

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

career education—and gradually trim Washington’s contributions.

But the President also wants Washington to pay the \$30 billion tab for Medicaid (medical care for the poor), while shifting to the states the entire \$56 billion burden of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), food stamps, and Medicare (medical care for the elderly). This, charges Guzzardi, amounts to “handing the states the leading social dilemma of our time”—caring for the poor.

The existing social welfare system is part state, part federal. Despite federal contributions designed to minimize wide benefit disparities among states, Mississippi pays a monthly AFDC benefit of \$96 to a family of three; Wisconsin, \$473. But Mississippi’s poor make up almost 25 percent of its total population; Wisconsin’s, only 8.5 percent.

Other inequities are unrelated to state wealth. Oil-rich Texas’s monthly AFDC benefit, \$118, is the nation’s second lowest. Arizona offers no Medicare benefits at all. Giving the states full responsibility for social programs could widen such gaps.

Guzzardi believes that the current system of shared federal-state responsibility is inefficient. But he points out that while Reagan favors a federal takeover of Medicaid on grounds of economy, he does not seem to acknowledge that the same logic applies to AFDC and Medicare.

The states may be ready to handle more responsibilities in some areas, Guzzardi concludes, but “in modern times the expressions of our highest values . . . have come from the national government and from national leadership.” That, he says, is not likely to change soon.

*Lying to
the Pollsters*

“Is the Public Lying to the Pollsters?” by I. A. Lewis and William Schneider, in *Public Opinion* (April-May 1982), © American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1150 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Public opinion pollsters called the 1980 presidential election a “horse race” right up to election day. Yet a “closet Reagan vote” gave the Republican a comfortable 10 percent margin of victory. The public, it appears, concealed its intentions.

Pollsters have been aware of the problem for years, write Lewis and Schneider, *Los Angeles Times* poll director and American Enterprise Institute Fellow, respectively. While people tell pollsters things—about their income, for example, or their political preferences—they might not reveal to neighbors or friends, they also tend to slant their answers towards what is socially acceptable or, as in a test, “correct.”

Researcher Theresa Rogers, for example, asked 171 New Yorkers in 1974 whether they had voted in the last year’s mayoral election. Of the nonvoters, 40 percent claimed they had voted. And those interviewed in person were more likely to misrepresent themselves than those queried by phone, confirming the suspicion that social pressures affect poll responses. But other studies show that between 10 and 41 percent of

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inaccurate answers are simply due to memory lapses.

Moreover, attitudes expressed in polls are not always a reliable indicator of behavior. During the early 1930s, researcher Richard LaPiere crossed the United States with a Chinese couple to measure discrimination. Only one of the 251 restaurants and other public facilities they visited refused them service. Yet when LaPiere later mailed questionnaires to the proprietors, 90 percent stated they would not serve Asians.

In 1970, political scientist Philip Converse reported encountering a different sort of inconsistency. People interviewed on the same issues three times over four years could be divided into two groups: 20 percent had stable attitudes, but 80 percent either had no opinion or repeatedly "flip-flopped" on issues. Yet, Converse found, the shifts tended to balance out, keeping the mean attitude "remarkably stable."

Statistical techniques can correct for some distortions, but a certain amount of error will always remain, say Lewis and Schneider. Public opinion surveys cannot precisely delineate popular attitudes or predict behavior, but, carefully and cautiously conducted, they are useful as broad indicators of what the public is thinking.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

*The Pipeline
Imbroglia*

"Specters and Pipedreams" by Jonathan P. Stern, in *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1982), P.O. Box 984, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737.

Détente is often said to benefit the Soviet Union more than the West. Ironically, says Stern, a London-based energy consultant, the Reagan administration's recent attempt to get tough with Russia by opposing construction of the Siberian natural gas pipeline to Western Europe also aided Moscow, by weakening the NATO alliance.

The importance of the pipeline, says Stern, has been vastly exaggerated. Western Europe began importing Soviet natural gas in 1968 and now buys some 26 billion cubic meters (BCM) annually. So far, West Germany, France, Austria, and Switzerland together have contracted for an additional 21 BCM annually to be carried by the new pipeline. Soviet hard currency earnings on the new gas will amount to \$3.8 billion per year, not the oft-cited \$10 billion. (Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, and Greece may also sign contracts soon, though for a smaller total amount.)

Moreover, killing the project would have little effect on Soviet energy development. Regardless of the European pipeline, Moscow plans to build five other pipelines from its Urengoy gas field in Siberia, the world's largest, for itself and its Eastern European allies. Natural gas production will rise from 28.6 percent of all Soviet energy production today to 35-40 percent by 1990.