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# 1981 — Year the Predictions Failed

THE past 12 months could go down in history as "The Year the Predictions Failed." At least it will be recorded as one such year. Prophesying always has been a risky business. In times past, prophets often were subjected to dreadful treatment when their declarations of future events were wrong. Nowadays, mistaken forecasters just try to keep a low profile until their errors are forgotten.

There are tricks of the trade that help, too. One is to make so many guesses that some of them are bound to be right. Having computers handy to calculate probabilities is helpful, too.

The safest predictions are made by those who learn privately of something that already has occurred and 'predict' that it will occur before the fact becomes generally known. The technique is said to have worked quite well for a certain former newscaster.

Everybody has to do a little prophesying on his own behalf. Usually individual predictions are based upon necessity, hope, luck and hard work. The right combination results in fulfillment.

Riskiest areas for predictions may be the weather, politics, economics, the end of the world, peace, and football games.

Even so, the biggest forecasting flop of 1981 was made by Robert E. Poli, head of the defunct Professional Air Traffic Controllers Union. He called a strike on the assumption that airplanes couldn't fly without PATCO help and that members would be back on the job with their exorbitant demands met within days at most.

Several thousand non-union controllers (and some union members) made an opposite prediction. They figured the strikers would lose and they stayed on the job. The minority was right this time.

In another example, 1981 was foreseen by some meteorologists as a drouth year, with short crops and higher food prices. It looked like they were right through July. But rains came in August, resulting in record crops, preparing soil for fall planting and filling our lakes. The part about higher prices turned out to be correct.

Early in the year, the Republican administration took over amid predictions of deep tax cuts, co, trolled

inflation, a balanced federal budget, and greatly reduced government spending.

These forecasts were offset by gloomy Democratic forecasts that the economy would tailspin into a deep depression and that most of those receiving federal checks would be cut off without a cent.

Of course, both sets of predictors were partly right and partly wrong. The country still is rolling around somewhere in between the extremes, with the possibility of plunging in either direction.

## Prayer for Today

AS THIS year ends, O God, I thank thee for the glimpses of truth which come in it. I trace thy will at work in the events of my life, and see the evidence of eternal purpose ruling over the temporary enthusiasms. Help me to discard the passing fancy and retain the abidingly real. Amen.