

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Monday
July 11, 1977

Third time — charmed or charred?

For the second time in two weeks College Station firemen answered a fire alarm on the Texas A&M campus Friday evening.

But where the first fire was extinguished before those firemen arrived, this fire was just getting started well in the basement storage area of the Memorial Student Center. This fire took five units and an hour of hard work to douse, and not before doing considerable damage to the supplies and furniture stored in that basement. But it could have been much worse.

In the June 29 Battalion we warned that the first fire pointed out dangerous shortcomings in the fire prevention and safety systems in some Texas A&M dorms. We should have included the MSC in that hazard list.

The basement area in the MSC was ripe for a fire. The area was filled with highly combustible paper, plastics and fabrics. Students were allowed to add to that paint fumes while painting signs there. No overhead sprinkler system or smoke alarm device kept vigil. The primary power systems, especially electricity for that area, and the entire center, were right there in the prime area for a fire. The Center and campus air conditioning systems are so efficient they carried the smoke and toxic fumes from the fire not only into the Center

itself, but also into Wofford Cain Hall and the University Physical Plant.

Yet the MSC basement isn't the only area in that combustible condition. College Station Fire Marshal Harry Davis says there are six to eight other buildings on campus whose basements are as good as the MSC's. But it's easier in a growing University crowded for space to use every available foot of space for storage.

Easier is very seldom better. The dangers are absolutely mind-boggling. Take the MSC fire, for example. The fire started between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. There were still people in the other basement areas of the building — in this case, in the beauty shop — who smelled the smoke and reported the fire before it got too big a head start on the firemen. Consider the possibility that that fire had started at 10 p.m. or 12 p.m., when those people wouldn't have been there. It took those five fire units an hour to control this fire when it didn't have a big head start — what if it had had that extra time?

Another consideration: There were about 25 people staying in the MSC hotel when the fire broke out. How easy would it be to evacuate 25 sleepy people at midnight, in a building filled with the kind of toxic fumes this fire produced?

Okay. We've been lucky. We've had two pretty good warnings that holes are showing in our fire safety program. We've gotten those warnings without anyone being seriously injured. But whereas the old saying is "third time's the charm," in this case the third time might be the charred.

The answers aren't that tough. The top administrators in this University have got to hand out some tough orders: Evaluate the whole place, from top to bottom, and ferret out every last danger spot, right now, whether they be basements filled with paper and boxes, buildings with too few exits or high-risk areas without sprinkler or alarm systems. For example, the MSC fire burned electrical connections in the basement and shorted out all the "emergency exit" signs in the center.

Where these danger areas exist, they have to be corrected. Yes, that costs money. But then, people always seem to holler about the price of life preservers until the boat starts sinking. But the biggest task is to educate people — to make them realize that even big, fancy buildings made of brick and masonry burn, and so do the people in them.

Two warnings are about as many as we get for anything. May we never have to stand beside a grave or listen to Silver Taps and think "I told you so."
L.R.L.

A man and his God

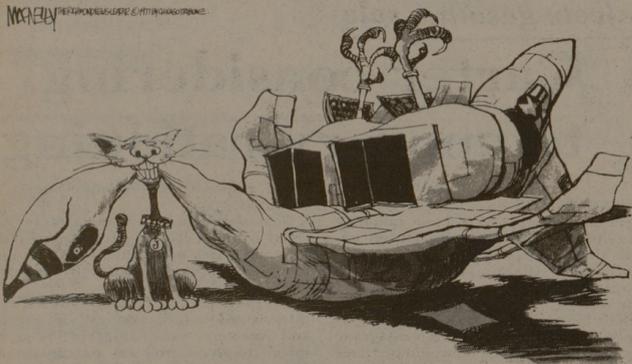
A French archbishop named Marcel Lefebvre celebrated a high Latin catholic mass in Dickinson, Texas, yesterday.

The archbishop called it a return to the traditional rites and values of his church. Progressive followers of the church's Vatican II doctrines call it a dangerous act of rebellion. When a mass can be considered an act of rebellion against the church, something needs reevaluation.

Vatican II has taken a number of steps to "modernize" the Catholic Church. These changes, and most notably the switch from a High Mass in Latin to the present Mass in the language of the people celebrating it, were designed to bring parishioners closer to their religion and to bring back Catholics who have been drifting away from their church in increasing numbers.

To some degree this strategy has worked. Catholicism has been on the increase in many quarters for the first time in many years. But to traditionalists like Archbishop Lefebvre those Catholics have returned to a church missing much of the value and meaning it once had.

Can't there be room for both the traditional and the progressive in a church as large as the Catholic? As Lefebvre said, "We've changed nothing. We cannot abandon our Catholic faith." Why should they? A man's faith is first between him and his God, then his church. Let's pray the Vatican remembers that.
L.R.L.



Human rights may lead off deep end

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — President Carter says it has been "surprising" to him that the Soviet Union has shown such an "adverse reaction" to our stand on human rights. He also finds it distressing that Congress has tied his hands by attaching so many restrictive amendments to foreign aid to countries with authoritarian regimes.

What he has not yet noted in his public comments is that these are linked phenomena — two sides of a resurgent nationalism that is infecting Washington as much as it is Moscow. Jingoism is climbing faster than summer temperatures in the two capitals.

In its early, naive days, the Carter administration argued that there would be no "linkage" between human rights and other issues — notably strategic arms talks — on the Soviet-American agenda.

As it develops, there is "linkage" galore, not just in Moscow but in Washington. The President's foreign policy initiatives from SALT to Indochina to Cuba are being

tangled in the barbed wire of the issue he himself put at the center of American foreign policy.

What he did not foresee — but should have — was that Congress was likely to take the human rights issue and run away with it. Before there was Carter, there were members of Congress prodding the State Department to crack down on governments violating human rights, the original human rights manifestos are found, not in Carter speeches, but in the Congressional Record.

Without deprecating anyone's motives, it is a fact that human rights is a domestic political issue of limitless potency — a real flagwaver if there ever was one. If Jimmy Carter decided it was a good thing for him, then many members of Congress had to believe it would be even better for them.

Any distance the President was prepared to go on the issue Congress predictably would go three steps farther — even if that meant marching to the cliff.

And that is precisely what has been happening. The House and Senate, some-

times singly and sometimes jointly, have written into legislation a variety of bans and restrictions on the use of international aid funds for countries which do not meet American standards for protection of civil liberties.

This is double-dip moralism, a sort of total immersion in ethnocentric pride. Not only does the United States declare who is worthy of receiving its own benefactions, it says we will not dirty our hands in any international pool of funds for nations which do not meet our exacting principles.

Human rights amendments have been attached to the foreign aid bills mainly by conservatives like Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), who are plainly delighted to use the weapon Carter has placed in their hands against programs they never much liked anyway.

But the game is equally available and appealing to liberals. When Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) was trying to preserve language that gave the administration a degree of flexibility in handling the human rights issue on internationally

financed foreign aid, he was rebuked by two leading Senate liberals.

"There is no rationale that I can think of or that anybody has offered me that would militate for giving the administration what they claim is flexibility to negotiate with these countries about their human rights situation," said Sen. James G. Abourezk (D-S.D.).

Sen. Mark O. Hatfield (R-Ore.) derided those who say "we have a President who has made a lot of speeches about human rights." "Well," said Hatfield, "speeches are one thing, but action is another. I have observed this same President has been very selective in his application of the doctrine of human rights."

What Carter is discovering is that a little bit of righteousness can be a dangerous thing. It can upset the Russians and excite the Congress, arousing in both a nationalistic pride that knows no limits.

There's a reason why previous Presidents have been cautious about removing the cap from that particular bottle. It is very heavy stuff.
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How to radiate energy in one easy step

By DICK WEST

WASHINGTON — President Carter's energy program hasn't even gotten through Congress yet and already it is having an impact on the economy.

New types of business and technological enterprises are springing up everywhere in anticipation of changing fuel needs and altered life styles.

Perhaps the biggest spinoff so far is the production of solar energy feasibility studies.

Solar energy itself remains virtually untapped. But feasibility studies are booming.

It's a rare week that doesn't see the issuance of at least one voluminous report and this week has seen two.

The Congressional Office of Technology

Assessment has shared with us the fruits of its analysis of the feasibility of small solar energy units. I shall not burden you with the details here. Suffice it to say they are above average in feasibility.

The lighter side

More typical is the long-awaited Alvason Report. It presents the findings of my neighbor, Ed Alvason, who conducted a solar energy study at Buttermilk Beach, N.C., over the Fourth of July weekend.

His experiments to ascertaining if solar energy can feasibly turn the human body into an alternate source of incandescent light.

Incandescence means that something emits visible light as a result of being

heated," Alvason told me in releasing his report.

"If solar energy could be used to heat the body to the point where it glowed in the dark, that obviously would be an important new form of illumination — both cheap and plentiful."

"I spent three days on the beach absorbing solar rays with my body, particularly my back and the tops of my feet. However, the results were what we scientists call ambiguous."

"As my wife had theorized, my skin turned a radiant shade of red. I could even feel it radiating."

"That night when I turned off the light to go to bed, I could read a newspaper by my insteps. That's how radiant they were."

I said, "Why were you reading a newspaper after you had gone to bed?"

"My back was radiating so much I couldn't sleep," Alvason explained.

"That's wonderful!" I exclaimed. "It appears you have found a new way to save electricity. Wait till Jimmy Carter hears about this."

"Don't tell him yet," Alvason cautioned. "There are still some bugs to work out. The main problem is duration."

"I found that skin that has been incandesced by solar energy soon begins to peel, which causes it to lose its radiance."

That seems to be what happens with most solar energy feasibility studies. When you get to the bottom line, you run into the fine print.

Letters to the editor

Save now or pay later

Editor:

Each month the taxpayers of Texas are losing almost \$2 million. Much of the state's money (over \$400 million) is on deposit in checking accounts drawing no interest, rather than in savings accounts.

Banks use this \$400 million (which belongs to the people of Texas) without paying one cent of interest. Why should the banks benefit from this money rather than the taxpayers?

Fortunately, something can be done about this scandalously inefficient money management. But it is up to the Governor to include appropriate legislation in the July 11th Special Session of the Legislature.

Taxpayers who want to stop this senseless waste should write Governor Dolph Bris-

coe at the state capitol in Austin and insist that this money management legislation be included in the Special Session. If this revenue does not come from interest, then it will come from the taxpayer's pockets.

During the regular session I introduced H.B. 1984, which would have saved the taxpayers \$42.6 million each biennium. Although the bill passed overwhelmingly (127-5) in the House, it died in the Senate.

Incompetent, inefficient investment can cease, if you are willing to invest your time in writing a letter.

You have the choice of saving now or paying later. Voice your support to the Governor now.

— Frank Hartung
State Representative



"AND THIS IS THE HOUSE CLOAKROOM WHERE THE MEMBERS GATHER TO GO OVER LAST MINUTE STRATEGY BEFORE VOTING ON THE FLOOR... APPARENTLY, THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY TO VOTE ON THE PAY RAISE."

Top of the New

Campus

Career planning center opens

Questions summer degree candidates may have about employment will be answered by the Career Planning and Placement Center Thursday. An information station will be operated on the first floor of the Memorial Student Center from 8 a.m. to noon. Fall and spring degree candidates may also inquire about placement procedures and interviews while the station is open.

State

Special session begins today

The state legislature convened this morning for a special session on school finance without agreement on how to calculate local property tax assessments. Gov. Dolph Briscoe said Friday he hopes there will be an agreement within the week. "I'm very encouraged by the degree of agreement that now exists," he said. "I feel like it will be possible to work those differences out."

Crackdown on kiddieporn

Houston Police Chief Harry Caldwell has increased the number of detectives assigned to investigate the use of children in commercial pornography and prostitution. "I am sickened by this sort of behavior and I think the citizens of this city have a right to be protected from it," he said Saturday. "No evidence has been found indicating kiddie pornography is being manufactured in Houston, but the officers are trying to determine how much of a problem the city has."

Archbishop blames Vatican for tens

Rebel French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre blamed the Vatican yesterday for the divisions developing over a campaign to restore traditional rites in the Roman Catholic Church. The archbishop was in Dickinson to consecrate the Queen of Angels Chapel. He faces possible excommunication by Pope Paul VI if he continues to practice the old Latin mass. "If a division is in the church now, that does not come from us," Lefebvre said. "That comes from the Vatican, Vatican II."

Nation

And you thought the campaign was

Former President Gerald Ford took time off from a weekend in Val Colorado to criticize the Carter administration. Saturday, Ford endorsed further development of the neutron bomb and repeated his criticism of Carter for stopping production of the B-1 bomber. Sunday, he said the Carter Administration is going to have to move fast if it hopes to gain a new agreement with the Soviet Union on strategic arms limitation. Ford also left the door wide open to speculation whether he is a 1980 presidential candidate. "I haven't made up my mind," he said. "But I'm not going to let any one person pre-empt the Republican nomination."

The \$1 billion epidemic

The massive swine flu epidemic that never came will cost the Treasury more than \$1 billion it was reported Saturday. Legal claims filed against the government for deaths and injury resulting from last winter's swine flu vaccination program are the major cause for the high bill. "Even though the decision was a gamble," a General Accounting Office report said, "gambling with money would be better than doing nothing and gambling with lives."

Old language becomes new course

Young members of the Yakima Indian tribe in Yakima, Wash., will soon be learning their language, Mamachat, in school. The first Yakima language dictionary will be published July 18. A five-week workshop for teachers will begin the next day. Mamachat will be taught in nine school districts in the Yakima Valley. A teaching program developed around numbers, colors, toys, people, words, body parts, weather and seasons has been developed to aid the students.

No pity, says Scottsboro Boy

The last surviving member of the "Scottsboro Boys" says he feels sympathy for Virginia Price Street, one of two white women he and eight other black youths allegedly gang-raped 45 years ago on an Alabama freight train. Street, 70, has filed a \$6 million civil suit against NBC charging the network falsely portrays her in a TV movie as an adultress and a liar. "I have no sympathy for that woman," Clarence Norris, the last of the nine youths who were sentenced to die in the electric chair and served a total of 130 years in prison before they were finally cleared, said. "She's lying and she knows she's lying. I hope her conscience will whup her to death."

Like mother, like son?

The mother of G. Gordon Liddy, the convicted Watergate burglar who refused to cooperate with prosecutors, says her son kept his silence because she taught him the virtues of loyalty, patriotism and honesty. Liddy is now eligible for parole after President Carter recently commuted his 20 year sentence. "He is a loyal person," Mrs. Liddy said of her son. "It's a hard lesson to get across to children — loyalty and not to lie. You can't deal with people who lie."

World

The moralities of the neutron bomb

Soviet news agency Tass said talk in the U.S. over the development of the neutron bomb shows that President Carter's "Love of mankind philosophy" is "nothing more than rhetoric around a myth." The agency said the weapon, designed to kill people while leaving buildings intact, opens a new round in the arms race. "But there is another aspect to this question," Tass said. "The moral aspect that stems precisely from the destructive and refined nature of the new 'wonder weapon.'"

The Battalion

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