

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

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Monday

Getting lost in a cloud of morality

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — In his classic study of American foreign policy, "In Defense of the National Interest," Hans J. Morgenthau wrote that "the illusion that a nation can escape, if it wants to, from power politics into a realm where action is guided by moral principles rather than by considerations of power is deeply rooted in the American mind."

That reminder is needed now, when the leading voices of the new administration are joined in an effort to persuade the public that we are emerging from the dark night of Henry Kissinger's diplomatic duplicity into the bright new day of Jimmy Carter's international morality.

A re-emphasis on moral principles as the root of international policy was both necessary and proper after the massive cynicism created in the American public by the contorted rationalizations successive Presidents used to defend the foredoomed American intervention in Indochina.

Carter sensed that need and the promise to give the nation a foreign policy "that can make us proud again" was a central element in his successful campaign for the

presidency.

He has reiterated that intention as President. In his commencement address at Notre Dame University last Sunday, Carter pledged "a new American foreign policy... based on constant decency in its values and on optimism in its historical vision."

The first plank of that policy, Carter said, would be "America's commitment to human rights as a fundamental tenet of our foreign policy."

Carter's "human rights" foreign policy is the spiritual descendant of Woodrow Wilson's crusade to "make the world safe for democracy" and Franklin D. Roosevelt's espousal of "the four freedoms."

That is neither condemning nor praising it. It is simply to identify it with what Morgenthau correctly called the recurring American impulse to lift foreign policy beyond the crass constraints of power politics and onto the lofty plain of high moral principle.

But as the earlier examples of Wilson and Roosevelt remind us, a heavy dose of moralism can lead a President either to the ruin or the redemption of his realistic aspirations in the international arena.

The lesson has not been lost on Carter. In his Notre Dame speech he said, "I understand fully the limits of moral suasion." He rejected any suggestion that "we can conduct our foreign policy by rigid moral maxims."

Clearly, Secretary of State Vance understands both the importance and the inherent limitations of the moral element of foreign policy. His law day address on human rights, delivered at the University of Georgia a month ago, is an exceptionally balanced and careful exposition of the ways in which American principles can be applied to the variety of real-world situations.

Less reassuring, by far, was the interview which Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, gave the magazine U.S. News and World Report last week. It is full of sweeping generalizations about "stages of history," and "historical irrelevance," and marked by a disdain for that which is merely "expedient."

If the tone of his memos to the President is like that of public comments, one must fear that Brzezinski feeds the sentimental and moralistic tendencies in Carter's own thinking.

The main concern at the moment, however, is not the battle for the President's mind, but the need to discipline our own thinking. To the extent that the heavy

dose of moralism now being prescribed from Washington makes Americans "feel very good" about the country's foreign policy (to use Vice President Mondale's phrase), we are likely to be lulled into forgetting that while moral principles can provide a base for our foreign policy, they are not in themselves, a policy.

They become a policy only when they are applied to the practical problems of international affairs, as Vance said in a manner that not only reflects the values of our country but protects its interests as well.

There is no inherent conflict between values and interests; but policy can be fatally flawed when either is ignored.

As a people, we are all too prone to gasp in admiration of a President's exposition of moral principles, and to fail to judge whether he has grasped the hard nettle of the problem.

Uncomfortable as it is to recall, it was not too long ago that we allowed Lyndon Johnson to justify the American intervention in Vietnam on the argument that we were bringing the concept of one man-one vote to the Mekong Delta.

History shows that the more our leaders talk of moral principle, the more important it is that we ask how the transaction will affect America's national interest. (c) 1977, The Washington Post

Nixon's law

By LEE ROY LESCHPER

Richard M. Nixon seems well on his way to setting a marathon record for non-stop explanations. His most recent attempt to "set the record straight" appeared Saturday in an article Nixon submitted to the Washington Star.

Nixon wrote the article as an explanation for a statement he made during the third David Frost television interviews. During that interview Nixon had said of illegal wiretap and mail opening, "when the president does it, that means that it is not illegal."

The struggling-for-respect ex-president says in his article that the president must have some latitude in adapting law to his own interpretation of what's best for the country. The president, he says, must be able to exercise his judgement in national emergencies. He must be independent.

Nixon cites as historical proof Lincoln's extra-constitutional use of power in 1864 and Jefferson's power-play to complete the Louisiana Purchase. He likens their actions to his own plan for illegal surveillance of anti-war demonstrators. But here he stretches his rhetoric too far.

It seems ironic to have Richard Nixon interpreting the law. Somewhat like Chengis Khan discussing social reform.

This man was forced out of office for severe abuses of the power the presidency holds. Not for the "emergency actions to meet emergency situations" or the execu-

tion of laws "in a manner faithful to the nation's vital interests" that Nixon proposes. For attempts to manage power and politics for his own benefit, without regard for the laws or people of this country.

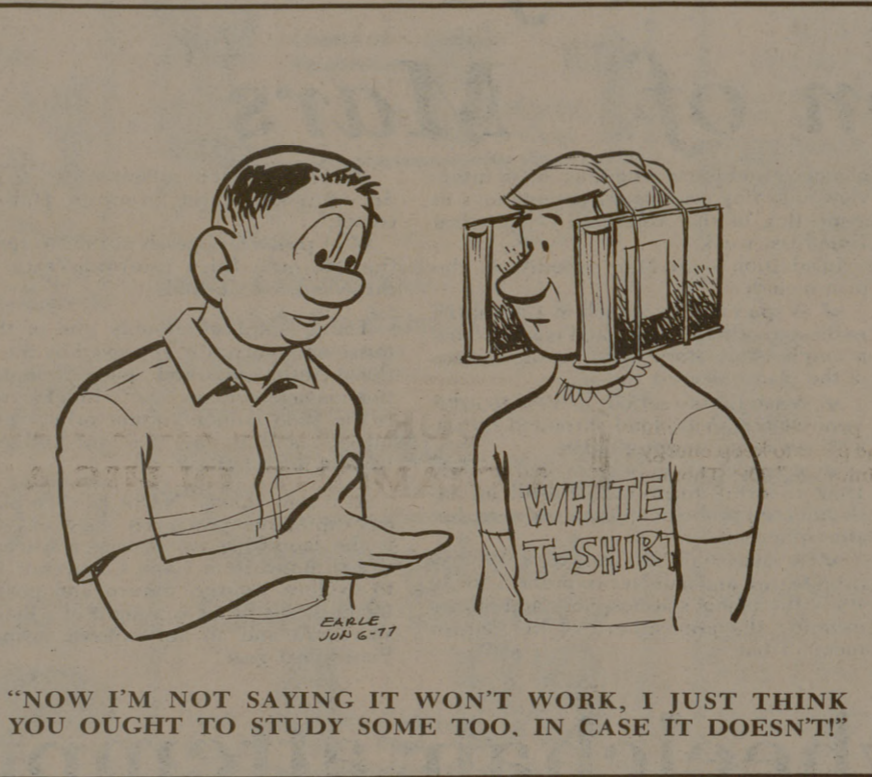
But because of who he is and was, Nixon has received a ready-and-waiting soapbox on television and in the other media. He has been paid handsomely to try to explain coast-to-coast that he's really not such a bad fellow after all. He hasn't convinced us yet.

He has taught us something about presidential independence and power. The president must have the power and freedom to act decisively and freely when the country needs strong leadership. But Nixon is the best or worst example we could have of what can happen with too strong and independent a president.

Readers' forum

Guest viewpoints, in addition to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' forum should be:

- Typed triple space
- Limited to 60 characters per line
- Limited to 100 lines



Readers forum

Gay rights: A Constitutional issue

By MICHAEL J. GARRETT

The question of gay rights has been debated in and out of the courts of the United States for almost a decade. Tomorrow the issue will be put before the voters of Miami and Dade County, Florida. There is no question that the vote, the first of its kind in a major American city, is of utmost importance to the movement for the human and constitutional rights of gay people. It is extremely unfortunate, however, that the issue has been obscured by the rhetoric of Anita Bryant and her supporters.

The issue in Dade County arose in January, 1977, when the Dade County Metropolitan Commission passed an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against gays in housing and employment. Similar ordinances already exist in forty cities and counties across the nation. Ms. Bryant, however, claiming she had a mission from God, gathered enough signatures to force a public referendum on the ordinance.

The primary issue in Dade County, as in the Gay Student Services lawsuit here, and most other gay rights battles is the protection and enforcement of the constitutional rights of gay people. The issue is not homosexuality, morality, God or personal conviction. As citizens of the United States gay people are entitled to the same rights the Constitution accords to blacks, women and all other minorities. The freedom on which this country was founded is not subject to the approval of the masses of an individual's lifestyle.

Throughout the course of her national campaign Ms. Bryant has consistently avoided the issue of constitutional rights and instead waged a campaign that is glaringly lacking in logic and fraught with emotion. Even the name of her anti-gay organization — Save Our Children, Inc. — smacks of irrational publicity hype.

According to Ms. Bryant, her major objection is that the ordinance would prohibit discrimination against gay teachers. It is her opinion that an openly gay teacher would "recruit" or at least influence students into a gay lifestyle. In no logical way can this contention be proven or even accepted. If Ms. Bryant and her followers are concerned that gay teachers would molest school children, then she should be reminded that the vast majority of sexual child abuse cases involve heterosexuals and over half of these cases are incestuous.

Another frequently cited objection is that gay teachers would be unacceptable "role models" for students. Although the causes of homosexuality are far from being fully known, many experts believe that sexual preference is established by the age of four or five. It is doubtful that an openly gay teacher would have much effect on a student except, perhaps, to encourage a better understanding of people.

Even if one refuses to accept that a gay teacher would not incite homosexuality the issue of teachers as role models brings up several important questions. What is an acceptable role model? Are divorced people, liberated women, Jews and unmarried persons acceptable? Who is to determine what is and is not acceptable?

Another of Ms. Bryant's objections is that homosexuality is a sin; a depravity upon which God looks with disgust. Ms. Bryant is, of course, entitled to her beliefs, but personal religious convictions have no place in determining the laws of our nation. Freedom of religion dictates

that any person may accept or reject any religious belief and places on all citizens the responsibility not to impose their personal religious and moral beliefs on others. The doctrine of separation of church and state reinforces the fact that our laws must not be determined by the religious convictions of any person or group.

Perhaps the most unfortunate aspect to Ms. Bryant's crusade is that her uninformed, emotional cries have received so much support. It is disgraceful that in a nation of democracy and freedom, gays in Miami, here at A&M and all over the nation must wage costly legal and political battles to gain those rights the Constitution accords them. It would seem that after 200 years we would have learned the true meaning of the words "liberty and justice for all."

Michael Garrett is a senior environmental design student and member of the Gay Student Services Organization.



Top of the News

State

Briscoe criticized

Rep. Dan Kubiak, D-Rockdale, criticized the legislature and Gov. Dolph Briscoe for not calling a special session to pass a school finance bill until most members agree to the measure. "With a priority issue like school finance which affects every citizen in Texas, how in the devil can legislators come back to the capitol with their minds made up for them by someone else," Kubiak said. Last week, Briscoe said he would not call a special session unless at least two-thirds of the lawmakers agree beforehand to pass the bill.

Crackdown of foreign students

A state representative, upset by the actions of Iranian students in Corsicana, wants legislators to consider ways of cracking down on protests by visiting foreign students. Rep. Clay Smothers, D-Dallas, said if the legislature meets in special session this summer it should consider measures "that would enable local law enforcement agencies to secure their areas against the dangers of visiting foreign students." His remarks responded to last Tuesday's arrests of 49 Iranians who were demonstrating at Navarro County Junior College in protest of an English language proficiency exam.

Nation

Doctor grounds Betty Ford

Former First Lady Betty Ford has been grounded by arthritis. Mrs. Ford, 59, was ordered by her doctors to cancel all travel plans for several months. She must stay at her desert home in Palm Springs where the dry climate eases her problem.

Space shuttle delayed

A malfunction in a machine about the size of a breadbox has forced the delay of the first manned flight test of the Space Shuttle. NASA officials said the problem is a leak in a fuel pump seal in an auxiliary power unit.

No nudes, especially good nudes

Eight tiny and "deceptive" pictures of a fine-art photographer in the nude brought down the house and closed the show. Jane Wenger, a Chicago photographer, used small angled shots which showed her body but not her face, in an art exhibit last week. But the exhibit officials threw out the exhibition for nudity. "They're very unusual and deceptive at first glance," said one of the officials, "but on close examination you don't have to guess."

Gag rule 'premature' says judge

The judge in the Roman Polanski trial ruled Friday that a gag order to prevent publicity of the movie director's trial for the drugging and rape of a 13-year-old girl was not warranted. The judge said such a ruling would be premature. Polanski directed such films as "Chinatown" and "The Tenant".

Chain store stops porno sale

Officials of a national discount chain said a million-dollar gamble to remove itself from the "word war over pornography" by discontinuing the sale of sex-oriented magazines was paying off. "We're hearing from that great silent majority and they approve," said Norman McMillan, marketing vice president for the Target Stores Division of the Dayton Hudson Corp. McMillan said that they were not setting themselves up as moralists, but that they were risking a million-dollar business to get out of the word war over pornography.

Court overturns Louisiana law

The Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 today that a state may not make the death penalty mandatory for the murder of an on-duty police officer. The majority said the Louisiana law under which Harry Roberts was sentenced to death for the fatal shooting of officer Dennis McInerney at Mardi Gras day in New Orleans in 1974 constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of the Constitution.

World

Pandas mate, earth moves

Two giant pandas presented to Japan by China in 1972 succumbed to the magic of spring and mated Saturday. And the earth moved. The mating took place between 7:39 and 8:39 a.m. in Tokyo's Ueno Zoo. A mild earthquake shook the Tokyo area during the same period. Zookeepers would not confirm there was a connection between the two events.

The Battalion

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Letters

Logic faulty

This letter is in response to the United Press International article, "Judge's rape opinion draws school outcry" (Battalion, May 30). His opinion that rape of a woman is how a man "reacts to it normally" is an appallingly stupid statement.

He blames the 16-year-old's crime on his response "to the permissiveness of the times and provocative outfits women were wearing." If that's the judge's logic then stealing, murder and any other crime could be blamed on a response to some influence that proved a greater temptation than a person's will power could resist. The punishment should fit the crime and rape is a crime.

Katherine Wood