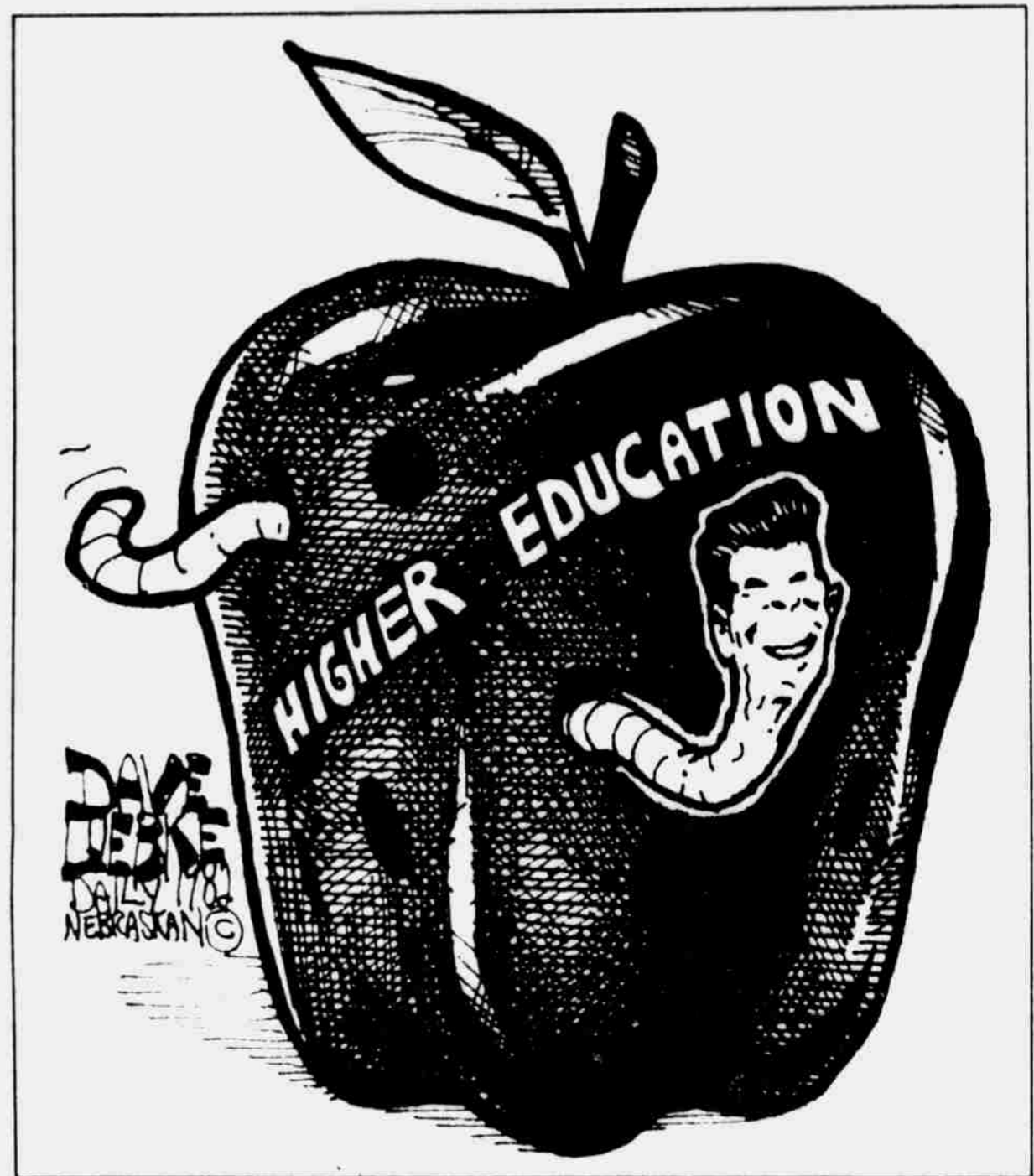
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'Ain't it awful?' game played

The behavior of people is described by the games they play, according to Transactional Analysis. This approach to human interaction analyzes the varieties of human interchange into specific reciprocal patterns — the "games people play." Eric Berne, the high priest of Transactional Analysis, used that phrase as the title of his popular book on the subject.

One of the games described in a TA manual is "Ain't It Awful?" in which "game players want agreement from listeners in order to confirm that the world is

their benefits are in danger. Student loan payments are cut. The federal budget deficit grows, small businesses fail and the taxpayer earning under \$40,000 bears the expenses and deprivation caused by increases in the military budget.

A recent poll revealed that a majority of people believed financial support for Reaganomics was coming almost exclusively from the lower tax brackets. But in addition most of those polled also believed that in the long run the economy would improve.

What is the advantage of having a guaranteed income of \$500 a week if a loaf of bread costs \$480? We seem to accept the bitter pill to cure our economic ills, as if the end (economic health) justifies the means (impoverishment of the already poor, enriching of the already rich). But are we even getting the cure we make sacrifices for? A number of economists don't think so.

One of them, Robert Lekachman, has written a book titled *Greed Is Not Enough: Reaganomics*, in which he argues that supply-side economics and tight-money policies are not only mutually contradictory but ineffective. He maintains that large corporations, not the supply and demand fluctuations of a free market, control the economy.

We have made a bargain with the devil in which we are sacrificing the small businessmen, the poor, the old, workers and students. The final word on whether sacrifices were worth the cure will have to wait until a time when we will look back and say, "Well, it was cruel and heartless and many suffered but we did end up with a healthy economy" or "Never have so many sacrificed so much for the benefit of so few and had so little to show for it."



Chuck Jagoda

an unhappy place. They seek out problems because if the entire world is horrible, it takes away an individual's responsibility to take care of himself."

A variation of the "Ain't It Awful?" game is "Look What They Are Doing to Us Now" game. This involves placing blame upon an individual or group thought to be very powerful.

These games are easier to play today than at any time in recent history. During the Vietnam War at least there were government initiatives in the improvement of civil rights, the elimination of poverty and the expansion of educational opportunities for all.

A thread that has been part of the fabric of American life — the right of blacks to sit in the same classrooms as whites — shows signs of unravelling. Older threads become bare: Social Security benefits for the old and disabled are imperiled. More and more workers are unemployed and