

Expert sees crisis in U.S. leadership style

By HELEN SHEFFIELD
 Staff Writer

There's a crisis in leadership in this country.

You've probably heard that before, but you probably haven't heard the concept explained just the way Layne Longfellow explains it.

Thursday morning he spoke to the League's Board of Directors on leadership and the use of power. Thursday evening he conducted a workshop on the stress of success, offered free to the public by the League. At 9:30 a.m. today, he'll conduct a workshop on human relationships. This session, also offered free to the public, is scheduled in the Monroe Civic Center Theatre.

He says the leadership crisis comes down to a lack of trust.

"People are having a hard time believing in anybody. Since the Kennedy days, it's been one expose and scandal after another. People are having a hard time committing," Longfellow said.

He said the people, as a whole, no longer believe those in power have their best interests at heart. That, to Longfellow, means the leaders are missing one of the fundamentals of leadership, which he defines as the ability to use power to meet the needs of other people as well as your own.

Too many of today's leaders are putting their own needs first, he said, and the problem affects the private sector as well as the public sector.

"When the public sees executives of automobile companies granting themselves \$150,000 bonuses—just when they're starting to show a profit again after cutting salaries and getting government loans—it causes peo-

ple to have no more faith in the people running the private sector than they do those in the public sector," Longfellow said.

The root of this problem is the "me first" attitude he says capitalism encourages.

"The real threat to capitalism isn't communism...It's the people at the top getting too greedy," Longfellow said.

Capitalism is also threatened by top managers with a short-term mentality. Short-range thinking as opposed to long-range thinking is the primary difference between the much-praised Japanese management techniques and those used in America. Those techniques, incidentally, were exported to Japan from the U.S. after World War II, Longfellow says.

"They took hold in Japan, even though they didn't take hold in this country, because the Japanese culture is a very long-term one. Japan is a country that's been there for thousands of years and expects to be there for thousands more. The Japanese think in cycles of hundreds of years. Americans think of the gross national product for the next quarter. Americans have a more short-term mentality than anyone else in the world.

"The Japanese also look at the yin and yang...the balance of cooperation and competition. Americans heavily emphasize competition at the cost of cooperation. You see this constantly in labor and management disputes.

"But you can't sink half a ship. We're all in this together. That's not a socialist concept. It's a human concept and an economic concept," Longfellow said.

But Longfellow doesn't believe the future of capitalism, and of America, is bleak. He just believes we need a change.

"What has to happen is a greater emphasis on the common good. In the last election, that got translated as more welfare programs and give-aways. But if the private sector doesn't want to increase taxes and support

more welfare programs, then they need to make economic decisions for the good of the whole and not just for short-term profit," Longfellow said.

On the political scene, Longfellow said our best hope is to blend the best qualities of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Reagan, he said, has the ability to inspire and uplift. He conveys to the people that he truly believes his economic policies will work.

"But reality doesn't support his beliefs. His economic advisers were telling him all along the numbers just didn't work out. Now they're telling him again he'll have to raise taxes to get the deficit down. This is not true leadership. A leader has an absolute responsibility to be realistic, true and honest," Longfellow said.

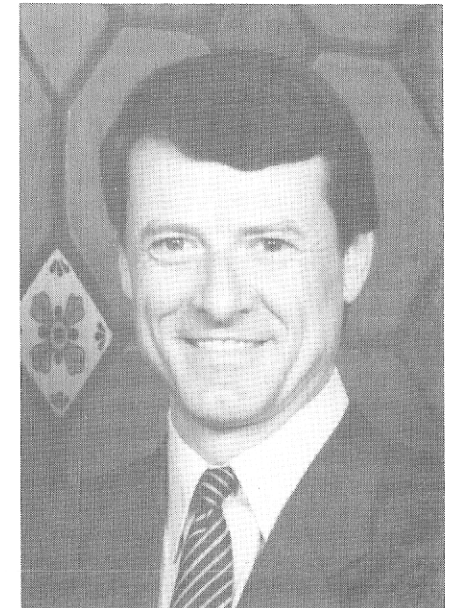
On the other hand, Carter took realism a bit too far.

"History won't judge Carter as severely as he's being judged right now. He was far more realistic than Reagan. But where Reagan emphasizes the positive—and it's my concern that he doesn't pay enough attention to the negative—Carter emphasized the negative. During the Carter administration, people were feeling bad and they didn't need to hear the president tell them that things were really as bad as they thought.

"What we have to have (in the presidency) is a balance of those two: realism and hope. Neither is really adequate to the position alone," Longfellow said.

The rapid change of today's society, while definitely a cause of stress, is also a source of hope for Longfellow. He says researchers now consider a generational change to occur every four years.

"In four years time, you get a new generation with a new set of values. You can turn things around very quickly. That's the good news. Just think about it. Think about how utterly dated the hippie movement is today.



Dr. Layne Longfellow

But, Woodstock was only 15 years ago," he said.

The challenge for him, as a social commentator, is to emphasize the positive—the way out—Longfellow said.

Longfellow is a research psychologist and musician by training. He worked as a college professor and academic vice president, as well as Director of Seminars for Executives at the Menninger Foundation, before starting his own company in 1978.

As the president of Lecture Theatre, Inc. and director of the Institute for Human Skills he travels all over the country giving multimedia presentations using lecture, slides, graphics and music.

His stop in Monroe is the last of a 16-day lecture tour.

This article includes material
 from Dr. Longfellow's
GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES programs.