

Bah! Humbug!

A politician may be honest or dishonest, sincere or hypocritical, dedicated to the common good or dedicated to feathering his own nest, but whatever else, a politician veers to winds of popular opinion. And during the early months of 1984, Americans have been treated to a good deal of veering and maneuvering on the part of the politician who holds the nation's highest elected office.

With the ease of an accomplished and experienced actor, which he assuredly is, the President has veered from demanding more and more billions to spend on defensive weapons to demanding no stone be left unturned in the search for peace between this nation and the Soviets. To an objective observer, it would almost appear as though, having gotten his way in placing nuclear warheads in western Europe, the President now can be magnanimous toward Russia and, at the same time, appease those on both sides of the Atlantic who view him as hawk rather than dove.

With consummate skill this actor-politician turns his smile upon us and, looking into our eyes as any honest man would, declares we must do something to reduce federal deficits and bring the budget into balance, even if it means cutbacks in money the Pentagon says it needs.

At the same time, of course, Americans are promised there will be no additional taxes levied. (Does he think we are so utterly stupid as to believe that?) And we are warned that billions are needed to implement plans to reverse political

trends in Central America. (Does he believe we don't know we must pay for that?) And we are assured that the economy is strong, and that peace, prosperity, and happiness-ever-after lie just around the corner. (Yup.)

All this cheery news comes at the same time we hear that senators and representatives to Congress are voting NOT to increase their own salaries another \$2,400 a year. Since there are fewer than 500 of them, that means an annual savings of about a million dollars. Isn't that great?

Nobody says what the Pentagon is paying for hammers, Allen wrenches, or cotter pins. Not even after it has been made public that thousands of such items have been purchased at prices neighboring \$1,000 apiece. Although he may be thinking about it, the President has yet to announce his plans to appoint a commission to investigate these government purchases. He has announced, and thinks we all ought to be relieved to learn it, a commission to suggest ways for the administration and Congress to reach agreement on the budget.

This spineless retreat from responsibility by officials elected to do the very job these appointed commissions are charged with is an insult to the intelligence of every voting American. Are we paying elected Congressmen around \$80,000 a year, plus expenses, to rubber-stamp work done by commissions?

Maybe all we need is commissions... we might save ourselves almost \$40,000,000 a year, plus expenses, by eliminating both houses of Congress... Politicians ... bah!