

Viewpoint

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Wednesday
January 25, 1978

The administrative 'domino principle'

Now is a very good time to be an administrator at Texas A&M University. It's a good time because the University System Board of Regents is handing out promotions like a new father handing out cigars.

Those promotions started with Texas A&M's own recent version of the "Domino Principle." A former United States Secretary of State made plenty of hay on his own version of this theory, related to Southeast Asia, but that's another story.

Texas A&M's Domino Principle is this: Create a new administrative organization, with vacancies at the top, and in promoting administrators to fill those positions, more vacancies will be created farther down in the administration. When those vacancies are in turn filled from lower-level administrators, a wave effect is created. Vacancies and promotions ripple down through the organization until many administrators change jobs.

It all started last May when the board of regents appointed then-President Jack K. Williams chancellor of the Texas A&M system and created a separate University president position. Dr. Jarvis Miller, then director of the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, was appointed president by the board of regents in July. The regents also appointed three vice chancellors, including then-Vice President for Academic Affairs John C. Calhoun.

Those changes were geared at separating the University and the system into administrative units that could better handle the enormous conglomerate the system has become. But there the dominos started falling.

In August the board promoted Dean of Science Mack Prescott to the academic vice presidency Calhoun had vacated. At the same time the regents appointed then-assistant Vice President for Business Affairs Howard Vestal to the business vice president post which had been vacant for about a year through retirement.

Then in November the regents approved two new vice presidential posts, for engineering and agriculture research and service units. At the same time they appointed Neville Clark, assistant director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, to become President Miller's successor as director of the experiment station.



Miller

Williams

Tuesday the board filled in a few of those holes while making more vacancies. Dr. Thomas Sugihara, director of the University Cyclotron, was named to succeed Prescott as Dean of Science. Ed Davis, director of management services, moved into Vestal's old position as assistant vice president for business affairs. Dean of Engineering Fred J. Benson filled the new vice president of engineering post. Businessman William G. Locke took over Clark's old job as assistant director of the Agricultural Experiment Station.

So where does that leave us? At least three positions — vice president for agriculture, director of the cyclotron and dean of engineering — will need to be filled. Maybe the director of management services job too. And the administrators who fill those jobs will have to vacate some other posts which will have to be filled with someone else.

Those dominos will be falling for some time to come.

L. R. L.

The pressure against negative reporting

By WILLIAM RASPBERRY

WASHINGTON — The press conference, called to announce a small HEW grant to the Rev. Jesse Jackson's PUSH for Excellence program, was breaking up, when Clarence Mitchell Jr., begged leave to say a word or two.

For the next five minutes, Mitchell, head of the Washington office of the NAACP, delivered himself of a stirring,

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impassioned and eloquent plea that members of the press not deal "negatively" with the announcement.

We all listened attentively — Mitchell commands that kind of respect — but I'm not sure any of us understood just what he meant for us to do.

Suppose one of the reporters in the room knew, or subsequently found out, that Jackson's program, designed to promote self-discipline and academic excellence in the public schools, wasn't working very well. Did Mitchell mean that such information should be suppressed?

Suppose it was some reporter's view, with evidence to back it, that Jackson had started a number of programs and not followed them through. Would it be "negative" reporting to say so?

Suppose it struck some of us that \$20,000 was a piddling grant in the context of the national program Jackson had outlined. Should our stories not reflect that?

I don't know what Clarence Mitchell meant. And yet I know, as they say, where he was coming from. He was reacting, I



think, to a fairly recent tendency of the press to be suspicious of the official announcement, no matter what its source, and to approach every spokesman, in government and out, as an adversary.

The tendency, at least in its recent renaissance, is a part of the legacy of Watergate. The handful of reporters who probed behind the official reports of a "third-rate burglary," who questioned official explanations, who assumed an adversary relationship with the government, uncovered the major political story of our time.

Since then, every reporter fancies himself something of an investigative reporter

— partly because of the possibility of uncovering a major story but mostly, I think, out of fear of the embarrassment of being had. Official versions — whether police blotters, press releases or the answers given in news conferences — are treated as inherently suspect.

And it sometimes happens that in our zeal to achieve a balanced report, covering warts and all, we find ourselves reporting the warts as though they were the main story.

That's especially true of the bigger, more influential outlets. If the Virgin Birth should happen today, only the small-town papers would report it as a miracle. The

big-city dailies would sprinkle their stories with the requisite disclaimers — "The mother, who claims to be a virgin, said..." — and then quickly assign reporters to interview prominent obstetricians, former neighbors and old boyfriends.

And it would happen even if the reporters thought the story to be true. They would be afraid of death of a letter to the editor accusing them of falling for the old "virgin birth" gag.

One of the worst things that can happen to us is to be accused, correctly, of swallowing a false report. And so we are careful to include any negative stuff we know in order to convince our audience that we are "objective."

Clarence Mitchell calls it "negative reporting." He's right, although I have no idea what to do about it.

With some stories — those based on ascertainable fact — it doesn't matter. Raise all the doubts and caveats you will, the good thing either happened or it didn't.

But some stories depend not so much on facts but on our willingness to suspend disbelief, to look at things from a different point of view so that the good thing can happen.

Jesse Jackson's efforts are clearly in that category. His notion that ghetto youngsters and their families can be encouraged to embrace academic excellence is true only if it is permitted to be true.

The way we report the story can have a major bearing on how the story turns out. Maybe that's what Clarence Mitchell was trying to say to us the other day.

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Letters to the editor

Veterans need ticket consideration, too

Editor: I am writing in response to Gus Wilson's letter in the Friday Battalion.

I have read the Battalion almost every day since I came here last fall as a transfer student and have read many letters on the subject of football ticket distribution. I can empathize with any junior or senior who has been sitting in the endzone for three years.

But for the record I don't feel Mr. Wilson's idea is all that fair, at least for those in the same boat as I. I don't wish to sound pretentious but not everyone is lucky enough to come right out of high school and come to A&M. In my case I felt the best way financially, and about the only way for me, to get a college education would be to join the service and take advantage of the GI Bill educational benefits which were in effect at that time. So I spent three years serving my country, and knowing I would be a few years behind others of my age, I went to night school and managed to enter A&M as a sophomore. Granted, I haven't "frogged" it here for one year but I feel I put in my dues. I'm sure there are other vets on campus in the same situation.

As for attending football games at all, last fall was the first time I have even attended a college game much less an Aggie game, which by the way is an experience in itself.

If the senate sees fit to adopt Mr. Wilson's idea I'll have no complaints for myself, as I don't usually go to many games anyway. But there are probably many vets who love to go to games. He asked for responses and I am complying with his request.

I hope this letter will give some ideas to Mr. Wilson and the senate.

—Allen A. Vajdos, '80

Thanks for nothing

Editor: To an anonymous "good Ag." This is to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for the kindness and courteousness which you bestowed upon me late last Friday eve. It is persons such

as yourself that so greatly reflect that rich tradition of thoughtfulness...one which sets students on this campus apart from any others in the world.

For it was you who, after unintentionally smashing into the left back side of my 1977 brown-on-brown Cutlass Salon (so deep is my admiration and respect for you that I toiled to save a small sample of the paint you so graciously deposited in the now existing crevice which is presently the back of my car), drove innocently away, without so much as a small note of apology or where I would be able to contact you to discuss our precarious dilemma.

How I only wish that I were able to meet face-to-face the fine and upstanding citizen responsible for this atrocity, and properly reward you for your actions. I only pray that someday you too will be able to attain that level of responsibility which would lead you to take credit for your deeds.

—James D. Thompson III, '80

Ladies deserve more

Editor: It seems that women's athletics has once again run into the "brick wall" as far as publicity and support is concerned. We are referring to the Texas A&M Women's Basketball team, our "supposed" yell leaders and the Battalion.

After Thursday's game in which the women played Southwest Texas, yell leader Joe Reagan's statement that the yell leaders were busy with studies is a poor excuse for a set of students who are part-time yell leaders. We totally agree with Coach Wanda Bender when she said that the three Corps members that led the yells at Thursday's game did a good job. It's good to see somebody care. It wouldn't bother us as much if school was even three weeks into the semester but "bogged" with studies on the fourth day of school is a weak and flimsy excuse for not caring.

The Battalion doesn't have a clean slate either. In Monday, Jan. 23, edition of the Battalion, there was an article about A&M men's basketball team's loss to Texas Tech but there wasn't even one word about the women's game against Tech. Although the

women lost, there are many of us who would still like to read about it.

Over the Christmas holidays, the women's basketball team played a tournament in Kansas. In that tournament one of the A&M players, Von Bunn, a guard, was named to a 10-man All-Tournament Team, an honor she obviously deserved.

Last fall, there were many accomplishments made by the women's teams at

A&M, that went unnoticed by the Battalion.

It really doesn't matter what anyone thinks or says, women's athletics at A&M is here to stay, and win or lose, the women tried and deserve some recognition and support.

—Rita Aguilar, '79
Carol Berry, '81

Slouch by Jim Earle



"EVEN THOUGH YOUR CIGARETTE IS NOT IN THE BUILDING, I'M NOT SURE THAT YOU'RE COMPLYING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW!"

Top of the News

Campus

Arts Society offers 'body' class

The Dance Arts Society is offering a men's body control and movement class from 7 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday nights. All classes stress muscle control and spend time on exercise. Registration is tonight at 7:30 p.m., room 226 G. Rollie White Coliseum. One can also join after classes have begun. Membership fee is \$15 a semester. For more information, call Marion at 693-3692, or Cindy at 845-6211 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) or 846-8516 (after 5 p.m.).

State

Selection begins in Torres trial

Jury selection has begun in Houston for the trial of four federal policemen charged with violating the civil rights of a Mexican American prisoner, who was beaten and drowned while in their custody last May. Former officers Terry Denson, Stephen Orlando, Louis Kinney and Joseph Janish could receive life sentences if convicted on the federal charges arising from the death of Joe Campos Torres.

Torres, 23, was arrested on a barroom complaint May 5. His body was found floating in Buffalo Bayou near downtown on May 8. Because the alleged violation ended in death, the defendants face possible life imprisonment if convicted. U.S. District Judge Ross Sterling announced the jury will be sequestered for the trial, which is expected to last at least three weeks.

Yarbrough tapes can be heard

A jury considering perjury charges in Austin against former Supreme Court Associate Justice Donald B. Yarbrough can hear tapes of a May 16 conversation in which Yarbrough discussed forging an automobile title and plotting the murder of a business associate, a judge ruled Tuesday. Prosecutors plan to use the tapes to show Yarbrough met secretly with John W. Rothkopf at an Austin motel — a meeting he denied during testimony to the Travis County grand jury — and to show he intended to deceive the grand jury by lying about the meeting. Yarbrough's defense attorneys admit he lied to the grand jury, but contended the tapes should not be admitted as evidence because they involved discussions of other offenses including forgery, conspiracy, attempted murder, tampering with evidence and aggravated assault.

Nation

Aides renounce Hughes will

Howard Eckersley, a personal aide to the late Howard Hughes, yesterday in Las Vegas, Nev. joined three other Hughes' attendants in renouncing any inheritance from the Mormon to demonstrate his belief the document is a forgery. Eckersley signed the declaration in the presence of a Nevada jury which will decide whether the Mormon document will be used to divide the industrialist's fortune. Under terms of the will, Hughes' aides as a group would receive one-sixteenth of his estate, or at least \$10 million for each aide after taxes, according to current estimates of Hughes' wealth.

No one hurt in airline crash

A Delta Airlines jet carrying 47 passengers and a crew of five skidded off a runway near Alexandria, La. and into a field yesterday at Esler Regional Airport, but none of those aboard were injured. Crews from nearby England Air Force base worked to free the DC-9 from four feet of mud and muck where it finished its slide, about 400 feet off the main runway. Delta canceled all flights through today and used buses to transfer stranded passengers to Baton Rouge and Shreveport. Royale Airlines maintained operations. The mishap was the second such incident on the same runway in less than a year. A Texas International flight from Houston with 17 passengers and a crew of three hydroplaned off the airport's main runway March 3, but no injuries were reported.

Park, 'untrustworthy witness'

With House leaders demanding Tongsum Park's testimony, Rep. Bruce Caputo, R-N.Y., the only congressman to hear his story so far, today called the Korean rice dealer "an eminently untrustworthy witness." Caputo, a member of the House ethics committee investigating charges of Korean lobbying on Capitol Hill, predicted that a good defense lawyer will "eat Park alive" in court. But also said he felt some sitting congressmen "quite definitely" were tied into an influence-buying scandal and will face disciplinary action if Park's testimony holds up.

Weather

Cloudy with occasional light rain during the morning. Decreasing cloudiness, windy and cold this afternoon. High today near 50, low tonight mid-20's. 20 percent chance of rain this morning. Winds from the north at 15-25 mph.

The Battalion

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