

# Editorial

## Image tarnished

The Aggies have done it again. After years of trying to improve its public image, claiming to prepare upright, hard working, honest young men and women for the world outside, the Administration blew its handling of the illness of Dr. Jack K. Williams, president of Texas A&M University.

Although he was first hospitalized on Monday, May 31, it was not until several days later that the school released a statement to that effect. The first public announcement by the Administration said that Williams had been admitted to the Houston Methodist Hospital for a series of tests and a period of rest.

Upon inquiring about Williams condition, The Battalion was told by an Administration official that the University president was "recovering."

Recovering from what? Other than saying that Williams had suffered "complications," the Administration refused comment.

For more than a week, Houston Methodist refused, apparently on instructions from his family, to admit that Williams was even hospitalized there.

Numerous calls for information to Administration officials elicited no other response than a not-so-reassuring "Dr. Williams is doing fine and will probably be released in several weeks."

The Battalion found it hard to be-

lieve that a man recovering from a period of rest would have to remain hospitalized for several weeks.

The Administration, after much prodding, admitted last week that Williams had developed "heart-related problems."

After trying time and again, out of genuine concern, to find out what had happened to the man, The Battalion was informed, two hours after last week's deadline, that Williams had suffered a heart attack.

Why didn't they just admit it in the first place?

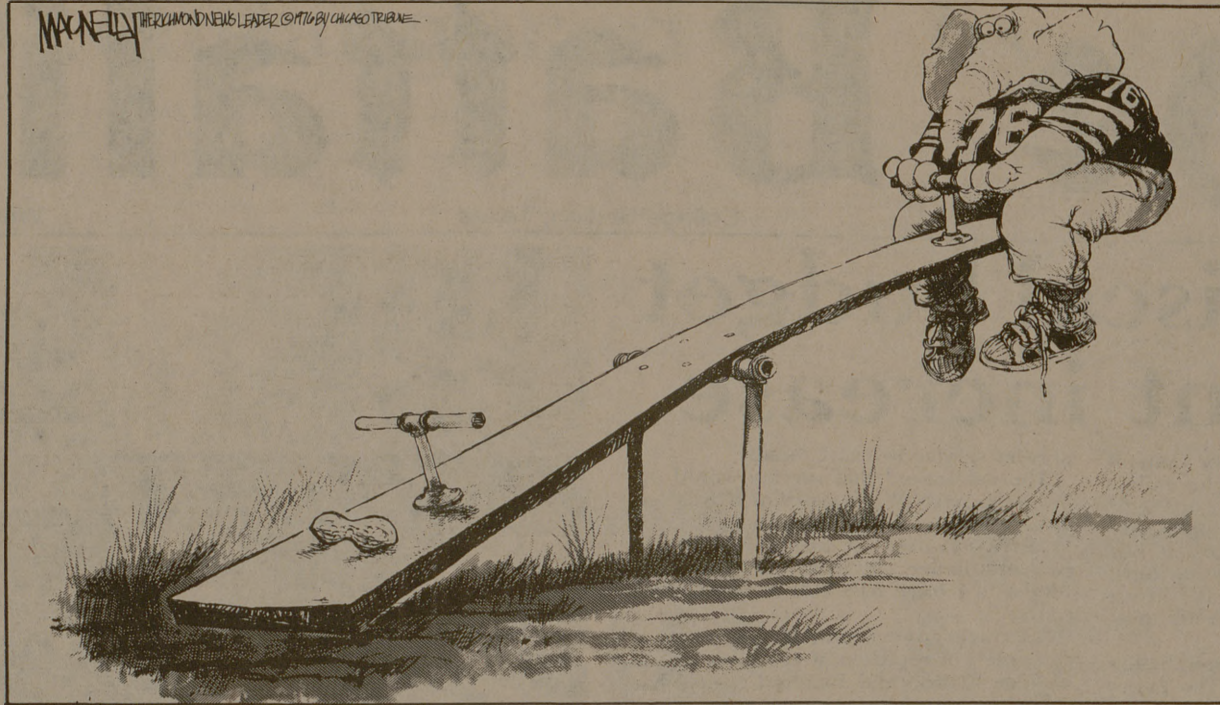
The Administration has badly damaged its, and the University's, credibility. There was no reason for such secrecy.

One University official close to the president said that the curtain was drawn "to keep every Aggie in Houston from trying to get in to see Dr. Williams."

The assertion is ridiculous; along with a statement on the heart attack, the Administration could have requested that Williams receive no visitors.

Family members, and friends of Williams' family, have indicated that they believe a person's physical condition to be a private matter. It is wrong for no one but himself and whomever he may wish to tell.

In most cases, that is true. However, while an individual does have a right to privacy, Williams gave up that right when he accepted his posi-



tion of public power. In its place, he has received the right to be scrutinized.

Students, faculty and staff at A&M want and need to know Williams' condition, not out of morbid curiosity, but out of a genuine concern for the man. The Administration should also have realized that the president's health can have a very real impact upon the A&M population.

The Battalion regrets that the Administration feels that the media and the public cannot be trusted enough to appreciate and understand the position Williams is in.

## Listen Up

### Democrats innocent

Editor: It has been brought to our attention that someone has been using the name of Texas A&M Young Democrats as a reference to secure advertising for a desk blotter to be distributed by our organization.

It is our contention that our organization knew nothing about the plan. Texas A&M Young Democrats have not authorized such a distribution.

We hereby disclaim any relationship with anyone purporting to represent Texas A&M Young Democrats in connection to the desk blotter without the authorization of members or officers of the organization.

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## Bright new day in Washington?

WASHINGTON — A majority is the best argument, as the old saying goes. Jimmy Carter will use that argument to quell whatever uprisings may threaten the unwonted harmony of the Democratic Party in the month remaining before he is officially selected as its presidential nominee in Madison Square Garden.



David S. Broder

While Carter was busy taking congratulatory phone calls from the vanquished barons of the party last Wednesday, his spokesman, Jody Powell, told reporters that the former Governor was anxious to head off "any major confrontation on issues" in the platform.

It would have been astonishing were it otherwise, for that has been Carter's policy from the outset of his campaign. And there was surely no reason to abandon it in his moment of triumph.

Leaving aside for the moment what this may say about Carter, it is clear that the preference of the expected nominee will postpone most serious public consideration of the directions the government will go if the Democrats win both the presidency and Congress in November, as now seems likely.

That election is filled with significance for the country. Not only is there a real prospect of ending the long and costly deadlock between the Congress and the President, there is now a possibility for a complete turnover in leadership in both legislative and executive branches such as this capital has not seen in decades. The nation could have a dramatic new start as it enters its third century.

Retirements guarantee there will be a new Speaker of the House and new majority leaders in both the

House and Senate. With a new President and Vice President, the sweep would be complete.

One need not be a Carter partisan — or even a Democrat — to recognize the possibilities in such a change. The past decade has been filled with trauma for the country — assassinations and civil strife, Vietnam, severe inflation and recession and the scandals that toppled the highest officials of government.

After such a time, a clean break with the past can be therapeutic and liberating. That kind of change is now possible.

But, to be realistic, such a massive transfer of power also entails large risks. New men, untested in their exercise of authority, unfamiliar with each other and little-known to the nation they are leading, are a gamble.

That gamble is greater when — as in this case — their policies and purposes remain largely unexamined and untested until after they are in power.

And the political risk is exaggerated when — as in the case this year — one party is submerging its policy debate while the opposition is exaggerating its internal issues differences.

Because neither President Ford nor Ronald Reagan commands a

clear majority in the Republican convention, every conceivable difference between them has become a matter of intense and harsh debate.

Both men are conservatives. But to hear them talk, they represent alien and hostile philosophies. And the shock waves from their increasingly bitter collision threaten to split the Republican party, no matter which of them is finally nominated.

There is some history that is relevant here, and its implications are disquieting. In 1964, a similarly exaggerated and embittered conflict between Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater produced open warfare on the Republican platform.

The Democrats did that to each other in 1968 and 1972. As a result, the opposition parties in the last three elections were so crippled by the time they left their own convention halls that they were not able to mount an effective challenge to the eventual winner during the general election campaign.

Those Presidents — Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon — were installed in office with little public understanding of their purposes or principles. And it took major and costly upheavals of the political system to curb the appetites for power their deceptively easy election victories had induced in them.

The coming election need not follow that pattern — unless the opposition, the press and the voters all fail to force the hard debate that it is the candidates' duty to provide.

But the promise of a bright new day in Washington must also, under the circumstances, be described as one big gamble.

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