PS for 11/23/89

Grading President Bush

A *Newsweek* columnist has just presumed to give a school grade to the President, deciding that George Bush deserves only the mediocre grade of "C" on his economic policies. On the budget deficit, however, this presumptuous writer gives Bush a "D" because Bush "won't agree to new taxes."

The *Newsweek* writer was scathing, even vitriolic, in his denunciation of George Bush for daring to oppose tax increases. He reached for his thesaurus to lace Bush with such uncharitable epithets as "false piousness," "showmanship over substance," and "motivated by the crudest sort of short-term political calculus."

Contrary to the assumptions for this *Newsweek* oracle, the best way to grade a public official is on how well he fulfills his campaign promises. On that test, President Bush rates an "A" because he has stood firm on his pledge despite nightly hammering by the media.

The media have tried, ever since election night 1988, to get Bush to renege on his promise. First they used the media "stick" by saying he didn't really mean "read my lips"; then they tried the media "carrot" by defining "leadership" as supporting tax increases and "do-nothingism" as opposing tax increases; and finally they used every event and circumstance that came along (from the drug crisis to the San Francisco earthquake) as an excuse to get him to change his mind.

If the liberals really believe that tax increases are popular, why don't they just raise taxes? The Democrats clearly have the votes in Congress to do that. But they are afraid to do that because they know the public will side with George Bush.

This month's election provided new proof of the current American anti-tax mentality. Several spending measures went down to crushing defeats, even though they were packaged in supposedly unbeatable wrappings and supported by all the "best" people.

In an upset victory in Washington State, voter decisively rejected by 2 to 1 a proposition for a small sales tax increase attractively titled Children's Initiative. How could anyone vote against helping children – especially when the bill would have financed programs widely promoted by the media and recommended by the

experts, such as early childhood education, drug education in the schools, and child abuse prevention?

The initiative was endorsed by everyone with any name I.D. and the Governor did bleeding-heart TV spots pointing the finger of shame at opponents. But, funny thing, the voters said no.

When the disappointed backers of the Children's Initiative did their Monday morning quarterbacking, House Speaker Joe King said, "I don't think you can read into this that the public doesn't care about kids." That's right, Mr. King; but you surely can read into this that the public has discovered that such programs are principally a means of leading more persons onto the public payroll, with only trickle down benefits to children. Often, the programs are actually counterproductive.

Michigan voters trounced two school financing proposals, which the Michigan Legislature had been working on for three years, to provide additional state funds for education. They were enthusiastically backed by Governor James Blanchard, and the Michigan Education Association was reputed to have spent $2.5 million to achieve passage.

One of the Michigan propositions would have raised the sales tax only ½ of 1 percent, with all the revenues to be used for schools; the voters said no by more than 2-1/2 to 1. The other Michigan proposition, also exclusively to benefit the schools, would have raised the sales tax 2 percent with an offset of temporary property tax relief; the voters said no by more than 3 to 1, apparently disbelieving the promises.

In Texas, voters overwhelmingly defeated a proposition to raise the salaries of state legislators. The supposedly persuasive argument was that lobbyists had spent $2 million to entertain legislators, and a pay raise was going to eliminate the need for legislators to dine out so high on the hog.

That argument fell on deaf ears. State Senator Chet Edwards commented after the election, "It's good thing there wasn't a ballot alternative that said legislators' pay should be lowered."

Earlier this year, in Fremont, California, the city council put to a referendum a proposition to raise taxes by a puny $12 per household in order to provide daycare for employed parents. Again it was one of those propositions that "everyone"

supported but, when the votes were counted, it lost 3-1/2 to 1 and the politicians were stunned.

The voters are clearly saying, “No tax increases.” George Bush has been reading our lips, and for that he deserves an “A” because that’s democracy in action.