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HAROLD NEWMAN'S CLOUDY CRYSTAL BALL

"All is flux, nothing stays still."

Heraclitus (C540-C480 B.C.)

In last month's issue of this publication we closed our column with a quotation from Shakespeare's "King Henry VI". The quoted line was, "Away with him! Away with him! He speaks Latin." We then wrote, "the end of Harold Newman." Some of our readers thought that we were signalling the departure of this writer. The writer endureth, the column will go.

Governor Carey has honored me by appointment to the Chairmanship of the New York State PERB. This is a post of major responsibility and is especially challenging because the only person to hold the office until now has been Dr. Robert Helsby. Bob is a cherished friend and we expect him to also serve as wise counselor. But if I am to be PERB's *Pontifex Maximus*, I must recognize that I cannot at one and the same time hold the sceptre and the crystal ball. As Director of Conciliation it was accepted that I could express views that were iconoclastic--or even mildly subversive, on collective bargaining, court decisions, etc. As Chairman, anything I write may be interpreted perhaps as a Board view or position. Thus, it would be unseemly and improper for me to continue the "Crystal Ball."

We find it difficult to give up what has for seven years been a very happy chore. We have never deluded ourselves that the column was profound or "learned." We hoped only to translate into pragmatic terms for thought and discussion the everyday concerns of those charged with establishment of "harmonious and cooperative relationships" between public employers and their employees. Thus, when we reported, (quite accurately,) Max Doner's outcry that he had received 7½ lbs. of exhibits in a school district fact-finding matter and we disclosed the sterling advice we had given him, we were pointing out that while parties very often put too many issues before the fact finder--there are ways of dealing with the problem. Again, with regard to the substantial number of court decisions that arose out of the police-fire interest arbitration amendment, we strove to illuminate what we thought was the core of the court's decision and its impact on our work--without pompous spouting about law logic.

We have sought above all else in these monthly homilies to remind the labor relations professional that he should never overlook the human dimension in his involvement with union and management in situations of deep concern to them. This is, obviously, especially required in a mediation effort to preclude a work stoppage or in a grievance arbitration involving discipline of an employee. We have, therefore, at the risk of redundancy and of giving offense to good friends, cautioned frequently against being too conscious of the citation and over attentive to the regression analysis.

We have also written much and talked from the platform quite often, of the need for those in our profession to be concerned that we are perhaps a bit ingrown, a bit incestuous. Everybody knows everybody else. Distinguished individuals make their predictable points to predictably attentive colleagues at meetings and conferences across the country. Egos are massaged. Brilliantly written awards, cogently briefed court cases and marvelously creative mediation proposals are recalled. Meanwhile, high court judges express doubt about the ability of the neutral to make sound judgements or provide innovative ideas, or most important, protect the vulnerable in matters ranging from ethnic discrimination to fair representation--to OSHA and ORISA. We cannot survive on past glories.

Friends and colleagues, above all we must strive to be relevant. We have a friend who for many years had a Lutheran pastorate in a German neighborhood in Brooklyn. The neighborhood changed. The families of German origin moved away and were succeeded by Puerto Ricans. Some of the Hispanic Catholic mothers brought their boys and girls to my friend's Lutheran church school. One day a class of youngsters was reading a story about a little girl. "Lucy came downstairs one morning and saw that her mother was making pancakes for breakfast," they read aloud. A small hand went up. "Why didn't Lucy and her mother live in the same apartment?", the teacher was asked. (My friend changed the textbook.) We must keep our own textbooks and our own skills updated. We must constantly remind ourselves

of how dynamic and ever-changing our society is and we must in our daily work respond to these changes. What we said in these columns month after month--and even if we said it with humor, and the need for the statement was strongly felt--was that we need to be never pompous, never smug, and always human. Perhaps, because my distinguished predecessor, Bob Helsby, made it a point to live by that rule and to transfer his personal style to the agency he headed, we have had such a warm and fine relationship among staff, panel and advocates. Now that I have succeeded Bob to the purple, I cannot and will not seek to walk in his footsteps. Nor do I suspect that the saintly Erwin Kelly will seek to walk in mine! We are each of us very different people. But I will seek to follow the Helsby style. I know the staff and panel well enough to be sure that if ever we stray from that style or permit the PERB to do so, they will see that we get back on course.

We will continue our professional and personal contact with panel without this column. Perhaps, Erwin Kelly will wish to write his own. We hope he does. Kel may ask other PERB staff to contribute columns from time to time. In any event, as close to each of you as in the past, we shall continue the work that is, we believe, very meaningful, socially useful and capable always of providing stimulus and satisfaction to heart and mind. But we shall miss the conciliation battles on the firing line...

"Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content!
Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars that make ambition virtue!"

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Othello Act III, Scene III

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In September, Robert D. Helsby resigned as Chairman of PERB to become Director of a project funded by the Carnegie Corporation to provide assistance to Public Employment Relations Boards and Commissions in the United States. Cooperating in the project are the American Arbitration Association (AAA) as fiscal agent, and the Association of Labor Mediation Agencies (ALMA).

Muriel K. Gibbons, until recently PERB's Director of Public Relations, has joined the project as Assistant Project Director, and Ellen K. Zimmermann, until recently Secretary to the Board, has also joined the project as Executive Assistant.

The project is now known as Public Employment Relations Services (PERS), and the recently opened office is located at 1215 Western Avenue, Albany, New York 12203, and the telephone number is (518) 438-6836. The original proposal to the Carnegie Corporation proposed the name, PERBCAD (Public Employment Relations Boards and Commissions Assistance and Development) but a joint meeting of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Council suggested PERS.