# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY** 

THURSDAY **JUNE 15, 1978** 

# The proposition

As the dust settles in California after the passage of proposition 13, the tax cut referendum, the shock waves are rolling across the country. Whether any city or state can just arbitrarily cut taxes by 60 percent and continue to function remains to be seen.

It should be obvious to lawmakers on all three levels of government city, state and federal - that the taxpayer is fed up with waste and inefficiency. How to translate these sentiments to specific actions is going to be a lot more difficult than just getting people to vote "against" taxes.

One cannot revolt against taxes on one hand and protest about terrible roads, inadequate police and fire protection, and second-rate schools on the other.

There is a middle ground to be sought between the extremes of revolt and extravagance with tax money. Every single appropriation, whether it's before the Board of Estimate and Taxation, the General Assembly or the Congress, must be weighed prudently. There is no room for experimentation.

There are other factors which must be considered, and the most important is inflation. Government, especially at the national level, does more to contribute to it than control it.

#### Norwalk (Conn.) Hour

California taxpayers have revolted, and the rest of the country is going to watch carefully the results of that revolution. With the overwhelming approval of Proposition 13, the Golden State voters cut their property taxes by 57 percent

Californians had seen those taxes triple and quadruple during the last five years. Many homeowners faced the loss of their homes because their property taxes were too high.

There have been gloomy warnings that the passage of the tax cut will result in closed schools and crippled public services since property taxes provide much of their financing.

Proposition proponents contend the cut will force government and public services to operate more efficiently. They deny the state's services will grind to a halt.

Everybody is watching to see which faction was right. Both sides probably will see some of their predictions come true. There will be reductions in services and schools will suffer. But government will cut out some of the fat and deadwood.

We may not see a taxpayers' revolt here, but no doubt there will be resistanvx xing the bill for an increasing array of public services and projects.

Huntington (W.Va.)Advertiser

# **Indochina on the brink**

#### By R. MUCHONTHAM

According to the UPI correspondent Joan Hanauer (Battalion, June 8, 1978), the CBS News Special on "What Hap-pened to Cambodia?" was frightening and thought-provoking. One couldn't have agreed with her more. It would be interesting to find out, how-ever, if one could, what kind of thought it has provoked among the viewers, if at all. But such-as one can see-would be an overly-burdensome undertaking.

There is no question that what is hap-pening in Cambodia is frightening. It frightens those who see it happen. It is also frightening, particularly to students of the Indochinese affairs, precisely because of the prospects that the whole Indochinese peninsula might one day be turned into a Cambodian-like situation with Marxist-Communist domination.

This is by no means new, ex nihilo apprehension. Most of us, although some may refuse to, remember John Foster Dulles and his Domino proposition. It would be interesting indeed if one could ask Mr. Dulles for comment and his feel-ing on the recent development in In-

dochina. But that is impossible. And, to the students of Indochinese affairs, no matter how great our apprehen-sion, if there is any, it can by no means be greater than that felt by those few remaining free Indochinese countries, who watch helplessly through their back doors the maniac atrocities committed daily by their new Communist neighbors and, ponder over the time when John Foster Dulles' apprehension will be fulfilled in Indochina. Now that is frightening

#### **Readers Forum**

Thailand, a case in point, is only a stone throw away from Communist Laos and Cambodia. The recent tidal waves of Communism which swept through Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia have given a treproportionate drop in morale among the country's top business, political and gov-ernment leaders. Their morale was so low, it was known at one point that almost everyone of them possessed an exit

This is understandable because in addition to the many problems which have burdened this fledgling country, the re-cent development has turned everything to the worst. Foreign investment in the country has dropped drastically. The already low subsistent per capita income is further strained by the influx of hundreds of thousand of refugees. And the country is now also burdened by constant border conflict with the Red Cambodians. If there is a single word to describe her outlook it

is certainly not hopeful. And if the future does not look bright for Thailand herself, it is certainly not bright also for the rest of free Indochina.

Thailand at the moment is the largest

end). Her friendly front door neighbor, Malaysia, as opposed to her fervent revo-lutionist back door neighbors who are ready to march through her door, is only slightly better off by perhaps \$300 per capita income above the Thais. At any rate, be that as it may, there is always hope even in the least hopeful situ-ation like this one. We hope that Thailand will solve her wretched social and eco-nomic situations in due time. Among her

nomic situations in due time. Among her priorities will be to solve the immediate refugee problem and on down the list. Only an economically strong nation can resist the Marxist and Maoist revolution-

ary fever which, we know, feasts on the poverty-ridden masses and the remaining free Indochinese countries are most vul-

nerable to it in this crucial time. The survival of Thailand will be the survival of the rest of free Indochina. We hope the floodgate will be strong enough eventually to stop Red tidal waves from spilling over and wash away what is left of free Indochina.

Muchontham is a graduate student in

# TOP OF THE NEWS H

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### CAMPUS

#### Adult driver education offered

The Safety Education Program at Texas A&M University will spon-sor an Adult Driver Education course during July. Four phases of instruction will be included: classroom instruction, simulation, multiple car and on-the-street instruction. The multiple car phase includes driving exercises in an off-street area. Cost for the course is \$50

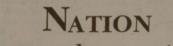
### STATE

### Bus company found negligent

The Texas Supreme Court Wednesday in Austin upheld a lower court decision finding a bus company negligent for ejecting a passenger who was killed by a vehicle shortly after the ejection. Lucille Lee sued Continental Trialways for negligently ejecting her father, Andrew Lee, from the bus. Lee was struck and killed about an houre later bus a vehicle near the location where he was let off the hour later by a vehicle near the location where he was let off the bus. The bus driver claimed he ejected Lee because the passenger was creating a disturbance.

#### No referenda power, no tax limits

With Texas voters unable to wield real power in referenda, it would be difficult for the state to adopt tax limits similar to Califor-nia's Proposition 13, says a state legislator. Sen. Walter Mengden, R-Houston, said that California's recently passed tax limitation mea-sure would never have been adopted if that state did not have the initiative and referendum method of enacting legislation.



#### Cuba may exchange prisoners

The administration is exploring an indirect offer by Cuba to exchange an American imprisoned in Havana for a Puerto Rican woman convicted of a 1954 terrorist attack on the U.S. Capitol, the Washing-ton Post reported Wednesday. U.S. officials are not certain about whether the offer has the full backing of the Cuban government. The Post said the White House is considering whether to have the state Department make direct contact with Havana on the matter, which comes in the midst of the increasing tension in U.S.-Cuban relations.

### Embezzler denied tax refund

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has refused to refund in-come taxes to a convicted embezzler for illegal money he returned to the government. The appeals court Tuesday said in New Orleans that Herman E. McKinney, who embezzled more than \$91,000 from the Texas Employment Commission in 1966, could not "be made whole tax-wise" for returning the embezzled money to the government.

#### Police kill dogs trapped in house

Police say they had to kill more than 20 German shepherd dogs trapped in a filth-caked house Monday in Flint, Mich., because officers feared for their safety. Authorities said another 12 dogs removed alive from the house also would have to be destroyed. Police were searching for the woman who owned the house who apparently aban-doned it several days ago. Authorities found the dogs late Sunday living in rooms packed with excrement. An animal control officer said authorities tried to capture as many dogs alive as possible.

#### Police brutality hearings slated

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission will hold police brutality hearings in Houston, where several officers recently have been indicted or convicted in prisoner deaths, a spokesman announced in Washing-ton Wednesday. The six-member fact-finding body which monitors civil rights in the United States has no enforcement authority. "Both the pros and the cons" of allegations against Houston police will be aired at the Texas hearings scheduled for Dec. 11 and 12, the spokesman said

World





# **'Protection from such protection'**

#### **By HANS-ULRICH SPREE**

BONN, WEST GERMANY-At the beginning of this year, legislation went into effect to shield German citizens against invasions of their privacy by computerized data banks.

A govenment spokesman hailed the new law as the most comprehensive in Western Europe. But a leading newspaper editor commented: "Heaven protect us from such protection.

This devergence of views underlines the difficulties that face West Germany and other modern societies as they strive to defend civil liberties in a world of increasingly powerful technol

THE QUESTION RAISED by the new West German law is whether the com-puter can be controlled completely-or whether, given its sophistication, any attempts to curb its use are necessarily going to be less than satisfactory. Thus the present legislation, while riddled with loopholes, may be better than no protec-

tive legislation at all. Under the law, known as the Federal Data Protection Act, government agencies and banks, insurance companies, mailorder firms and other private enterprises are forbidden to gather and store information on individuals without their permission.

#### FEEM

ion research. In theory, companies are not supposed to furnish each other with the credit rating of their customers.

In addition, firms that have collected and stored information are required to reveal it to individuals at their request and advise them how it has been employed. And now a company may not gather data on an individual without his authorization.

#### *Commentary*

According to the legislation, a special commission will report on the effectiveness of the law next January, after it has been in operation for a year. Already, the evidence suggests that its shortcomings will make it vulnerable to criticism.

For one thing, the provision that allows individuals to obtain stored data about themselves does not apply to information held by government agencies like the domestic intelligence sevice, the internal revenue department, the police, the public prosecutor's office and the criminal investigation bureau. As a consequence,

The law also restricts the sale of data on individuals and its use for market or opin-

CITIZENS CAN COMPLAIN to a socalled "computer ombudsman," Hans Peter Bull, a 41-year-old former law professor who was recently appointed to handle public objections to the system. But Bull and his 19 assistants function under the Ministry of Interior, which controls West Germany's federal security apparatus, and it seems doubtful that they are going to be entirely independent from

government pressure. Indeed, Bull took the job only after two other candidates rejected it, in part because they were uncertain about the degree of real autonomy they would enjoy. Meanwhile, there also appears to be

flaws in the data protection law's capacity to impose controls on the collection and possession of information by private companies.

For example, a private firm is under no obligation to divulge to an individual that it is holding personal data on him if that information was in its possession prior to passage of the legislation. The law is equally ambiguous regarding the matter of transmission of data from one company to another

It stipulates that information may be transmitted "if this does not curtail the interests of the person concerned." It does not specify, however, who is going to de-

by Doug Graham

cide whether the "interests of the person concerned" have been curtailed.

Presumably, this task is to be carried out by "information protection representa-tives" assigned to the staffs of all companies that have five or more employees involved in processing computer data. But these representatives, who are paid by the companies, seem unlikely to stand behind the consumer in a conflict with the firm. STILL ANOTHER WEAKNESS in the

law is its lack of jurisdiction over data banks that are based outside West Germany but can easily communicate information across the frontier. Even before legis-lation was passed, several West German firms dealing in credit information and other data set up branches in Switzerland and Luxemburg, and their computers are beyond the reach of this country's law.

These loopholes mirror the fact, of course, that there was intense lobbying by various government and business interests against the Federal Data Protection Act prior to its passage. The law itself, accordingly, is a compromise.

But it is bound to be amended and refined, and improved in the process. So it offers hope that the privacy of citizens may be better preserved in the future.

(Spree covers social issues for the Deutschlandfunk, a West German radio network.)

**Readers**'

Forum

Guest viewpoints, in addi-

tion to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' forum

• Limited to 60 characters per

should be:

line

• Typed triple space

• Limited to 100 lines

#### Coin collectors stampede bank

About 20 persons were injured in a stampede of 20,000 collectors trying to shove their way into the Bank of Korea in Seoul, South Korea, to buy commemorative silver coins, police said Wednesday Police said coin collectors began gathering at the central bank soon after the midnight to 4 a.m. curfew ended Tuesday to buy silver coins issued in commemoration of the 42nd world shooting championship to be held in Seoul Sept. 24-Oct. 5.

#### Zaire strike force to be trained

France and Belgium will train an elite 15,000-man strike force for Zaire, capable of carrying out hot-pursuit raids into neighboring countries, military officials said in Kinshasa Saturday. The special army unit eventually will replace the 2,700-man inter-African peace-keeping force now being flown in by U.S. transports and assembled to protect the country's troubled southern copper belt, the officials

### WEATHER

Partly cloudy and warm Thursday. Continued fair and mild tonight and Friday. High both days in mid 90s. Tonight's temperature in low 70s. Winds from south-southeast, 5-10 mph.

### THE BATTALION

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