

Earl Raab

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Displeased people complain. Pleased people just sit back and smile. That might seem reasonable, but it is often bad politics.

President Carter was assaulted several weeks ago by many thousands of citizen - communications. They were highly displeased by his experimental tilt towards the idea of a P.L.O.-dominated Palestinian State. The President seemed to respond to this assault - and last week publicly supported the Israeli position that an independent Palestinian State would be a bad idea whose time has not come. He made a number of people unhappy with that statement, even the world's new folk hero, Egyptian President Sadat.

Well, the modern theory of citizen-communications is that one individually written letter is worth a thousand petitions, telegram banks, mimeographed postcards or carefully constructed little "demonstrations." Today, those things are easily done, easily organized, and do not convey to the modern politician as much heartfelt motivation as individually written letters. Those letters are also worth ten points on a public opinion poll, to which people respond one way or another whether they feel strongly about the subject or not.

If a letter of displeasure is such an index of strong opinion, how much more impressive is a letter of pleasure and approbation, which requires even more motivation. Yet, how often do we write a congratulatory letter?

At this week's beginning, such a letter was in order to President Carter. Those citizens who liked his statement of opposition to a Palestinian State, should let

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him know they liked it. The idea is not to abhor or approve the President - but to abhor or approve specific Presidential acts. In psychology and in politics, that is known as "reinforcement," an important principle of learning.

The President has committed other acts worthy of approval in recent weeks, notably his repeated and strong requests to the Soviet Union that they release Anatoly Shcharansky. According to the theory of citizen-communications, commendations on that score should go in a separate letter. But commendations will count that much more if they are scored in separate piles.

Our President has shown himself to be an open, talkative, sometimes impressionable fellow; and given his itinerary, he may well have ended this week with statements not so pleasing to every ear.

However, the critical issue in the Middle East right now is that of an independent Palestinian state. Polled last week, four out of every five Israelis said that they were willing to give up all or part of Judea-Samaria (the West Bank) "in return for true peace and appropriate security guarantees." The issue for them is not that land itself, but: what conditions for the release of much of that land will best secure peace and security for the Israelis? A separate Palestinian state springing up there overnight will not provide those conditions. An "independent Palestinian State" means not just the release of land under conditions of self-government - to which the Israeli government seems agreeable - but also the instant creation of a sovereign military power, without any period of Israeli-Jordanian overview on matters of military security.

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Jimmy the Greek would surely give ten to one odds on the outcome of such an instant Palestinian state. The P.L.O. would assassinate peace-loving Arab leadership in the area, as it has already started to do, and take over. Terrorist assaults on the Israeli border would begin at once. Israel would have to retaliate. The Soviets might well send in arms, and even presence. There would be perilous trouble for the United States as well as for Israel.

That is why it is so important to have the President's strong statement of last week that an independent Palestinian State at this time would run counter to the interests of American and peace. Such a statement, as long as it stands, should receive the reinforcement of popular acclaim. In this new age of populist politics, the post office is as important an instrument of democracy as the polling place.