

A WASHINGTON PERSPECTIVE . . .

By Lou Cannon

Humpty Dumpty and kitchen sinks

Jimmy Carter, barefoot and wearing jeans, was drinking a glass of milk and eating a baloney sandwich when the reporters came to his house to interview him on the Friday before his fall campaign began. This was the interview in which Carter would talk about his need for getting a broad mandate from the voters and give his opinion that a tie in the presidential debates was equivalent to a victory.

Forty minutes later, when the interview was nearly ended, one reporter brought up Republican vice presidential nominee Bob Dole's criticism of Carter for saying that he wanted to "pardon" VietNam War draft resisters rather than give them "amnesty." Dole had observed that these two words have the same dictionary definition.

"Not in my dictionary," Carter said with some animation, offering to take the reporters into his library and show them. The reporters obliged. With Carter, they turned the pages of Webster's Third International Dictionary, dutifully noting the various special usages of the word "amnesty." Then one of them observed, as Dole had, that the dictionary listed the word as a synonym for "pardon."

"I'm reserving the right to define the words the way I want to," Carter replied. He was smiling but his words left a chill, perhaps because the reporter remembered *Alice in Wonderland*. ("When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.") But Carter's comment turned out to define the shape of things to come. When he goofed in an interview with the Associated Press two weekends later and left the impression he wanted to raise taxes on everyone making more than the "median" income, Carter's aides repaired to Humpty Dumpty's defense.

"The median," said one of them, "is whatever Governor Carter wants it to be."

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Gerald Ford's difficulties are of a different order. In his campaign opening speech in Grand Rapids, which fortunately for the President was not seen on national television, Ford appeared intent on demonstrating that his masterful performance at the Republican National convention had been a fluke.

The speech had its moments, notably in Ford's forceful challenge of Carter on the issue of "trust." Also, Ford won plaudits from the majority of the students jammed into the Crisler Arena at the University of Michigan for his patient and good-natured endurance of constant heckling. Taken as a whole, however, his speech was a rambling document which one aide privately referred to as "the kitchen-sink address."

Reflecting Ford's propensity for taking bits and pieces of a speech from a dozen conflicting advisers, the address

drifted between minor mortgage reform proposals, denunciations of crime, vague promises of tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools and celebrations of peace and prosperity. The latter could not have been more ill-timed, coming as it did when Michigan's inflation and unemployment is soaring and the Ford auto workers are on strike.

This did not deter the President. He plowed gracelessly through his text, flinching when a cherry bomb went off but otherwise appearing to be oblivious of what was going on in the country he intends to govern for four more years.

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Reporters covering Ford at least eat better than those on the Carter plane. This is largely because the Carter organization is leasing its campaign planes, rather than chartering them, and saves money by short-changing on the food. After a particularly bad meal on the Carter plane recently, reporters cried, "No more swill." When Press Secretary Jody Powell came back to quiet the noise because Carter was angry about it, he was struck by flying egg rolls.

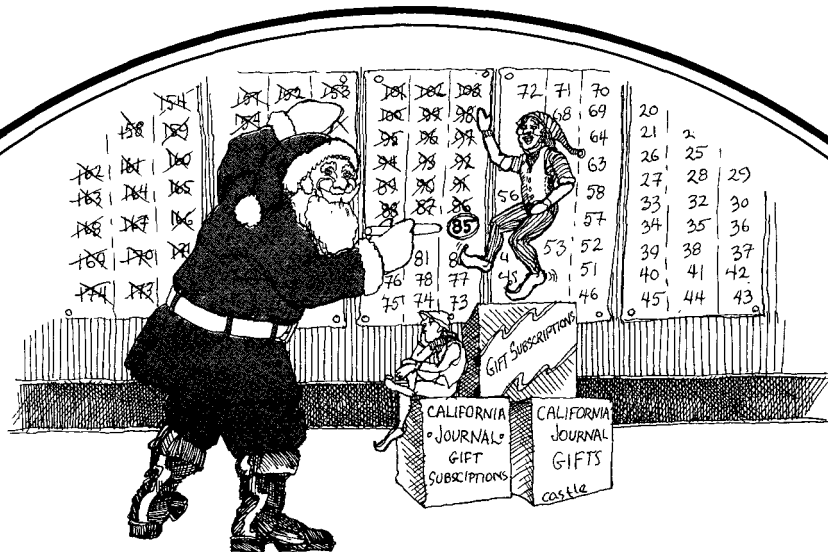
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Ronald Reagan can mean the difference between victory and defeat for Ford in California, according to Ford Committee strategists who not so long ago were reviling the former California governor. Research taken for the Ford Committee shows that 80 percent of the Republicans planning to vote for Ford in California favor Reagan for President. And of the undecided voters who plan to split their tickets in November, which is one of nine Californians, 44 percent consider themselves conservative.

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The reliance on Reagan has extended to a reliance on those who worked for him. The Ford polling organization, headed by Robert Teeter of Detroit, has subcontracted polling in California and Texas (where Teeter was off the mark in the May 1st primary) to Decision Making Information of Santa Ana, headed by Richard Wirthlin, the Reagan polling firm in the primaries.

Jim Lake, the capable Reagan press secretary, is co-chairman of "Farmers for Ford," along with another ex-Californian, Dick Lyng. Lyn Nofziger is doing his best to help Dole straighten out his logistics problems and two key Reagan advance men, David Keane and Charles Black, also are working for the Ford-Dole Committee. Before the election it's even conceivable that someone in the Ford organization will search out Reagan mastermind John Sears for advice, of which he usually has plenty. At this moment, however, Sears intends to vote Republican but to sit out the presidential campaign.



Only 85 more shopping days until Christmas

We hate to bring up the subject in October, but this is the time to start thinking about what to give those far-flung friends and relatives for Christmas this year. May we suggest a gift that is at once informative and educational (and occasionally even entertaining)?

What we're suggesting, of course, is a gift subscription to the *California Journal*. The *Journal* makes an ideal present for anyone interested in California politics and government. Besides, it's a gift that keeps coming 12 times a year.

With each subscription, we will send a card to the recipient informing him or her of your gift. For each gift subscription,

send your check for \$15 (or your BankAmericard or Master Charge number) to our circulation department, 1617 10th St., Sacramento 95814. If you prefer, ask us to bill you.

Other gift suggestions:

Classic books on California, by Carey McWilliams, three volumes: *California: The Great Exception*; *Southern California: An Island on the Land*; and *Factories in the Field*. A \$12.85 value for \$10, tax included.

The *California Journal Almanac of State Government and Politics*, packed with information on all aspects of government in California, \$3.13 including tax.

Postage is free only on prepaid orders.

Civilization will be saved, not by democracy, not by idealism, not by the United Nations, but by a sense of humor.

— William Feather