

To : Objectives Group

From: Safire

Re : Jawboning vs. Backboning October 16, 1969.

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We deride “jawboning” as (a) government wagging a finger at business and labor to act with restraint while government acts without restraint. (b) Government asking labor and business to do what is against their self-interest and in the public interest, which is usually ineffective, and when it works rewards the greedy and penalizes the patriotic.

We introduce “backboning” as

(a) government setting an example of restraint by its own, admittedly unpopular, belt-tightening actions, thereby earning the right to call for others to follow that example. (b) telling business and labor to assume a lowered rate of inflation in their own interest -- so they won't price themselves out of markets or jobs -- as well as in the public interest.

Jawboning says “Do what we say, not what we do;” backboning says “Do what we do.”

Jawboning emphasizes a plaintive “do good” backboning stresses a realistic “be smart,” which will result in good for the public.