



Conscience nowhere to be found at State House

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TV's all-time villain, J.R. Ewing, whose portrayer, Larry Hagman, died last week, offered a fiendish explanation when asked how he could live with himself.

"Once you get past conscience," he replied, "the rest is easy."

Nowhere is that truer than on Beacon Hill, where Bob DeLeo, Therese Murray and [Deval Patrick](#) just handed out pay hikes to State House staffers, even while still insisting there's no extra money in the till for those who labor in the noble field of human services.

They did it because they could, not because they should, which is what happens when incumbents begin to feel invincible, the inevitable result of one-party rule, which is what we have here in Massachusetts.

Accountability? Please. To whom do they feel accountable?

In a place where "Christmas" can't be mentioned they shamelessly play Santa Claus, doling out gelt to worshipful subordinates while sticking us with the bill.

Brazen? Yes it is. Oh, they can explain it all they want, but they cannot justify it, because while you can do all kinds of things with numbers, decency cannot be rationalized, and what these pseudo public servants are pulling off here is simply indecent.

But who's going to stop them? Mister Speaker, Madam President and His Excellency are not in leadership as much as they're in power, which means they're free to feather their own nests, whether the rest of us like it or not. Government "by, of and for the people" may make a lot of sense in civics class, but it's little more than a punch line on Beacon Hill.

Back in 2000 one of this town's great newsmen, Clark Booth, underwent triple bypass surgery. Upon being discharged, he noted, "I'm thinking right now of technicians, night nurses, the folks who cleaned my room, some of whom couldn't even speak our language, remembering the concern on their faces, how good they were to me; man, that impressed me.

"Let's face it, some of us live on the high side of life, a world of privilege, and maybe don't pause often enough to realize just how kind most people are. There I was, vulnerable as could be, and here were all these people pulling for me, not one of them mailing it in."

There are legions of people just like them in Massachusetts, state workers laboring under the umbrella of human services, conscientiously serving others in unheralded ways, and their wages remain frozen, even as Beacon Hill back-slappers receive a boost.

J.R. Ewing had it right; this can happen only if your conscience doesn't constrain you.

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