PS1 for 7/30/87

LET'S REDIRECT OUR OUTRAGE

Reporters and TV commentators keep asking Reagan loyalists if they are not ""outraged'' by the revelations of Oliver North and John Poindexter about what went on inside the Reagan Administration. The answer is no.

No, we are not outraged that Reagan Administration officials ""violated'' the Boland Amendment because they did not. The Boland Amendment simply prohibited appropriated funds from going to the Contras; it did not prohibit American individuals or foreigners from sending funds to the Contras. Those who donated sums of money to keep the Contras alive deserve our thanks for their generous gifts.

No, we are not outraged by the fact that Iran was induced to send funds to aid the Contras. It was, indeed, a ""neat idea.'' No law prohibited any foreign government from sending funds to aid the Contras; indeed, no U.S. law could possibly do that.

No, we are not outraged by Colonel North proposing the ""neat idea'' or by National Security Adviser John Poindexter okaying it. We are glad they did it because those actions helped the Contras to keep body and soul together at a very critical time until Congress came to its senses and voted more funding.

No, we are not outraged by Admiral Poindexter not telling the President and believing that the President would have approved the ""neat idea'' if he had been told about it. Admiral Poindexter believed he had the authority to make this judgment call, and whatever the President says today cannot negate the fact that Poindexter (and the rest of us) believe the President would have approved the ""neat idea'' when it was proposed.

No, we're not outraged because the plan wasn't approved by the State Department. The constitutional and elective responsibility for

foreign policy belongs to the President, not the State Department.

No, we are not outraged by President Reagan's management style that allowed his advisers to assume this responsibility. The American people didn't like the hands-on, obsession-with-detail management style of Jimmy Carter (who personally decided every person allowed to play on the White House tennis court) and Lyndon Johnson (who personally selected every bombing target in Vietnam).

No, we're not outraged by the ""arms for hostages'' revelations, but that is not necessarily to say that we approve it. First, it could not have been exclusively an arms-for-hostages deal, since Iran wasn't holding the hostages, and secondly, the matter of the hostages is a very difficult dilemma for which Reagan's critics haven't any solution anyway.

In any event, how we deal with Iran is such an immensely complicated issue that you can get a different opinion from everyone you consult. It's easy for the armchair ""experts'' to second-guess a failure with the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, but we don't hear them criticizing the successes in Grenada and the Achille Lauro.

We are fed up, if not outraged, by the sanctimonious politicians who are trying to make the Iran-Contra affair a moral issue, a constitutional issue, and a criminal issue. It isn't any of those things; it's just a political issue, and the posturing against the Reagan Administration is patently political.

We are also outraged by the way that Speaker Tip O'Neill delayed for months the funds for the Contras that Congress eventually did vote. Congress should be investigating itself, not trying to pillory or prosecute courageous servicemen.

The President now has a great opportunity to ""win'' the Iran-Contra investigation IF he puts as much passion into this objective as North and Poindexter did. The President should ask immediately for at

least $300 million in aid to the Contras, and push for a vote right away.

It isn't enough just to ask for the funds; the American people must be told WHY the Contras deserve our financial support. The political battle can't be won with some limp rhetoric about ""democracy'' in Central America.

There isn't any ""democracy'' as we know it in any other country. The issue isn't ""democracy'' at all. The issues are U.S. national security and freedom versus Communism. If the President doesn't explain these reasons, he won't get funds for the Contras.

The American people will respond to the cause of preventing the Soviet Union from consolidating a Soviet base in Central America in violation of the Monroe Doctrine. The American people will respond to the cause of helping a people to prevent the Communists from running their country. And the American people will respond to the cause of preventing a calamity that would result in some 10 million refugees from Communism walking north across the Rio Grande into our country.

Loyalty should be a two-way street. Oliver North and John Poindexter have dramatically and publicly demonstrated their loyalty to our country and to President Reagan. It's time for President Reagan to show his loyalty to the cause for which North and Poindexter sacrificed their careers by seizing the high ground they captured for him and asserting the passionate leadership necessary to win.