

Mr. Mike Powell  
Frederick News-Post  
Frederick, Md. 21704

2/5/88

Dear Mike,

I'm not trying to overload you and I'm sorry, I forgot to include the Post's map in what I sent. It is enclosed. Besides, you don't pay me and look what you pay for!

You (pl) and yours (nothing personal) made my days, rather my second day, when I saw ~~some~~ "Bells" and heard them like an old firehorse. Which, by the way, I remember very well. They were, at least where I live, magnificent.

Unlike a morning-paper past, I get up early and in the beautiful quiet read. By daylight I'm at the Fredericktowne mall, now along with at least four dozen others, for walking physical therapy. At the end of my lane I separate the junk for the Wx Post and the news and ~~sports~~ take the news and sports sections from yours into the mall. I can't walk much before I have to rest and elevate the left leg, and then I begin the papers, yours first. By the time three hours are past I've generally read both papers.

Frankly, I couldn't believe it when I read "Bells."

The third part of my day began with the enclosed, which I dashed off as soon as I was home.

Best wishes,

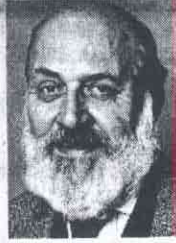


Harold Weisberg

# Roy Meachum

## Bells

2/5/88



No one thought to set off Capitol Hill's Sen. Robert A. Taft Memorial Carillon on Wednesday. It was an unfortunate oversight, for history has rarely recorded a greater day for the cause that dominated the late Ohio legislator's life.

All his long and distinguished Washington career, Sen. Taft fought for at least parity between the Congress and the presidency. As Franklin D. Roosevelt dominated American government many of those years, the senator lost more battles than he won.

This week and, by coincidence, on a single day, the Senate and the House sharply exposed the rapidly declining power of the lame-duck Ronald Reagan. Unfortunately for the memory of the senator, who enjoyed being called "Mr. Republican," the president whose wings were further clipped belongs to the Grand Old Party.

Mr. Reagan's greatest set-back this week was entirely his own doing. On a unanimous vote, the Senate confirmed California appeals court Judge Anthony M. Kennedy as the next associate justice of the United States.

With little fanfare and only spluttering opposition, Judge Kennedy inherits the Supreme Court seat the White House had reserved for Judge Robert A. Bork, or some other suitable symbol of conservative force. But, as I wrote before Judge Bork's confirmation process began, an attempt to impose any symbol was doomed to failure at the hands of the Senate's newly won Democratic majority.

The Bork disaster became a fiasco when the White House scrambled and came up with the name of Judge Douglas H. Ginsburg, another symbol whose non-existent chances turned to ashes with the admission he had smoked marijuana.

In putting forth Judge Kennedy, Mr. Reagan made no prior claims on the California jurist as his kind of man.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's praise before casting his vote for the man with the same name (but no relation) must have been particularly galling for Mr. Reagan and arch-conservatives like Sen. Strom Thurmond, who had been in the forefront of Judge Bork's losing effort.

Later the same day, on the other side of the Hill, House Democrats managed to fashion a close defeat for the president's "pet" foreign policy project, the

### Nicaraguan Contras.

The loss, no real surprise, came after the nation's three major television networks had flatly denied Mr. Reagan's request to plead the Contras' case to the general public the night before. Observers were hard-pressed to find any parallel instance that approached the communications giants' slap in the face to the man once known as "the Great Communicator."

To add to the administration's woes, hopes for avoiding an international conference on the Middle East virtually ended when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced, this week, new settlements in the troubled West Bank would not be postponed, as the U. S. State Department had asked.

At any rate, symptomatic of the current leadership crisis in this country, Washington's proposals failed to reflect the need for some immediate action to end the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, which claimed

three more lives this week and resulted in the firebombing of an Israeli settler's car. If the badly burned victim dies, then the violence can be expected to dramatically increase.

In other words, the evidence mounts that the White House is fostering another defeat for America abroad, and to its own prestige, to be added to this week's losses.

The "Dark Days" I foresaw for the republic in November are turning into a deepening gloom. We face months with a president who continues to display little touch for the common good, domestically or in this nation's great responsibilities abroad.

At the very least, Mr. Reagan should have devoted the power he still possesses to seeking a postponement on the Contras' funding. The anti-Sandinista forces will not go broke tomorrow. Adopting the slogan "Give peace a chance" would have almost certainly enabled the president to win a delay from the deeply divided House. It would have taken heat off the members and enabled the threat of future funding to act as a stick to both sides in the Central America negotiations currently under way.

However, as with Judge Bork, Mr.

Reagan ran the need to try and employ muscle on a reluctant Congress, to show the world he was still "boss" in Washington. In both instances, the president's frantic maneuverings served chiefly to highlight his present weakness.

The networks' decline of his request to address the American people seems, in retrospect, an ill-disguised favor to the embattled man in the Oval Office. At least he was saved the embarrassment of making a big pitch and still winding up on the wrong side in the next day's vote.

Since the past, however fresh, cannot be changed, today's hope must rest with Mr. Reagan turning his thoughts and energies to the Middle East. The situation commands the kind of urgency the White House sought to impose on the Contras' vote.

In his closing months, with no need to face political exigencies again, Ronald Reagan has a singular opportunity to regain the leadership role in that unhappy region his successors threw away. In fact, there has been no U.S. policy in the Middle East since Dwight D. Eisenhower's days in the White House.

But then, Mr. Eisenhower had the advantage over all his successors. He worked with a Capitol Hill largely shaped by the ideals and the labors of Sen. Robert A. Taft, who believed in independence for this nation, as well as his beloved Congress. Neither man was perfect, but both the late president and senator demonstrated integrity and a devotion to this nation's best interests and in a bi-partisan way, when called for.

The ultimate failure of Ronald Reagan may be his unwillingness to hear those clear voices from his own party's immediate history. If the means existed, I would order the ringing of the Taft carillon morning and night, until the bells' message drowned out the present confusion in the White House. They might help our lame-duck president to regain that lost vision of this nation and the world.

BELLS TOLL

When I read in the <sup>stat</sup> Post of Friday, February 5, <sup>in</sup> the column titled "Bells," that President Reagan's "successors threw away" what the gifted author calls "a singular opportunity," I ~~not~~ longer had a suspicion - I was satisfied that if anyone at all on the papers <sup>only</sup> ~~one~~ he who is closest to god can lay a pencil on the kind of simply atrocious copy I've been flabbergasted to see in type for several years.

So nobody will have to consult any dictionary, Oxford's definition is "<sup>of 'success'</sup> a person or thing ~~that~~ succeeds another." And "succeed" means "to come next in time or order, to follow, to take the place previously filled by another." The <sup>happily</sup> appropriate illustration is, of all things, ~~italized~~, "Hoover succeeded Coolidge."

Thus we have it on what seems to be, by local journalistic standards and desires, unquestionable authority that is by no means inconsistent with a long past, that whoever takes Ronald Reagan's place a year hence has already exercised his authority and wasted it by ~~throwing it away~~.

If traditional journalistic standards applied locally, <sup>with</sup> a pink slip long overdue there would be recollection of "bells" as the poet John Donne <sup>made</sup> ~~it~~ imperishable, ~~as~~ <sup>and</sup> take <sup>n</sup> for the title of his classic about the Spanish civil war by Ernest Hemingway: "Ask not for whom the bells toll, they toll for you."

I have trouble believing that nobody on the local papers does not know that succession to Ronald Reagan is scheduled for a year from now, as I also can't believe that some of the incredible nonsense, if I may praise much of what I've read, is outside their knowledge and understanding. Even though non-metropolitan papers ordinarily do ~~not~~ <sup>it</sup> seek or employ editors with more than casual experience in national and international affairs.

By their traditional content, non-metropolitan papers are not ordinarily exciting, <sup>stimulating</sup> and they can be made somewhat exciting by provoking controversy. If they are responsible, they do not do this by misleading and misinforming the <sup>iv</sup> readers

insert on page 2 where indicated:

Of this he says he "wrote before Judge Bork's confirmation process began" that he would be defeated by the Democrats, ~~who then had a majority~~. It is my recollection that what he actually wrote was long after and well into and not before the confirmation <sup>process</sup> began, and he then wrote the impossible, which I ridiculed pointedly, that the Democrats would "slink" -his word - into anonymity in the mass of the opposition. Anonymity on coast-to-coast TV? Anonymity when each and every Senator was making a very public display of his views and then all made speeches, recorded and also on TV, explaining his position and vote? Anonymity on committee and floor roll-call votes?

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concerning matters most readers have never studied or experienced. Otherwise they impose on readers' trust and besmirch themselves.

pontificating, as is his wont, based firmly on a combination of carelessness, ignorance, <sup>m</sup> a lack of concern, limitless ego and sublim<sup>m</sup>e certainty that the moving finger will forever sign that check, this talented commentator ~~on national and international affairs~~ makes a public spectacle of himself in this column, too. Not necessarily to casual perusal although even then it is obvious to anyone who has more than a glimmer of knowledge of what he writes about.

He lumps all Republicans, be they Mac Mathias or Jesse Kelmses, into one, all as identical "conservatives."

He says that President Reagan and his gang of Meeses selected Robert Bork and Douglas Ginsburg for the supreme court only as "symbols of conservative force." the actuality is and was obvious - they were selected as ideologues who would support Reaganite ideology. Is it not obvious, going back to those telecast hearings, that a judge who says "any person" as used in the Constitution <sup>includes only blacks and white women and non-black</sup> ~~does not include women or~~ other minorities, is not an authentic conservative but is an extremist, exactly what, true to Orwell, he claimed he was not, an "activist" actively rewriting the Constitution? And that he was defeated with the negative votes of a <sup>not</sup> inconsiderable number of Republicans?

Then there is <sup>this</sup> the intellectual detritus (a polite word for garbage): to add to the administration's woes, hopes for avoiding an international conference on the Middle East virtually ended when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced this week, new settlements in the troubled West Bank would not be postponed <sup>as the</sup> ~~as the~~ <sup>has to be avoided</sup> ~~as the~~.

Who says that any such international conference ~~would be avoided~~ and how could this administration even hope for one as long as the Israeli government is as firmly opposed to one? (There is no mention of the existing if ignored Camp David agreement, which was signed by Israel and Egypt.)

Switching ~~to~~ topics but as usual pontificating from the profundity of his ignorance about matters on which he says he is expert: "At the very least, Mr.

Reagan should have devoted the power he still ~~posses~~<sup>ses</sup> to seek a postponement of the Contras/funding."

How could he when in order to get such an appropriate<sup>in last year</sup> through <sup>single</sup> after the fiasco of the Iran/Contra hearings, Mr. Reagan made a solemn ~~pled~~<sup>pled</sup> pledge to an up-or-down vote of what he would propose on the fixed date?

"Adopting the slogan, <sup>have</sup> "gave peace a chance," would almost certainly enabled the president to win a delay. <sup>of</sup> "Give peace a chance" was the slogan of those who opposed his bill, which provided for more war and not peace, more weapons of war described not as "humanitarian" but as "non-lethal." Those who are for humanitarian aid and against the Reagan bill would have voted for only humanitarian aid and say they will introduce their own bill. ~~THE XXXX~~ In addition to the impossibility of his "almost certainly" there is the ridiculousness of trying to con the agitated Congress into believing that munitions, transportation and aviation, <sup>of</sup> included in the Reagan bill and <sup>a</sup> accounting for most of the funds it called for, into believing that either he or his bill intended peace. It is and for years has been ~~that~~ whether or not one agrees with him, the president's <sup>ardent</sup> early desire ~~is~~ to overthrow <sup>of</sup> the present government of Nicaragua. Most Americans and most in Congress strongly <sup>oppose this</sup> disagree.

This delay would "act<sup>as</sup> as a stick to both sides in Central America." When the end of financing and arms means the end of <sup>only</sup> one side? Does our omniscient one really think that when they would not run in any election and when they <sup>overwhelmingly</sup> lost an election international observers, including Americans, agree was free, does he really think that the Reagan-created and financed Contras <sup>would</sup> will be content to return and participate in any elections? Most of them don't dare return and most won't, which is another major ~~problem~~ Reaganite problem because under the <sup>Arias</sup> ~~Ara~~ plan they have to leave Honduras and Costa Rico. (<sup>more</sup> Girl your loins again, Miami of Miami Vice!)

"Today's hope," we are told, "must rest with Mr. Reagan turning his thoughts and energies to the Middle East. The situation commands the kind of urgency the White House sought to impose on the Contras' vote."

"Urgency" to lose? <sup>He lost that one!</sup> Not a plan that can be made acceptable to both sides, some-

thing for that urgent effort? Does he really think that we crack a "Reagan whip and the world falls to its knees?"

He does not, apparently, remember the earlier "Reagan urgency" on the Middle East. He inherited <sup>the</sup> an agreement to settlement of Camp David. His first "urgency" then was to rewrite it unilaterally and insist, with as much effect as King Canute, that his revision be agreed to. *It wasn't and that word since has been dormant.*

"In fact, there has been no U.S. policy in the Middle East since Dwight D. Eisenhower's days." Does he remember the Eisenhower plan - sending <sup>into Lebanon,</sup> ~~in the~~ Marines, also a disastrous Reagan policy? The Camp David agreement negotiated by Jimmy Carter does not exist and didn't ever? If there has been no U.S. policy for that area, how is it that our national debt is so much greater because of all the weaponry provided from one end of <sup>Islamic</sup> ~~the Arab~~ world to the other? We had no "policy" with regard to the shah of Iran? We haven't provided Saudi Arabia with the most advanced <sup>aviation and much more?</sup> ~~attraction?~~ Nothing went to Jordan or Egypt or Libya pursuant to U.S. policy?

We don't have ships and didn't lose men in the Persian Gulf?

If the bells tolled only in the Taft carillon, a stretched and amateurish *literary* ploy, it would be fine. As, they toll in a gray head and were there any prospect of anything reasonable <sup>my</sup> emerging, those tolling bells - or something - always prevents ~~it~~ that and we get this kind of harmful detritus.

If Frederick is to get local commentary on national and international affairs it ought not be, at its best, propaganda, and at its usual level, misinformation, disinformation, factual inaccuracy and worthless opinion.

For representative society to work, the people need honest, factual and ~~of~~ actual information and if there is to be opinion, <sup>with</sup> worthwhile and dependable opinion, not just anything at all for a paycheck and self-promotion.