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Baloney & Peanuts *Politics Among Grade Schoolers*

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Recently, a derisive political rhyme about President Carter has been sweeping the grade schools in the Greenville, North Carolina, area. So far as I know, this rhyme did not come to the children from an adult source; few of my colleagues or my folklore students knew of its existence before I brought it to their attention. Moreover, the rhyme is circulating among the children in traditional ways. The first version I heard goes as follows:

My peanut has a first name, it's J-I-M-M-Y
 My peanut has a second name, it's C-A-R-T-R
 Oh, I hate to see him every day
 And if you ask me why I'll say
 'Cause Jimmy Carter has a way
 Of messing up the U.S.A.

Sometimes a child will spell C-AR-T-E-R to get the spelling correct, but the C-A-R-T-R spelling makes the six letters of Jimmy Carter's last name fit into the meter of the source of the tune, an Oscar Mayer bologna jingle:

My baloney has a first name, It's O-S-C-A-R
 My baloney has a second name, it's M-A-Y-E-R
 Oh, I love to eat it every day
 An if you ask me why I'll say
 'Cause Oscar Mayer has a way
 With B-O-L-O-G-N-A

More than a political rhyme, this new rhyme is a parody of a baloney commercial, and the correspondence of "baloney" in the original to "peanut" in the parody is interesting in light of the slang definitions of baloney: "Foolishness" or "nonsense." This and the slang definitions of peanuts, "a small or trifling amount, usually in regard to money," are intriguing comments about Mr. Carter in these inflationary times.

The rhyme tells us that the peanut's name is Jimmy Carter; therefore, this Jimmy Carter is a peanut—a small or trifling amount (of money). Behind his peanut-ness is baloney—foolishness or nonsense. All of which the rhymer tells us that he "hates" to see because it's "messing up the U.S.A."

Are the third, fourth, and fifth graders who sang this jingle-parody to me such astute political commentators? I do not know. When asked how Jimmy Carter was "messing up the U.S.A.," they had no comment.