

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Wednesday
July 13, 1977

Turning blue in Aggieland

Signs are getting stronger and stronger that Texas A&M University will have a new president by the end of this month. Let's hope so.

University System Chancellor and Acting President Jack Williams told the members of the Academic Council yesterday that a list of finalists for the presidency from within the system has been sent to the system board of regents. A three-man committee from the board will review those finalists and, if they find one to their liking, could recommend their choice to the full board during their meeting July 29. Or they could take longer to make a decision.

There is little reason to take longer. There is very good reason not to delay.

During the 10 months of this last year that Dr. Williams was not able to serve as full-time president because of his health, the University's top administrators were in a quandary. Vice-Chancellor W. Clyde Freeman was put in charge of the system by the board during Williams' recovery. But the regents left the situation at that.

For those 10 months no one in the system really knew what to expect. Rumors ran wild; one

said Freeman would become president, another maintained Williams would return as full-time president or be replaced by someone new. But no one knew for sure.

For those directing multi-million dollar research programs or heading academic departments containing several thousand students, that was a pretty disquieting feeling. Not knowing who your boss is or how long he'll be there is hardly conducive to long-range planning.

Very few people would build a mansion on an island that may wash away in the first good rain. Likewise, administrators need pretty solid ground on which to plan.

In March the regents restored Dr. Williams to his full-time duties as president. Everybody breathed easier — the ground felt solid again. Then in May the board reshuffled the system administration again by making Williams chancellor with a new president to be appointed for the university.

That was two months ago. People are getting nervous again.

There is much to be said for caution in selecting a new president. But there is more to be said for not being overcautious.

Williams' faculty advisory committee has recommended the system people most qualified for the job. The regents have plenty of time to consider that list before their July 29 meeting. In fact, the odds are very good that they've already made up their minds who they want.

In yesterday's Academic Council meeting Williams said he had a number of plans for improving the system and university organization. But those plans, like everyone else's, have to wait for a new president.

"It seems to me that the man that operates the president's job ought to make some suggestions on how to change it," Williams said, explaining that he doesn't intend to make any changes inside the University until a new president is appointed.

This University has been holding its breath for a new president long enough. If it doesn't get to breathe soon, it's not going to be able to when that new president does take over.

L.R.L.

Obscure 'sunset' battle could be crucial

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — Even in this era of open government, the most important struggles still take place with little public scrutiny. This is a story of one such struggle — as obscure as can be but with vast potential importance for the taxpayers and citizens of this country.

It concerns the "Sunset bill," a measure which is aimed at cutting back the overgrowth of federal programs by automatically terminating each program every six years unless Congress decides after reviewing its performance to keep it in existence.

Sunset was endorsed by President Carter during last year's campaign and a Sunset bill was introduced in January by more than half the members of the Senate. Last week, in substantially amended form, the bill cleared its first major hurdle when the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee gave its formal approval.

The committee action came on a hectic day in the Senate, with senators and re-

porters preoccupied with the floor action on a Labor-Health, Education and Welfare appropriations bill. Working between quorum calls, the committee moved from its own room to an office just off the Senate floor. And in the course of its deliberations and wanderings, the committee made one of those decisions that can literally affect the lives and fortunes of people who will never know about it.

The "trigger mechanism" in the Sunset bill is the provision that automatically kills off a program after six years, unless the Congress, after scrutiny by the appropriate legislative committee, decides to reenact it.

Sen. John H. Glenn, Jr. (D-Ohio) argued that if multi-billion-dollar social programs were to be subjected to that automatic scrutiny, then so should the billions of dollars the government directs into the economy by way of special preferences written into the tax code — the so-called "tax expenditures."

If, for example, the program that authorized government subsidies for low-income housing were subject to "Sunset" provisions, then so should the tax-code provision that allows millions of middle-income and wealthy families to deduct their mortgage interest payments from their taxes.

The bill was drafted to include the \$125 billion of "tax expenditures" right along with the \$460 billion of federal spending programs under Sunset review. And that provision immediately became the center of a furious tug-of-war.

Liberals like Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) argued "the critical necessity" of treating tax expenditures and direct outlays in the same fashion. Otherwise, the tax code provisions that benefit the better-off would enjoy an exemption not granted the programs aimed at the needy.

But Sen. Russell B. Long (D-La.), in a powerful rebuttal, argued that the "uncertainty" which Sunset could cause businessmen dependent on special tax provisions could cripple investment in this country.

The Carter administration was caught in the middle. Secretary of Treasury W. Michael Blumenthal testified in support of Sunset last March, but counseled "extreme caution" in applying it to the tax expenditures. So dubious did he sound that Glenn felt called upon to read the Treasury Secretary an excerpt from a Carter campaign speech vowing his full support for Sunset. "I agree with every word of it," Blumenthal said.

Maybe, but in April Blumenthal wrote Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine), chief sponsor of the Sunset bill, endorsing Long's suggestion that the tax provisions be subject to regular review, but without the automatic death-sentence that would befall any spending program not winning renewal by its Sunset deadline.

That angered Glenn enough for him to write the President in May, asking whether Blumenthal was speaking for the administration or "for himself alone."

Carter replied that the administration was "supporting inclusion of tax expenditures within this important legislation, as are other programs." Armed with that letter, Glenn managed early in last week's crucial committee meeting to stop a Republican move to exempt tax expenditures from the Sunset bill provisions.

But later in the day, Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) tried again with the Blumenthal-Long formula, which provides for regular review of the tax expenditures without an automatic death sentence. By this time, the Republicans had picked up a proxy from one of their absent members, two Democratic senators had disappeared, and Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.) suddenly found himself the swing man.

Ribicoff, who is also a member of Long's Senate Finance Committee, said he saw no problems with the Danforth proposal, and so, by a 7-6 margin, the Blumenthal-Long-Danforth proposal prevailed. At that point, Glenn and Muskie, arguing that the "compromise" was worse than useless, asked to have tax expenditures dropped from the Sunset bill entirely.

During the maneuvering, the Carter administration was on the sidelines. One White House lobbyist says that Glenn had given him the names of some wavering senators who "needed work." But with the other matters on the Senate floor today, the White House man had no time to make any phone calls.

Glenn and Muskie plan to resume their fight to include the tax expenditures under full Sunset review when the bill reaches the floor. Meantime, billions of dollars of tax advantages stand to be exempt from the same searching scrutiny that social programs would receive if the Sunset bill is passed.

It is an obscure fight — one of many that go largely unnoticed each week on Capitol Hill. But as usual, in obscurity the interests of the powerful and the affluent prevail.

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Top of the News

Campus

Wadley blood drive begins

Wadley Blood Banks' summer drive will be held today and tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in MSC 224-225. Donations require about 45 minutes to complete. Appointments are available.

State

Manson will not be published

Charles Manson's writings won't be published after all. At least not by the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston, which had planned to put the writings in *Points of View* magazine next month. "Due to prepublication publicity, its purpose as a serious art magazine has been misunderstood," museum patron Ann Robinson said yesterday. Manson was convicted in 1969 for the murder of actresses Sharon Tate.

And this little piggy . . .

Two pint-size culprits with a penchant for piggy banks robbed an Austin apartment Monday and bicycled away with more than \$80 in small change. A witness told police one thief escaped on a bicycle and the other on foot. Both were about 8 to 10 years old. Police said the thieves apparently entered the apartment by slicing a hole in a window screen.

Nation

Artificial hearts beat the real thing

Artificial hearts — not transplants — will be used in the future to replace diseased hearts in humans. So says Dr. Michael DeBakey, who pioneered heart bypass surgery in 1964. He said heart transplants were "hardly worth the effort. I can see them only in an experimental use. The artificial heart has a better chance of replacing a human heart in any transplant."

Bubble gum cards next?

That nationally famous softball superstar Jimmy Carter has received an invitation from a good ole Louisiana boy to hurl an out-of-town game. Mayor Joe Powers of Opelousas, La., sent the invitation after Carter and the White House staff lost a July 4th tilt to a team of Secret Service agents. The game put Carter at 0-1 for the season. Powers want the Carter team for the Lou-Ana Fifth Annual Slow-Pitch Tournament July 22-24. There has been no reply from the White House team.

Aid for Americans in Mexican jails

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved a special treaty that would help free some 600 Americans in Mexican prisons. It now goes to the full Senate. Under the legislation, the prisoners could choose to serve out the terms in American prisons, while Mexican prisoners in the U.S. could serve their sentences in Mexico.

McDonald's premium has no lead

The golden arches of McDonald's stand tall once again. The Food and Drug Administration said yesterday tests have turned up no evidence that cartoon-character glasses distributed by the fast-food chain will give customers lead poisoning. Even though the red, white and yellow decals on the exterior of the glasses contain lead, there is "no evidence the lead can contaminate the liquid inside," health officials in Massachusetts last week ordered McDonald's to stop its "Glasses to Go" campaign and advised parents to keep children away from the glasses. McDonald's has threatened to sue the state.

World

OPEC begins talks

Ministers of OPEC opened policy meetings yesterday in Saltsjbaden, Sweden amid heavy security and speculation the oil nations might compromise on fuel prices and cut back on sales to energy-wasting countries. Saudi Arabia ended a feud with the other members over OPEC's radical stand on fuel prices when Sheikh Ahmed Yamani embraced Iran's Jamshid Amuzegar, his rival for OPEC leadership, before the meetings began. Both made it clear they were "very happy" the feud is over.

Menahem presents peace offers

Prime Minister Menahem Begin of Israel presented his ideas for Middle East peace to the Israeli government today and won unanimous approval to discuss them in talks with President Carter next week in Washington. Newspaper reports said Israel would offer to give up major chunks of the Golan Heights and the Sinai as part of a peace agreement with Syria and Egypt while holding on to a semi-autonomous West Bank of Jordan. Begin warned the public not to pay attention to speculative articles. He says Carter should be the first to hear the proposals.

The Battalion

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Italy becoming crime center of world

By MARIO DEAGLIO
International Writers Service

TURIN, ITALY — Americans concerned about law and order in the United States ought to consider Italy, where violence is turning the country into a virtual battlefield.

Hardly a day passes here without robberies, bombings, murders, riots and prison revolts. Abductions, usually of wealthy or prominent people, currently average one a week, and ransom payments are spiraling to such heights that Italians sardonically refer to kidnapping as the nation's foremost growth industry.

The turmoil is complicated by increasing difficulty to distinguish between political terrorism and common crime. Indeed, in many instances extreme leftist or rightist gangs are allied with ordinary criminals in the Italian bandit tradition.

With all this, Italians are still hopeful that peace can be restored without curbs on civil liberties. Public sympathy for the police is on the rise, and every legitimate political party, including the Communists, is calling for more effective judicial action, but the system is simply not functioning.

Thousands of cases clog court calendars. Jurors are often intimidated into not showing up at trials. Jails are overcrowded and the penal code is so permissive that many inmates, permitted to visit sick relatives, never return to their cells.

According to official statistics, the number of crimes has risen from 700,000 in 1950 to more than two million last year. Political crimes last year, estimated at nearly 1200, doubled from 1975.

The targets of violence within the past few months have included leading politicians, judges, businessmen, professors and even journalists, who until recently had been treated with respect by extremists. During the first three days of June three editors were wounded and two other journalists had their cars blown up.

A prestigious lawyer was assassinated here in May, and a couple of weeks ago, two masked men in Naples shot an executive of the Alfa Romeo automobile company, claiming that he "oppressed" workers.

Some observers attribute the rise of violence to social strains caused by the economic boom and bust of recent years. According to this thesis, numbers of Italians were attracted to the cities from their villages during the 1960s, and, left jobless by the recession that followed, have turned to crime.



This has been aggravated by the absence of credibility of the ruling Christian Democratic party, many of whose leaders were implicated in the Lockheed scandal. The government therefore lacks authority to deal with the crisis.

(Deaglio writes on social issues for *La Stampa*, the Turin daily.)

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British developing new super weapon?

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The current issue of *nithsonian* magazine reports the British defense Ministry is conducting tests on ordnance levels of servicemen.

We want to isolate the causes of boredom find out what happens to the brain and what it can be counteracted," the scientist charge of the program was quoted as saying.

Ostensibly, the findings would be used to help servicemen who monitor blank lar screens in air defense outposts remain alert enough to notice blips made by enemy planes or missiles.

Note I said that is the ostensible purpose. Some of the military sources I asked with told me there may be more to it than that.

These sources suspect the British are secretly working on a counterpart to America's neutron bomb.

The N-bomb, as you must know by now, is a nuclear warhead that kills people while

The lighter side

leaving buildings, totem poles, diving platforms and other vital structures standing. Militarily, it's a whiz. But it has caused humanitarians to glance askance.

Critics are bothered not so much by the priority as by the likelihood that some of the victims would be subjected to lingering death.

In war as in golf tournaments, sudden death is considered better form.

Great Britain apparently does not have

the technology to build the neutron bomb. It is known, however, that the British are capable of producing some of the world's most deadly bores.

Now suppose the British were to find some way of harnessing the great inertial force of boredom. They then would have a weapon for which there is no known defense.

Theoretically, people could be shielded against being rigidified by neutronic radiation. But there are no safeguards now existent or envisioned to keep people from being bored stiff.

If the British, as my sources suspect, are trying to develop a blah bomb, they must overcome a number of problems. One is deliverability.

As the Smithsonian points out in its

comments on the British tests, "there's no such thing as a little boredom."

So the trick would be to make a tedium warhead small enough for a missile to deliver.

Another problem is the guidance system. Bored tend to be indiscriminate, latching onto the nearest person at hand. This makes it difficult to devise a blah bomb that will zero in on selected targets.

Even if British weaponers can overcome these difficulties, they still will encounter the same humanitarian opposition generated by the neutron bomb.

The prospect of people, even enemies, being slowly bored to death stirs our compassion. Unless the blah bomb is capable of inflicting instant ennui with lethal tedium, world opinion surely will shout it down.