

Texarkana Gazette

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Clyde E. Palmer (1876-1957)
WALTER E. HUSSMAN (1906-1988)

In Our View

Achieving the Dream

Award marks big turnaround for TC

Since 2004, Achieving the Dream has been working to help community college students complete their studies and go on to make their hopes become realities.

Education is a key to economic achievement in today's world. Those who start, continue and finish their educational goals get better jobs at higher salaries. That helps boost the economies in the communities where they live. And it also helps their children go on to even greater success.

ATD works with a network of more than 200 community colleges across the country. And each year they give the Leah Meyer Austin Award for outstanding performance.

The award recognizes "a college that employs a holistic approach to reducing achievement gaps between

student groups and increasing success for all," according to the ATD website.

And this year, our own Texarkana College was one of only two winners of the award for 2018.

It wasn't that long ago that few would have predicted TC would win such an honor. But under the leadership of President James Henry Russell, the board of trustees and the faculty and staff, TC has made a remarkable turnaround. So much so the school is now recognized by ATD as a leader in working to improve outcomes for its students. And isn't that what college is all about?

We congratulate Texarkana College for its outstanding accomplishment. And we wish them even greater success in the future.



John McEoy
BWD/AMS

Plan only serves to patronize the poor

Several words came to mind when I considered the budget that President Trump submitted to Congress recently. One of them was "sanctimony."

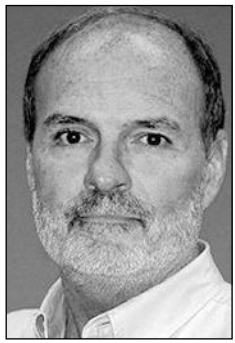
Sanctimony used to be synonymous with holiness, but in modern usage, it refers to "affected or hypocritical holiness." So sanctimony is to holiness as self-righteousness is to righteousness, that is, the hypocritical version of a desirable attribute.

Thus, in the Trump budget, the generous act of helping other people get enough to eat provides an opportunity to criticize and patronize the poor for their bad food choices and to congratulate ourselves for making better choices than they do, even though our president's favorite food appears to be Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Under the proposed plan, citizens who get food support from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would receive half of their benefits in the form of a "Harvest Box," which would contain foods selected on the basis of their supposed nutritional value, as well as on their economic benefit to American farmers.

According to the New York Times, the "Harvest Box" was conceived by Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue as part of a program to cut food assistance by \$214 billion over the next decade. Perdue described it as "a bold, innovative approach to providing nutritious food to people who need assistance feeding themselves and their families—and all of it is grown by American farmers and producers."

Budget director Mick



John M. Crisp

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Mulvaney was enthusiastic about the idea, comparing it to the Blue Apron grocery delivery service.

In practical terms, "Harvest Box" has a close-to-zero chance of approval. The idea was immediately dismissed by the Republican chairs of the agriculture committees in the House and Senate, and it was never seriously discussed in hearings. No one even bothered to calculate the logistical challenges and costs of putting boxes of food into the hands of the 46 million Americans who used SNAP last year.

No, instead of a serious policy proposal, "Harvest Box" feels more like a mean-spirited opportunity to stick a finger in the eye of people who are short on resources. It supports the myth of the "lazy poor," whose poverty serves as testimony to their innate irresponsibility and untrustworthiness.

"Harvest Box" is an impractical version of other efforts—such as imposing work requirements and drug testing on recipients of public assistance—to generate more responsibility and better behavior in the poor.

Accountability is a worthy goal, but efforts such as these serve to stigmatize and demean the poor while shifting blame for their plight in their direction rather than toward public policy that works to their disadvantage.

And such efforts always ignore data. For example, according to Forbes magazine, 77 percent of SNAP recipients are children, elderly or disabled non-elderly. And non-disabled adults between 18 and 49 who are living in a childless home can receive only three months of benefits during any three-year period, unless they are already working 20-plus hours per week.

In short, SNAP serves people who are having a hard time getting enough to eat in the richest country in the world. Sanctimonious restrictions on such programs may make us feel better about our responsibilities and obligations, but they also make it easier for candidate Mitt Romney to categorize 47 percent of Americans as "tak-ers." That simply isn't true.

Here's the point: As long as the increasingly small segment of our society that holds an increasingly large share of the money and power can keep the middle class's anger and blame directed downward toward the poor rather than upward at rich, and as long as they can keep the rest of us convinced that the poor, rather than the rich, are draining our culture of its resources, we don't need Russian agents working among us to sow hatred, discord and social fragmentation.

We're quite capable of doing that, ourselves.

We can finally identify, defeat real enemy

We are reporting today from the battle lines of a nation at war, besieged by attackers on multiple fronts—yet tragically unable to even identify its prime enemy.

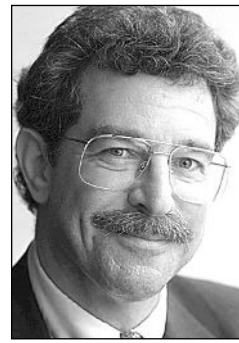
So we must begin not by analyzing another round of fresh battle plans from our frayed commanders. Instead, we need to consult our nation's most sage philosopher, in the hopes that he can once again set us straight. I refer of course to Pogo, the comic strip possum who functioned as the philosopher king of newspaper comic strip Walt Kelly's satirical swamp.

"We have met the enemy and he is us," Pogo famously told us in the 1950s. And lo, Pogo is spot on, yet again, in the America of 2018.

America today is a nation at war with itself. In one week:

■ Fourteen Parkland, Fla., teens and three teachers were slaughtered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. They were killed by a mentally troubled, expelled student spraying his former classmates with a military-styled AR-15 assault weapon he'd purchased legally. Cops came to his house 39 times; he'd had mental counseling; teachers feared him. The FBI was twice warned he wanted to be a school shooter; but the FBI shockingly failed to act. Background checks failed because federal, state and local computers didn't tell each other what they knew about the accused gunman, Nikolas Cruz, age 19. Just days later, Florida's Republican state legislature refused to debate the gun controversy yet found time to drone on about the peril of pornography. So teenage survivors of the Parkland massacre went to Tallahassee to courageously confront legislators for their un-American failures to act.

■ Thirteen Russians with ties to the Kremlin were indicted by the Justice Department's independent counsel for launching an attack on the United States democracy, seeking to spread lies and dissension during the 2016 election via



Martin Schram

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

cyber warfare and also on the ground. The independent counsel is investigating evidence of ties between the campaign of the ultimate winner, President Donald Trump, and the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin. In statements, Trump did not condemn or even mention Putin. But Trump repeatedly attacked his Democratic opponents.

In his Pogo Papers anthology, Walt Kelly explained that he came up with Pogo's core philosophy while thinking through the Cold War crisis that led to Sen. Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist Cold War abuses—excesses in reaction to the Soviet efforts to infiltrate spies into the U.S. government.

"In the time of Joseph McCarthyism ... I attempted to explain each individual is wholly involved in the democratic process," Kelly wrote. "... The results of the process fall on the head of the public and he who is recalcitrant or procrastinates in raising his voice can blame no one but himself."

McCarthy's abuses were ultimately curtailed because America's Republicans and Democrats used to say that politics stops at the water's edge. In today's multiple battles, we need to pay homage to—and heed—the patriotic instincts of the father of the modern conservative movement, Sen. Barry Goldwater. The Arizona Republican was a patriotic leader in both of the arenas that marked this past week's major news.

Goldwater famously

posed with his rifle (the one he made!) for the National Rifle Association's recruitment ads, proclaiming: "I am the NRA." Yet, as the iconic "Conscience of the Conservatives" spoke out strongly in defense of the Constitution's Second Amendment, he also believed that no hunter should be able to buy military-styled assault weapons. "I've never used an automatic or semi-automatic for hunting," Goldwater once said. "There's no need to... If any SOB can't hit a deer with one shot, he should quit shooting."

Now the NRA calls such talk blasphemy, cuts off funding if pols dare speak such common sense—and runs a primary opponent against them. Which makes gun-toting Republicans cower in fear and run up their laundry bills. Never mind that Ronald Reagan agreed with Goldwater on that.

Gun enthusiasts need to re-channel the Goldwater/Reagan greatness they once admired, defend the common-sense strength of the Second Amendment—and really make America great again.

Meanwhile, Goldwater and Reagan were in the vanguard of the Grand Old Party's leadership in standing strong against Russian spy efforts to infiltrate the USA during the Cold War. They would be sickened to see their once-Grand Old Party being led by a president who wouldn't condemn a Russian attack on America's most globally admired principle—our democracy. And unlike Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker Paul Ryan and other too-weak-to-lead Republicans, Goldwater and Reagan would have strongly condemned Trump's failures to oppose, block and defeat Putin's assault on the greatness of America's free elections.

Finally, thanks to Pogo's insightful reminder, we can identify, debate and defeat the our prime enemy—ourselves!—before our enemy defeats us.

Neither prophet nor theologian

WASHINGTON—Asked in 1972 if he believed in miracles, Billy Graham answered: Yes, Jesus performed some and there are many "miracles around us today, including television and airplanes." Graham was no theologian.

Neither was he a prophet. Jesus said "a prophet hath no honor in his own country." Prophets take adversarial stances toward their times, as did the 20th century's two greatest religious leaders, Martin Luther King and Pope John Paul II. Graham did not. Partly for that reason, his country showered him with honors.

So, the subtitle of Grant Wacker's 2014 book "America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation" (Harvard University Press) is inapposite. When America acquired television and a celebrity culture, this culture shaped Graham. Professor Wacker of Duke's Divinity School judges Graham sympathetically as a man of impeccable personal and business probity.

Americans respect quantification, and Graham was a marvel of quantities. He spoke, Wacker says, to more people directly—about 215 million—than any person in history. In 1945, at age 26, he addressed 65,000 in Chicago's Soldier Field. The 1949 crusade in Los Angeles, promoted by the not notably devout William Randolph Hearst, had a cumulative attendance of 350,000. In 1957, a May-to-September rally in New York had attendance of 2.4 million, including 100,000 on one night at Yankee Stadium. A five-day meeting in Seoul, South Korea, in 1973 drew 3 million.

Graham's effects are impossible to quantify. His audiences were exhorted to make a "decision" for Christ, but a moment of volition might be (in theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase) an exercise in "cheap grace." Graham's preaching, to large rallies and broadcast audiences, gave comfort to



George Will

WASHINGTON POST WRITERS GROUP

many people and probably improved some.

Regarding race, this North Carolinian was brave, telling a Mississippi audience in 1952 that, in Wacker's words, "there was no room for segregation at the foot of the cross." In 1953, he personally removed the segregated ropes at a Chattanooga crusade. After the Supreme Court's 1954 desegregation ruling, Graham abandoned the practice of respecting local racial practices. Otherwise, he rarely stepped far in advance of the majority. His 1970 Ladies' Home Journal article "Jesus and the Liberated Woman" was, Wacker says, "a masterpiece of equivocation."

The first preacher with a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame was an entrepreneurial evangelical who consciously emulated masters of secular communication such as newscasters Drew Pearson, Walter Winchell and H.V. Kaltenborn. Wielding the adverbs "nearly" and "only," Graham, says Wacker, would warn that all is nearly lost and the only hope is Christ's forgiveness.

Graham frequently vowed to abstain from partisan politics, and almost as frequently slipped this self-imposed leash, almost always on behalf of Republicans. Before the 1960 election, Graham, displaying some cognitive dissonance, said that if John Kennedy were a true Catholic, he would be a president more loyal

to the Pope than to the Constitution but would fully support him if elected.

Graham's dealings with presidents mixed vanity and naivete. In 1952, he said he wanted to meet with all the candidates "to give them the moral side of the thing." He was 33. He applied flattery with a trowel, comparing Dwight Eisenhower's first foreign policy speech to the Sermon on the Mount and calling Richard Nixon "the most able and the best trained man for the job probably in American history." He told Nixon that God had given him, Nixon, "supernatural wisdom." Graham should have heeded the psalmist's warning about putting one's faith in princes.

On Feb. 1, 1972, unaware of Nixon's Oval Office taping system, when Nixon ranted about how Jews "totally dominated" the media, Graham said "this stranglehold has got to be broken or this country is going down the drain." He also told Nixon that Jews are "the ones putting out the pornographic stuff." One can reasonably acquit Graham of anti-Semitism only by convicting him of toadying. When Graham read transcripts of Nixon conspiring to cover up crimes, Graham said that what "shook me most" was Nixon's vulgar language.

Of the My Lai massacre of Vietnamese civilians by U.S. troops, Graham said, "we have all had our My Lais in one way or another; perhaps not with guns, but we have hurt others with a thoughtless word, an arrogant act or a selfish deed." Speaking in the National Cathedral three days after 9/11, he said "it's so glorious and wonderful" that the victims were in heaven and would not want to return.

Graham, Wacker concludes, had an attractively sunny personality and was "invincibly extrospective." This precluded "irony" but also "contemplativeness."