

**DOROTHY RABINOWITZ**

# Spreading the word in a new way

It has been more than a week since the Hart campaign entered the shredder, and still no sign of any end to the wisdom spilling forth daily on press ethics, adultery, the plight of wives. Nor is this anything but welcome, compared to a number of other news stories falling into what you might call the Important Issues department.

Such, anyway, is the frame of reference of a number of those arguing that the media have concentrated in the Hart story on things that were interesting rather than important — things such as the deficit.

True, we have not heard much from the media about the deficit of late: perhaps because they and everyone else around for the '84 presidential campaign recall too well the torpor produced by any mention of the subject.

Then, as now, the concerns which first and foremost moved the electorate were character, values, spirit. Did they like the candidate — trust him — or did they not?

Then, as now, it was precisely the things that were interesting to people that were the important ones.

The debate — if that is the word — over what is important and what is not is nothing new in political life. What does seem to be new and different these days are the means employed to transmit political ideas, the sort of thing evident in the aforementioned Important Issues stories.

We saw, of course, the most spectacular example at work at William Casey's Long Island funeral recently — a ceremony attended by the president and not a few high administration officials.

This was an opportunity not lost on Bishop John McGann — friend of the Casey family — if also one whose higher loyalties had apparently been reserved to the political cause for which he had now become a

spokesman: the war against the Contras and their supporters.

Bishop McGann, invited to deliver the homily, proceeded, as the world by now knows, to include in it an assault on the Contras, whose cause Mr. Casey had so long and ardently supported.

The bishop went on to expatiate on the high moral principles (disapproval of violence and such) to which he and his fellow bishops were themselves devoted but which the former CIA director had, his homily explained, altogether failed to comprehend.

All this Bishop McGann (not one to stand on ceremony) was thoughtful enough to have distributed to the assembled press in advance, which must have confused somewhat those few among them so innocent as to have supposed that the bishop had come to honor William Casey, a lifelong and devoted servant of this country.

In the meantime, in the nation's capital, yet another official last week took an opportunity to stress an issue of importance of his own.

This notable, who seized the day while serving as guest lecturer in an eighth-grade science class, was none other than Marion Barry, mayor of Washington, D.C.

Mr. Barry, who according to a Washington Post story has training in the field of chemistry, nevertheless turned in the course of his lecture from scientific wisdom to other thoughts.

"This government," the mayor of Washington informed the eighth-graders, "has an Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines who are killing people and they shouldn't be doing that."

The nation's servicemen did this killing, the mayor explained, in Vietnam. And in Lebanon.

This is a fine lesson for officials to be imparting to schoolchildren about the nation's armed services.

Mr. Barry, it is clear, is yet another of that illustrious cadre devoted to political instruction, to whom no occasion seems inappropriate for the dissemination of wisdom of this sort.

The burdens of office must weigh heavily on all such men. Perhaps Mayor Barry and Bishop McGann would do well to divest themselves of other responsibilities and simply team up, free to continue propounding the grotesque view of a nation and its policies which they share. In company, it should be said, with a goodly number of others nowadays presuming to speak for America's conscience.

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