

opinion

Governor Jaberwocky's revenge



Governor Jaberwocky and his retinue of aides put on a masterful show of obfuscation two weeks ago at the College of Staten Island in what was billed as an opportunity for the citizens to talk to their Janus-like chief executive.

The governor of liberalism sounded more like Ronald Reagan as he lectured the audience on how government works, on how much he cares about the homeless (even though he has done nothing to help them) and how difficult it is "to make these tough judgments" on how our money should be spent.

Cuomo, for a variety of reasons, has been treated with kid gloves by the supposedly independent-minded media thinkers who pilloried Hugh Carey for not governing. He sounds wonderful, he is an eloquent and persuasive speaker and he has a sixth sense about what sort of rhetoric sells, especially if the press corps is too dumb or too lazy to compare his speeches with his record. One on one with his constituents, however, Cuomo always resorts to his sneering, preachy style so familiar to the other Democrats from Queens County hackdom. He is the master of double-talk, the wise guy who, if he tried to pull off some of his verbal stunts in a saloon, would wind up on the barroom floor.

Consider this:

--While blasting away at the Reagan administration for spending too much money on the defense budget and expensive missiles, Cuomo blithely tells the audience that the Navy homeport is a swell idea but that it was a "purely local decision" made by city and county residents. He forgot to mention his role in approving expenditures by the Port Authority, to the tune of between \$20 million and \$40 million. He also forgot to mention the letter he sent asking the Navy to set up shop on our shores. "I was assured there would be no nuclear weapons on those ships," he said. In other words, he was misled by the Navy, which now refuses to admit or deny that the ships will be carrying nuclear weapons?

--While promising to act as a mediator in the Corson's Brook Woods dispute, he sent his equally-arrogant Commissioner of Mental Health and Retardation, Arthur Webb, to the daily press with a truly insidious message: if environmentalists don't knock off the challenge to our plans, we'll sue you. This is the liberal governor, the man who saved

scrap dealers in Willets Point from the bulldozers of Robert Moses? This is the same guy who acted as a mediator when John Lindsay wanted to take over the homes of working class homeowners in Corona? The same governor who sounds oh-so convincing when crying about the indifference of the Reagan administration? The jabberwocky message is this: we will use the power of the state -- and your money -- to harass you with a lawsuit because you have the temerity to save Staten Island's few remaining natural areas from our insensitive bureaucrats. Make way for the tough guy from Queens.

--While ranting about the lack of enforcement on environmental laws by the Reagan crowd, Governor Jaberwocky allows his state Commissioner of Environmental Conservation to negotiate three consent orders with DACS Trucking Company, owned by Ted Persico, as the firm continued to ignore legal sanctions. As he signed the orders, Persico continued to dump garbage into the Kill van Kull. Cuomo's commissioner, Henry Williams, first promised to "throw the book at these guys," recommending a \$20,000 fine. He then let them off the hook with a paltry \$3,000 fine as they were saving \$7,000 per week in unpaid landfill fees. This is the record of the tough environmentalist.

--While castigating Reagan for cutting back on mass transit subsidies, Cuomo stubbornly supports the \$5 billion Westway project, which will never be built. Because he is now counting on the real estate interests and the construction unions to finance his campaign for the White House, Cuomo will not listen to reason and trade in the Westway money for use in the subway, bus and ferry system. Some mass transit advocate.

--While sounding so principled on the issue of teen-age drinking, Cuomo refuses to enforce the current 19-year-old law. He talks a great deal about the need to educate the public about the dangers of under-age drinking, but he will not increase funding for the State Liquor Authority. This is evidence enough of his hypocrisy on the subject, but his appointments of Anthony Gazzara, another member of Queens hackdom, and Anthony Papa, as the chairman and executive director was an insult. Both were active in his campaigns. Several months ago, one of our reporters spent weeks attempting to obtain public records from the SLA, especially violations issued to taverns and delis for selling beer and/or liquor to minors. She was told they were "confidential" or not available. Both reasons were rejected by the state Committee on Access to Records. Finally, we spoke to Gazzara and tried to tell him about the state Public Officers Law and his responsibility to make those records available. His reply? "I am not familiar with this Public Relations (sic)-"

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Law.

The SLA is the laughing stock of the Cuomo administration. No one worries about getting nailed for serving to minors. There are at least 10 gin mills in this borough which regularly serve to teenagers and their owners are immune from prosecution thanks to the indifference of Governor Jaberwocky and his assortment of Queens polls. The kids who are drinking, naturally, could care less about the law and ridicule Cuomo for pretending to care about under-age drinking.

--As was pointed out in the Village Voice and re-printed in this column two weeks ago, Cuomo has yet to build one single unit of housing for the homeless, even though he used them at least nine/times as he explained why state government has limited resources. "We must take care of the homeless and the mentally retarded," was his constant theme. No one was impertinent enough to ask "When?"

--When Peggy Sklenar of the Chamber of Commerce asked Cuomo to reduce the personal income tax (a position recommended by his own commission) Cuomo berated her and demanded to know where she would find the money for programs for the retarded. A member of the audience having heard enough of Governor Jaberwocky's bullying, let him have it right between the eyes: "Don't play us off against one another." This got a nice round of applause from those who were tired of listening to this conservative Reaganite in liberal clothing. Cuomo denied he was trying to divide and conquer, but that is exactly how the man operates, just the way they taught him in Queens. He was sarcastic, sneering and couldn't resist the urge to lecture the audience about how government works, as if they were in a third grade civics class.

--When the president of the CSI student body challenged Cuomo on his plans to raise tuition, Governor Jaberwocky tried to turn the issue around by asking a ridiculous question: "Are you saying that the rich should not pay tuition?" Of course, that was not the point at all, and everyone in the room knew it. Cuomo simply cannot give a straight answer to any question. He would rather verbally spar with people than tell them the truth. The student body president relentlessly questioned Cuomo and had him on the ropes for 25 minutes. He was persuasive, articulate, and more aware of his facts than Governor Jaberwocky. In the end, Cuomo just gave up. He tried one last time to bamboozle the audience with the false statement that "they (the University trustees) raise your tuition, I don't raise your tuition." He admitted later, however, that he appoints "them" and "they" probably wouldn't do something that he was against: "Chances are if I

continued on page 23

don't recommend it, they won't raise it." Cuomo claims not to have seen a study which showed that CUNY could save money by eliminating tuition. The study was completed two years ago.

Governor Jabberwocky told people to "go to the city" for money. He told the audience it was "Washington's fault" that we can't afford everything. He would not promise to oppose the homeport if the "majority of the people" were against it, and avoided the issue of Staten Island's garbage problem. (When someone asked him to look into the possibility of keeping other city landfills open, Cuomo turned to Henry Williams who concluded a lengthy speech by saying "we're going to make sure the city closes all its landfills." Jabberwocky didn't care that this was another non-answer.)

On the homeport, he said at first "that is basically a judgment for people who live there. You people know best." This non-sequitur was followed by another preachy lecture telling us why he wouldn't necessarily follow the wishes of the majority. In other words, we know best but Cuomo will decide what we know best. And if he doesn't agree with what we know, he will overrule us. This is the liberal governor at work. Although he said "local government was better government," Cuomo doesn't really believe that. If he did, he would not have tried to weasel out of his statement about the "people knowing best."

Cuomo is a lucky politician who sounds good and depends on a dotting press to keep him away from being blamed for the disgraces of his administration. He is truly a master of double talk and, despite his alleged love for the people, really has no use for the folks who pay the bills. He thinks they are ignorant, selfish, and unwilling to listen to reason. He is the quintessential whiner. His motto seems to be "don't blame me; blame Reagan, Koch, anybody but me." The liberal governor who excited the Democratic Convention in July doesn't want to deal with the fact that he doesn't know how to govern. "Go away," is his message. Blame it on someone else. We can't do everything for everybody. We need money for Westway and \$20 million for raises for my underworked staff and no-show jobs in state agencies and the legislature.

Cuomo made two promises about the Greenbelt and Corson's Brook Woods. It will be interesting to see if he keeps them, or will turn Arthur Webb loose again to threaten us with a lawsuit. It will be interesting to see if he is willing to buck Betty Connelly and John Marchi, both of whom apparently made private deals with Webb to fool their constituents on the issue.

It is clear that Cuomo has been transformed from the liberal fighter against bureaucracy to one who defends the bureaucrats and has become one himself. The state government is at a standstill. Cuomo's commissioners are contemptuous of the public and he is in bed with the same real estate developers who are chasing the middle class and the poor out of Manhattan. Even on an issue like abortion rights, he is trying to have it both ways. If he indeed thinks "abortion is wrong," there is nothing in the state Constitution which prohibits him from trying to get the law changed. While he upholds the current law, he could persuade people that the law should be changed.

But he wants it both ways. He wants the liberal vote, the feminist vote and the conservative Catholic vote. While posturing that he will not impose his will on the people, he does exactly that on the death penalty issue. He goes further, in fact. He says even if the state legislature passes a death penalty bill over his veto, he will commute any death sentence. This is known in most circles as imposing your views on the people. Governor Jabberwocky gets away with this because too many liberal commentators agree with his positions on the death penalty and abortion, so they give him a free ride while he refuses to take a truly honest stance on the abortion question.

Governor Jabberwocky said this in July: "We must answer our opponents polished rhetoric with a

more telling reasonableness and rationality." Is it rational, Mario, to throw the elderly out in the streets so your real estate friends can "rebuild" Times Square? Is it rational to forge ahead on Westway while the poor and the middle class risk their lives in the subway system? Is it rational to allow a private carting company to befoul our waters and endanger the lives of our citizens while your commissioner looks the other way? Is it rational to give \$20 million in raises to your palace guard while your beloved homeless sleep in subway tunnels?

In the speech to the convention, Cuomo also said: "There are people who sleep in the city's streets, in the gutter, where the glitter doesn't show. . . . Maybe, Mr. President, if you asked a woman who'd been denied the help she needs to feed her children because you say we need the money to give a tax break to a millionaire or to build a missile we can't even afford to use. . . . We stand for . . . millions of reasoning people fighting to preserve our environment from greed and stupidity . . . for young people demanding an education and a future . . . how high will we pile the missiles?" This was Governor Jaberwocky's answer to the evil Republicans. He lambasted them for saying that "government can't do everything," which is exactly what he told Islanders two weeks ago. He's right, of course. Government can't do everything. However, in the Empire State, in the family of New York, under the direction of Governor Jaberwocky, government: threatens working people with a lawsuit if they don't get out of the way, encourages destruction of the environment, builds convention centers and wastes \$200 million in overruns, gives tax breaks to millionaires in Times Square, destroys vibrant neighborhoods like Clinton and talks about the homeless but does nothing about them.

Cuomo is one of the few political hacks I've met who can talk for an hour and say nothing. He is also one of the few who can make you think that he just promised you the world. Depending on what day of the week it is, he is either a priest, a philosophy professor, a lecturer on how government works, a deal-maker for the real estate interests and builders (who are the real monied class of New York), a radio-talk show host, a traveling medicine man, a shrinking violet presidential candidate, or a book author. He does all these things with great panache, and they are all duly recorded by his admiring bootlicking press. Rarely is he what we pay him for -- governor of the family of New York, where people sleep in the streets and the gutter. He is far too important for such minor distractions.

Cuomo is far too busy sounding like a liberal, acting like a conservative and being neither. In the final analysis, Cuomo will be whatever is convenient, whatever will get him the most votes. Just don't ask him to govern.

Man bites dog department:

From the Associated Press came this wonderful piece of news from the City of Brotherly Love:

"City councilman Ed Schwartz, riding one of the city's trolleys to see what the average commuter goes through, was mugged at a transit stop near his home. Mr. Schwartz said two men had approached him and demanded his money. He said one of them threatened him with a gun. When he pointed the gun, the councilman recalled, 'I said: You're dealing with a city councilman, are you sure you want to go through with this?' The effect of that was it made no difference. He put the gun to my left cheekbone."

Can you imagine the denseness of a public official in admitting to being a politician while being mugged? In parts of Staten Island, this would get you rubbed out by any self-respecting mugger. Also, what kind of pol would think that proclaiming his status would spare him the fate that has befallen so many of his constituents?

I think the offenders should get the electric chair for this crime. This is the only possible deterrent. What kind of a country would we have if the people started stealing from the politicians? We would quickly disintegrate into anarchy, since few people would ever run for public office again.