

ABANDONMENT OF GENUS: THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL RHETORIC

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THE scenario of the politician who enters office with the support and confidence of a majority of the electorate and whose popularity continually declines during his or her term of office is one that is played out repeatedly in American politics. Richard Nixon provides a striking example of the phenomenon at the Presidential level, but it seems to be one that affects most political leaders whether at the mayoral, gubernatorial, or Presidential levels.

A constituency's changed perception of a politician may be attributed in part to changes in his or her public rhetoric. The rhetoric no longer seems to provide expected and appropriate messages for the public as the political leader shifts from an idealistic rhetoric used to win voters' support to a rhetoric that reacts to the problems and pressures of the office. How a politician publicly explains and discusses his or her actions in office may be crucial in the maintenance of a constituency's support.

My purpose in this essay is to investigate changes that occur in the public rhetoric of political leaders over the course of their terms in office in an attempt to explicate the relationship between the form of a political leader's discourse, his or her world view, and the public's perception of and support for the leader. I will (1) outline a model to account for the likelihood of a changed world view or ideology once a

politician takes office and to establish a relationship between the world view and his or her public discourse; and (2) examine changes in the discourse of Jimmy Carter, Lyndon Johnson, and Jane Byrne in the course of their terms of office; all encountered circumstances that might create shifts in world view and public rhetoric, and all experienced plummeting ratings of public approval during their terms in office.

SHIFTS IN WORLD VIEW AND PUBLIC RHETORIC: AN EXPLANATORY MODEL

World Views

Actual experience in political office seems to force a dramatic change in a political leader's world view.¹ While this is particularly obvious for politicians who never have held office, it also applies, I believe, to those who are seeking an office different from that held before—usually a higher office. While these latter office seekers are not totally naive in terms of political experience, in seeking a higher office, they tend to be naive in their beliefs as to how much impact and control they will have once they are elected to that office. My discussion of changed world views, then, applies both to novice office seekers and to experienced politicians seeking other offices.

A central tenet of the vision or

¹ Charles E. Lindblom discusses many of the components of the world views suggested here in "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" in *Classics of Public Administration*, ed. Jay M. Shafritz and Albert C. Hyde (Oak Park, Illinois: Moore, 1978), pp. 202-13.

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ideology of the campaigner or the politician at the beginning of a term of office is rationality—a view of the political system manifest in the desired office as ordered, systematic, and logical. This component of rationality is characterized by a heavy reliance on theory as the ideal and most effective way to bring relevant knowledge to bear on a problem or to accomplish an objective. For example, the politician may incorporate into his or her world view a belief in the classical theory of government that suggests that policy originates in the doctrines and principles of the chief executive and then is implemented and administered at the lower levels of the bureaucracy. Holding such a theoretical view, the politician at this point sees him or herself as having a great deal of personal control over the policy-making and implementation process.

A second component of the typical world view of the office seeker is the prerequisite clarification and formulation of values prior to their application to issues and problems. For example, a politician might define as an important value the maintenance of human life and then apply this value in the formulation of positions on issues such as abortion, capital punishment, and war.⁵

Closely related to the view held of the function of values is an approach to policy formation based on means-end analysis. The desired ends are isolated, and then means are proposed to achieve them. The test of a good policy or a proposed solution to a problem in this view, then, becomes that which can be shown to be the most appropriate means to the desired end. For example, an office seeker might see as desirable the lowering of the unemployment rate and propose as a logical means for reaching the goal the implementation of a job-training program.

Finally, we tend to see included in

this vision of reality a focus on a few major issues, problems, and solutions. That the world tends to be seen as monocentered and driven by one or two major elements at this stage is evident in the repeated utilization of the same ideals as the basis for proposed policies and the same elements as the basis for the problems facing the constituency.

Once the campaigner becomes the office holder and becomes immersed in the attempt to implement policies and promises, he or she begins to experience certain constraints on his or her actions. These drastically alter the world view held by the rhetor by giving him or her first-hand experience with the world that previously was viewed from afar.

Among the constraints experienced is the need to make a seemingly endless number of complex decisions quickly, making the application of theory too simplistic, and in many cases, simply irrelevant. The political leader soon begins to substitute for theory application the process of comparison, whereby one course of action is compared to another and one consequence is compared to another.

Just as theoretical concerns are reduced in importance, so are values. The leader discovers that on many critical values, citizens, legislators, and administrators disagree, and that even if he or she resolves to follow his or her own values as criteria for decisions, values inherent in policy alternatives tend to conflict with each other. In response, the politician finds him or herself choosing among policies in which values are combined in different ways—a manner quite different from his or her earlier clarification of values and clear and simple application of them.

Just as the rhetor in office finds that the selection of values and the analysis of policies are not distinct, he or she discovers that means and ends also

cannot be kept separate. The means-end relationship held in the first vision is possible only to the extent that values are agreed upon and are stable, which the politician discovers is not the case. Policies then become judged good or correct simply on the basis of securing agreement on the policy itself. Such agreement remains possible even when agreement on values is not. Thus, for example, a state legislature might agree on the desirability of funding abortions for poor women, with some members agreeing to it from a desire to assert women's right to control their own bodies and other members agreeing to the policy in order to reduce welfare funding in the form of ADC and food stamps.

The monocentered focus of the campaigner's vision—with an emphasis on a few causes and issues—also is altered dramatically by the pressures of political office. The leader quickly discovers that there is a complex of interacting components and dimensions in the political system that make the designation of one or two elements as basic to the world view simplistic and ineffective as an approach to policy formulation and implementation.

Finally, we see the loss from the early world view of the belief that drastic change—to make policy and programs accord with the defined ideal—is possible. Once in office, the politician quickly realizes that the system with which he or she must work is highly resistant to change, and that talking about the ideal is much easier than actually implementing it. Schon calls this phenomenon "dynamic conservatism,"² or the tendency of a system to fight to remain the same. In part because administrators have a great deal of policy initiative and because they wish

to maintain the established system of theory and values that enables them to make sense of their worlds, the political leader is likely to find that the implementation of his or her sweeping decisions in the lower levels of the governmental bureaucracy produces results that often are grossly discrepant from the promise of the policy. The politician finds, then, that only incremental changes generally are possible. As a result, mere satisfaction with a policy or program—acceptable compromise—becomes the leader's goal, and optimal quality is abandoned as being too utopian to be a useful objective within the confines of the political system.³ Concomitant with these changes in world view come changes in the rhetor's discourse.

Reflection of World View in Discourse

The connection between a rhetor's world view or ideology and the form of his or her discourse has been posited and examined by numerous rhetorical theorists. Black, for example, suggests that a speaker's ideology is the most characteristic feature revealed by his or her discourse: "Discourses are . . . the external signs of internal states."⁴ To explain this inalterable connection between form and source, Burke suggests that "we think of a thing not simply as existing, but rather as 'taking form,' or as the record of an act which gave it form."⁵

Weaver also asserted that forms of argument reveal the philosophical or ideological position of the rhetor.⁶ In

³ For a discussion of satisfactory rather than optimal quality in policymaking, see Yehezkel Dvor, *Public Policymaking Reexamined* (New York: Chandler, 1968), pp. 147-49.

⁴ Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 56 (1970), 112.

⁵ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 228.

⁶ Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953), pp. 55-56.

² Donald A. Schon, *Beyond the Stable State* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 32.

fact, Weaver argued, an individual's method of argument is a truer index of his or her beliefs than an explicit profession of principles.⁷ Weaver carried the notion of discursive form as a key to the world view of the speaker further by describing a method the critic can use to determine that world view. He identified four types of arguments, sources, or topics available to an advocate who is formulating a persuasive message: genus, similitude, cause and effect, and circumstance.

Genus is an argument based on definition or the nature of the thing.⁸ It assumes that there are fixed classes that are determinate and predictable, and that whatever is a member of the class will have the class attributes.⁹ For example, an orator might assert that American citizens are guaranteed certain rights by the Constitution; thus, blacks and other minority citizens are entitled to these rights. The genus already may be a recognized convention, it may be defined at the moment by the orator, or it may be left to be inferred.

Argument by similitude invokes essential correspondences and includes analogy, metaphor, figuration, comparison, and contrast. Similitude permits only probable proof because the user of this type of argument hints at an essence, but he or she cannot produce it at the moment.¹⁰ To argue that Reagan's economic program will fail in the United States because Margaret Thatcher's similar program failed in Great Britain under similar circumstances is an example of argument by similitude.

⁷ Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, p. 58.

⁸ Richard L. Johannesen, Rennard Strickland, and Ralph T. Eubanks, eds., *Language is Sermonic: Richard M. Weaver on the Nature of Rhetoric* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), p. 212.

⁹ Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, p. 86.

¹⁰ Johannesen, Strickland, and Eubanks, eds., *Language is Sermonic*, p. 213.

Cause-and-effect argument operates in the realm of becoming and deals with connection of a present cause with a future effect or a present effect with a preceding cause. Arguing that restricting the money supply will lower the rate of inflation exemplifies cause-and-effect argumentation.

Argument by circumstance, which also could be viewed as a form of the cause-and-effect argument, merely reads the circumstances, accepts them as coercive, and allows them to dictate a decision. As Weaver explained, "It simply cites a brute circumstance and says, 'Step lively.'" ¹¹ This is the least philosophical of all the topics of argument, according to Weaver, and comes very close to pure expediency. The argument that Great Britain must go to war with Argentina because of Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands is an example of argument by circumstance.

Weaver went much further than I am prepared to go in his use of this particular system of argumentative form. Interested in building a strong case in defense of conservatism, he argued that certain of these arguments are appropriate to and reveal political positions and that some forms of argument are more ethical than others. As many have pointed out, the extension of Weaver's system of criticism to politics and ethics is problematic,¹² and with them, I do not believe that the form of a rhetor's argument necessarily reveals political or ethical positions. I do accept, however, that there is an essential link between the form of one's discourse and the world view of the rhetor.

Because the world view held by the rhetor differs drastically according to

¹¹ Johannesen, Strickland, and Eubanks, eds., *Language is Sermonic*, p. 215.

¹² See, for example, Dennis R. Bormann, "The 'Uncontested Term' Contested: An Analysis of Weaver on Burke," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 57 (1971), 298-305.

whether he or she is a campaigner or an experienced office holder, the public discourse of the rhetor is likely to reflect these changes. Prior to and shortly after taking office, a politician is likely to use genus as a major rhetorical source, reflecting the idealism that is likely to result from an outsider's or novice's view of what can be accomplished in office. The components of the world view of the rhetor at this stage seem almost to demand this type of argumentation. The application of theory and pre-formulated values to a situation, the seeking of means to achieve established ends, and a monocentered view of the world as composed of a few fixed essences all accord with the form of argument by genus, in which an ideal is established and then a particular issue, class, or problem is shown to fall within the domain of that ideal. The ideal, then, provides guidance for all action.

The experience of the constraints of the political office, however, demands that the politician alter the idealistic view of the political system he or she once held and also pressures him or her into abandonment of argument by genus, which begins to appear irrelevant to and out of place in the actual political reality. No longer is the politician's course of action that which conforms to ideal principles; now the best course of action is whatever gets him or her through the latest crisis. Thus, argument by cause and effect, circumstance, and similitude are used as the rhetorical sources by which to justify his or her actions because they rely on the immediate circumstances and situations that come to dominate the world view of the leader.

APPLICATIONS OF THE MODEL

Jimmy Carter

Jimmy Carter is an obvious recent example of a political leader at the

Presidential level who had to deal with numerous crises during his term of office and who was not able to maintain his popularity with the voters. The public's rating of his performance generally continued to drop throughout his term of office until, in August 1980, seventy-seven percent of the Americans polled disapproved of his performance as President,¹³ reflected, of course, in Reagan's landslide election the following November. A review of Carter's speeches after he was first elected compared to those later in his term of office reveals the pattern formulated in the model: argument by genus, reflecting an idealistic view of the Presidency, was abandoned with increased awareness of the realities of the office and replaced by argument by similitude, cause and effect, and circumstance.

Carter's early speeches as President were based almost entirely on genus. In his inaugural address on January 20, 1977,¹⁴ for example, he explicitly chose definition over circumstance as his guide: "As my high school teacher, Miss Julia Coleman, used to say, 'We must adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles.'" Definition was used as the major source in a fireside chat the next month. He defined ideal government as government that is "competent and compassionate" and then told what he was doing to insure that the government of the United States was in accord with this ideal.¹⁵ In a speech delivered to Congress on April 20, 1977, entitled "The Moral Equivalent of War,"¹⁶ Carter continued to use argu-

¹³ Allan M. Winkler, "Jimmy's Problems Differ from Harry's," *Eugene [Oregon] Register-Guard*, 3 August 1980, p. 23A.

¹⁴ Jimmy Carter, "Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 February 1977, pp. 258-59.

¹⁵ Jimmy Carter, "Fireside Chat: Unity on U.S. Goals," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 February 1977, pp. 259-61.

¹⁶ Jimmy Carter, "The Moral Equivalent of

ment by genus, even though his subject—the energy crisis and his plan for meeting it—seemed to be one particularly appropriate for argument by circumstance. He defined the ideal energy plan as one that is “fair” and then detailed how his proposed plan was just that.

Carter’s state-of-the-union address on January 19, 1978,¹⁷ retained some of his idealism, reflected in his use of argument by genus concerning American foreign policy. He defined three major goals in this area, “security of our country,” “a world at peace,” and “economic growth and stability,” showing how his programs were designed to fulfill those ideals. Yet frequent references to the pressures of his office appeared as well: “Each generation of Americans has to face circumstances not of its own choosing,” “there are times of emergency,” “profound national interests are at stake,” “we have come through a long period of turmoil,” and “persistent problems . . . burden us as a nation.” With the recognition of these problems, Carter’s argumentation was beginning to change, and cause-and-effect arguments frequently were used to discuss how his actions—in the areas of unemployment, inflation, elimination of federal red tape, civil service reform, and foreign policy—caused certain effects.

By July 1979, traces of idealism in Carter’s rhetoric were minimal, and in a speech given on July 15 entitled “Energy Problem: The Erosion of Confidence,”¹⁸ argumentation by circumstance was used almost exclusively. Admitting that he had had only “mixed success” at putting his “campaign promises into law” and that America was facing a “crisis of confidence” or a

lack of confidence in the future, he cited the circumstances behind the crisis. Among them were the worship of “self-indulgence,” the lessening “productivity of American workers,” “a growing disrespect for Government and for churches and for schools,” and “growing dependence on foreign oil.” These were circumstances overwhelming Carter at this point, and his attempt to remain idealistic faltered in response to them; he suggested that the solution to these problems was to “have faith in each other.” The words were hollow attempts at argument by genus and what followed was a lengthy explanation of his plans to solve the energy crisis based on circumstance: “The intolerable dependence on foreign oil threatens our economic independence and the security of our nation.” Thus, he was forced to take certain measures in reaction to these circumstances. His conclusion, “whenever you have a chance, say something good about our country,” seemed woefully inadequate and lacking the firm visionary foundation necessary to argue from genus.

Carter’s speech accepting renomination at the Democratic convention on August 14, 1980,¹⁹ reflected a continuation of less idealistic modes of argument. Because this type of speaking almost demands inclusion of some vision, Carter obliged by using argument by genus to describe his future vision of America and the ideals of the Democratic Party. But this was overshadowed by other forms of argument. He argued from similitude, comparing his views and policies with those of his Republican opponent, Ronald Reagan. Examples of argument by circumstance and cause and effect also were prevalent in the speech.

War.” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 May 1977, pp. 420-23.

¹⁷ Jimmy Carter, “State of the Union,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 February 1978, pp. 226-30.

¹⁸ Jimmy Carter, “Energy Problems: The Erosion of Confidence,” *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 August 1979, pp. 642-45.

¹⁹ “Text of Carter’s Speech Accepting Renomination at the Democratic Convention,” *New York Times*, 15 August 1980, p. 2B.

He used such arguments in his discussion of Afghanistan, telling of the actions he took in response to the Soviet troops' invasion of that country. He would "put all America back to work" (effect) through various actions (causes), including "new industries," "a modern transportation system of railroads and ports," and "job training." All of these arguments could have been made on the basis of genus. He could have defined, for example, the ideal future for America, the ideal actions a nation should take with regard to other nations, and the ideal work system for a nation, with an explanation of how his policies were helping the United States conform to these ideals.

Carter's term of office, which ended with Reagan's landslide victory in November 1976, also ended with rhetoric that seemed unable to maintain the vision with which he entered office. He seemed to have shifted from a view of the world as having a particular nature based on principles to one where facts and circumstances were so overwhelming that they dictated the course of action he should follow. When the circumstances changed—even if ever so slightly—so did Carter, and this unsteady and uncertain world view was reflected in his public rhetoric and the public's rating of his performance.

Lyndon Johnson

Lyndon Johnson's rhetoric provides another sample by which to test the thesis that a shift in world view is correlated with an abandonment by genus and reflected in lowered public ratings of the politician's performance. Like Carter, Johnson's initial efforts as President won high ratings. Nine months after he took office, for example, his record was viewed favorably by seventy-five percent of the American

voters,²⁰ and he won a landslide victory in 1964 over Barry Goldwater.

By 1965, however, Johnson had to choose between accepting defeat in Vietnam or committing American air power and combat troops. He selected the latter strategy, and as the war continued to escalate, his popularity with Americans waned. By September of 1967, Johnson's approval rating was only thirty-nine percent,²¹ following heavy casualties in Vietnam and a summer of riots in black ghettos. In a nationally televised speech on March 30, 1968, Johnson implicitly recognized the difficulties he would face in a campaign for re-election and announced, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."²²

As was traced in the discourse of Carter, the changed perception of what could be accomplished in office seemed to encourage Johnson to change his style of argument, reflected in the public's lowered ratings of his performance. His state-of-the-union address on January 8, 1964,²³ was devoted to a discussion of the legislation that Congress should pass in the coming session, with most of it based on argument by genus. In fact, what is right and the notion of principles appeared early in the speech:

Let us carry forward the plans and programs of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, not because of our sorrow or sympathy, but because they are right.

And in his memory today, I especially ask all members of my own political faith, in this election year, to put your country ahead of your party and to always debate principles; never debate personalities.

²⁰ "Opinion: The LBJ Image," *Newsweek*, 31 August 1964, p. 27.

²¹ "The President in Trouble," *Newsweek*, 4 September 1967, p. 21.

²² Lyndon B. Johnson, "The Vietnam War: The President's Plans," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 April 1968, p. 389.

²³ Lyndon B. Johnson, "State of the Union: The Months Ahead," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 January 1964, pp. 194-97.

He saw each American as entitled to "a fair chance to make good," "fair play from the law," "a full-time job on full-time pay," "a decent home for his family in a decent community," and "a good school for his children with good teachers." He then detailed how the programs he proposed would insure that these rights were fulfilled and maintained.

Johnson's state-of-the-union speech on January 17, 1968,²⁴ delivered in the midst of numerous domestic crises, reflected argumentation by cause and effect and circumstance. He used causal argumentation to assert that he had accomplished positive things in the past year: elections had been held in Vietnam; tariff barriers had been reduced; and Americans were enjoying higher pay checks, new cars, and television sets. Although Johnson briefly resorted to argument by genus to ask Congress to support his programs in the year ahead, this type of appeal constituted a minor portion of the speech. What predominated was the use of argument by circumstance: He would stop the bombing in Vietnam "if talks would take place promptly and with reasonable hopes they would be productive," defense expenditures would remain high "until world conditions permit," and the need to reduce the government's budget deficit meant that Congress must enact a tax surcharge.

In Johnson's speech on Vietnam in which he announced his decision not to seek re-election,²⁵ we see a continued use of argument by cause and effect. In this speech, he cited how his actions had resulted in particular effects in Vietnam: there had been progress in building a durable South Vietnamese government, and the South Vietnamese had begun

to accept more responsibility for waging the war. Argument by circumstance, however, was even more predominant in the speech and surfaced in at least five of his major points: (1) If the Communists launched another round of heavy attacks, America would have to fight; (2) All bombing could not be stopped because "to do so would immediately and directly endanger the lives of our men and our allies"; (3) To meet the "enemy's new offensive," "11,000 additional Marine and airborne troops" were sent to Vietnam; (4) Defense spending must increase because America needed to re-equip the South Vietnamese forces; (5) America would withdraw its forces from South Vietnam when the other side withdrew its forces. No principle seemed to be motivating Johnson's actions, such as the need to keep the world free from Communism. Rather, immediate circumstances were seen as demanding certain action. Even Johnson's reason for not seeking re-election was cited as being dictated by circumstances:

With American sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge right here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance every day, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office—the Presidency of your country.

As was apparent in the rhetoric of Carter, then, the form of Johnson's discourse changed to reflect not idealism and action on the basis of principle but rather action taken largely in response to circumstances. His world view seemed to have changed over the course of his term in office.

Jane Byrne

The phenomenon of argumentative shift to reflect a changed world view is not limited to the Presidential level of

²⁴ Lyndon B. Johnson, "State of the Union: 1968," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 February 1968, pp. 226-30.

²⁵ Johnson, "The Vietnam War," pp. 386-89.

politics. Examination of the changes in discourse of a mayor reflect the same trend. Jane Byrne's campaign to become mayor of Chicago culminated with her upset of Chicago's political machine on February 27, 1979, when she won fifty-one percent of the vote and thus the Democratic mayoral primary. In Chicago, of course, this was the crucial step for winning the general election on April 3. As she entered office, she was viewed by the electorate as a woman of principles and a fighter for justice, a perception based in part on the work she had done as Commissioner of Consumer Sales, Weights, and Measures and in her readiness as a campaigner to assail "snow jobs," "deceit," and "greed" in the city's administration. Six months after her election, Byrne's performance was being widely cheered by Chicagoans; sixty percent of those polled gave her an excellent or a good rating.²⁶

By the winter of 1979-80, however, Byrne was facing a number of crises. She was confronted with a teachers' strike, a fire fighters' strike, and a city transit workers' strike. She was having difficulty retaining city officials, and her policy of hiring and firing had given Chicago four police superintendents, three commissioners of the Department of Streets and Sanitation, two top assistants, and three press secretaries since she had assumed office. The model posited earlier would predict that such circumstances would alter Byrne's idealistic world view and lead to the emergence of less idealistic types of public argument.

A speech presented to the Executives Club of Chicago on May 4, 1979,²⁷ shortly after Byrne had assumed the duties of her new office, was characterized by

an abundance of argument by genus, reflecting an idealistic view of the political system and the impact she could have on it. In the speech, Byrne made reference to the Chicago tradition of support for and reliance on business, discussed problems facing Chicago, and suggested solutions to the problems of business that she could help implement.

All major claims in the speech relied on argument by genus. She defined, for example, an economically strong city as having "generous supplies of fuel and water; outstanding educational and research institutions; unparalleled transportation lines; a versatile and skilled labor force . . ." It has a strong "tax base," "major corporations," a port with a "new container-shipping facility," "foreign banks," and "direct flights" to a large number of cities both domestic and foreign. These all are characteristics of a city that is defined as economically strong and supportive of business; because Chicago has these, it is such a city.

In an address at the installation banquet of the Chicago Real Estate Board a few days later on May 9, Byrne continued to argue from genus. Defining Chicago as "a wonderful place to live," she cited a number of problems Chicago was facing: "Its riverfront property is decaying and under-used," "our single-family housing is deteriorating," and "our neighborhoods lack stability and commercial stimulus." She urged action regarding these problems on the basis that they do not meet the definition of a city that is a wonderful place in which to live.

Byrne's speech before the Executives Club a year later—on May 2, 1980—was quite different from her earlier ones. She mentioned the various crises the city had faced in the past year, stated that these conditions were improving and that the city still worked, and blamed the media for much of the damage

²⁶ John Camper, "The Pragmatic Jane Byrne Has Mastered the Machine," *Washington Post*, 3 November 1979, p. 2A.

²⁷ Copies of all speeches cited by Jane Byrne were obtained from the Mayor's Office, Room 507, City Hall, Chicago, Illinois 60602.

caused by the crises. The argumentative sources on which she relied were different from the earlier speeches. After listing the crises she had undergone and resolved, she presented her major argument—under her leadership, conditions for business were improving:

The city's financial position is markedly improved. We are off our knees, standing and beginning to walk again.

This week, after four arduous months, we successfully legislated the city's debt consolidation program. Our short-term cash flow has been restructured and improved.

We also managed to decrease our projected debt consolidation costs from nearly \$180 million to just over \$90 million—a significant savings to the city.

These supporting details all are part of causal argumentation: My leadership has caused the condition of improved business climate. Although she made a similar claim in her earlier speech, here Byrne did not use definition of an economically sound city as the foundation for her arguments. Here circumstances were shown as controlling her actions; her proposals and actions were formulated from current conditions and pressures that dictated her decisions.

At the conclusion of the speech, Byrne moved from causal argument to appeal by similitude. In order to support the claim that Chicago is a flourishing business center, she compared it to other business centers:

What will we be saying about Chicago?

—That it is the center of the largest industrial area in the United States, within 400 miles or more than \$400 billion . . . or 31 percent . . . of the nation's production of goods and services.

—That its gross national product is larger than that of most countries.

—That it is the most accessible major U.S. city, with an unparalleled transportation network.

—That it has one of the largest pools of skilled and semi-skilled workers in the nation.

Once again, this type of argumentation represents a deviation from that used in

Byrne's earlier speeches. She did not define what an economically sound city is and then demonstrate that Chicago meets that definition as she did earlier. Instead, Chicago was compared to other similar entities, and it looked good when compared to them. But the question of how the city would compare to an ideal definition was not addressed.

Byrne's changed mode of argumentation also was strikingly evident in a speech at the annual dinner on April 23, 1980, of B.U.I.L.D., a social service organization concerned with street gangs. Byrne briefly praised B.U.I.L.D.'s efforts, but the body of the speech was structured around one major cause-and-effect argument: "Her administration has taken action to eliminate the causes and effects of youth unrest," resulting in a number of effects that have reduced "the horror of street gang crime."

Byrne's use of argument by cause and effect, similitude, and circumstance in her later speeches—in contrast with her use of genus in her earlier ones—indicates a change in her view of the world. Existing tangibles, the overwhelming demands and pressures on her, seem to have pulled her away from her earlier view of the world. She was struggling simply to survive, the absolutes that accompany principles were gone, and she no longer seemed to hold a larger vision by which to lead the city. Directed at an audience that still desired city government based on justice, fairness, responsiveness, and equal opportunity, Byrne's discourse was largely ineffective and inappropriate for her audience members. And while her actual performance may have contributed to her image as a poor leader, her discourse certainly may have been a contributing factor to her lowered ratings as well.

That Byrne later was able to recover partially her standing in the polls sug-

gests a return to argument by genus in her rhetoric. She and her husband moved into Cabrini-Green, a predominantly black, crime-ridden housing project in April 1981 in an attempt, as Byrne explained, "to change a word called despair to a word called hope."²⁸ As a symbolic act, the move suggested to the public that a life characterized by rats, roaches, and violence does not meet the definition of the way human beings should live and signaled a return to argument by genus. The response of the public to the action was dramatic—her approval rating, which had been thirty-five percent, was boosted to fifty percent.²⁹

CONCLUSIONS

The model posited at the beginning of the essay suggests that political leaders necessarily must move from an idealistic world view as campaigner and novice office holder to a largely pessimistic world view of what they actually can accomplish in office once they experience the constraints of that office. We have seen this apparent evolution in world view and its concomitant abandonment of genus as the major argumentative source in three political leaders—Jimmy Carter, Lyndon Johnson, and Jane Byrne—and the phenomenon seems not to be unique to them.

While Carter and Johnson ended their terms in office seemingly unable to extricate themselves from a world view characterized by the overwhelming dictates of circumstance and Byrne may be headed in that direction, to suggest that such a doomed course is inevitable—with its resultant lowered perceptions of the leader by the public—would be inaccurate. I suggest that although al-

most all political leaders seem destined to experience a rude awakening once they actually take office and tend to change their rhetoric accordingly to some extent, a third stage with the same realistic world view and yet a different kind of rhetoric should be possible for a political leader. This world view, in fact, should be able to be created and maintained in part through a deliberate shaping of the leader's rhetoric in such a way so as to meet the public's expectations for rhetoric and performance in office and to insure that his or her world view does not become hopelessly mired in the pressures of the office.

A more thorough investigation of the shift in argument that seems to occur in political rhetoric and of leaders who have maintained popularity throughout their terms of office likely would suggest what some of the strategies and techniques of such rhetoric might be. They might include, for example, use of a **modified** form of argument by genus, in which ideals still are presented, but the ideals are ones that realistically can be accomplished by the rhetor in office. Perhaps formulating a vision through rhetoric that can be altered in minor ways without totally changing the core and essence of the vision will prove to be an important rhetorical strategy. Or, the office holder might want to define his or her goals in terms of a sequence of intermediate goals that mark progress toward the ideal. When the ultimate goal is defined in terms of reachable steps, the public well might perceive that the political leader is performing well and is making progress toward the ideals formulated in his or her rhetoric.

This is not to say that rhetoric based on genus can take the place of effective action or that the public will be fooled by the discourse of a politician into believing that he or she is doing a good

²⁸ Blaine Harden, "Combat Zone Calm," *Washington Post*, 12 April 1981, p. 7A.

²⁹ "The Audacities of Attila the Hen," *Time*, 15 June 1981, p. 29.

job when that is not the case. But the rationale for actions—whatever they are—seems to have a major effect in molding perceptions of those actions and either can dignify or denigrate them.

This study suggests that the pressures of a political office and the problems confronted in it do tend to alter the world view and the rhetoric of the office

holder. Although rhetoric must remain flexible and adaptable to some degree, it also should retain some of the original quality that appealed to the voters—apparently often based on *genus*—if the office holder is to retain credibility for his or her performance and sustain the image of a competent and effective leader.