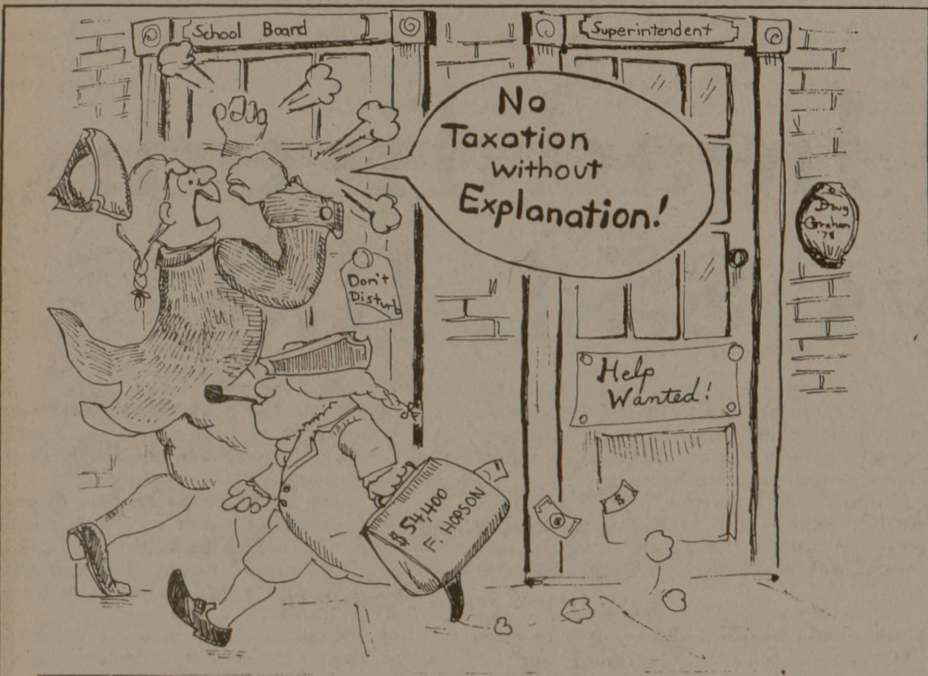


# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

WEDNESDAY  
NOVEMBER 22, 1978



## Explanation needed for costly decision

Board members for the A&M Consolidated school district could have more than a disgruntled superintendent relationship on their hands if better reasons are not given for the firing of Fred Hopson.

College Station taxpayers are faced with paying their superintendent of schools almost \$60,000 next year for not being their superintendent of schools. And that prospect has more than a few town's residents hopping mad.

The problem is not so much the firing of Hopson (the idea apparently has been in the works for weeks now). But the fact that the school board refuses to give an adequate explanation as to why it's worth \$54,400 to get Hopson out of office a year ahead of schedule is taxing the imagination and patience of many a taxpayer.

In a press conference announcing the dismissal yesterday, both Hopson and board president Bruce Robeck said the action was taken because the superintendent and board weren't able to work together.

Well obviously something would need to be done. But when \$54,400 of the taxpayers' hard-earned money is concerned, the district's administrative leaders should learn to iron out their differences.

As one caller to The Battalion said yesterday, the thorn Hopson thrust into the sides of the trustees must have reached almost criminal proportions to prompt such a costly dismissal.

If, in fact, the only problem was that Hopson and the board could not get along, we can see no justification for this expensive solution. It would be silly to think that the board would bow out at such a price for such a flimsy reason.

The only logical conclusion is that there must be more to this story. If there is, the taxpayers who will have to finance this action have the right to know why they are paying something for nothing. And if trustees are spending \$54,400 of everyone's money because they really can't work out personality differences in an administrative job, then it's time to start looking around for more fiscally minded candidates when the school board elections come around again.

—J.A.

## Loans no way to buy public office

By DAVID S. BRODER  
FORT WORTH — Bill Clements has just become the first Republican governor in Texas' history after a campaign in which he lent his own organization upward of \$3 million. His victory has not only altered the political landscape but revived an issue which will be loudly debated over the next few years:

Should a rich man be allowed to "buy" public office by pouring millions of his own money into his campaign?

Let it be noted, quickly, that Clements is not unique, or even unusual, in employing his wealth for political self-aggrandizement. Outgoing Gov. Dolph Briscoe (D), a shy rancher who often seemed ill at ease in politics, compensated for his handicap by his readiness to reach for his checkbook to pay for campaign bills.

In this year's Senate races, more than a dozen candidates made six-figure loans or gifts to their own campaigns, without which they would not have been viable contenders.

Not all of them bought victory. Briscoe was defeated for renomination here in Texas, and the losers' list from the Senate primaries and general election included such other heavy self-investors as Bob Short of Minnesota, Alex Seith of Illinois, Jane Eskind of Tennessee, Luth H. Hodges, Jr., of North Carolina, Phil Power of Michigan, and three Virginians, Clive DuVal, Carrington Williams, and Rufus C. Phillips.

All of these losing Senate aspirants were Democrats, which may prove the Republican claim that Democrats really are careless with the dollar.

But there were also some notably successful self-subsidized candidates like Clements and new senators Bill Bradley (D) of New Jersey, John W. Warner (R) of Virginia, Alan K. Simpson (R) of Wyoming and Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R) of Kansas. They join a Senate that already includes more than 40 millionaires, one of whom, Pennsylvania Republican H. John Heinz III, loaned \$2.6 million to his 1976 campaign — none of which has been repaid.

Such examples make many people angry, but it is not clear what can or should be done about it. Congress legislated limits on candidates' contributions to their own campaigns a part of the 1974 election law revision — \$25,000 for a House race and \$35,000 for the Senate. But the Supreme Court threw that provision out, saying, "The candidate... has a First Amendment right to engage in discussion of public issues and vigorously and tirelessly to advocate his own election."

That decision has been the subject of much criticism, but its logic is not that easy to reject. The rationale for limitations on campaign contributions is, generally, to avoid the corruption of a public official's judgement by those to whom he is financially obligated for his campaign treasury. But no one would argue the Clements or the other self-subsidized candidates compromised their own independence by contributing heavily to their own campaigns. Quite the contrary.

The case against people of wealth financing their own races for office rests, instead, on an egalitarian notion that everything should be even-stein in politics, if not in the rest of life. But that is an unrealistic ideal. Candidates differ in their fame, their looks, their charm, their intelligence, their eloquence, their experience, their reputations, and their political allies.

### Commentary

Money is one resource in a campaign — but only one — and it can be used to enhance these other advantages or compensate for other deficiencies. As the earlier examples show, it is no guarantee of victory.

While the court was wise to strike down the limits on self-subsidy of campaign expenses, it missed an important distinction between loans and outright contributions. Some candidates, like Heinz, never bothered to seek post-election contributions to pay themselves. But others, like Briscoe, have done so repeatedly.

And that raises a serious problem. The people or groups that give money after an election — when there is no risk — are almost always people who have a particular interest in ingratiating themselves with that officeholder. Giving a "campaign contribution" to the winner of the last election, who instantly uses the money to repay himself, is, as Fred Wertheimer of Common Cause has said, "coming awfully close to the bone" on the distinction between a campaign contribution and a personal payoff.

Rich folks who want to pay their own way in politics should be allowed to do so — but only by contributions, not loans. If they want the excitement of victory, let them take the risk of financial as well as political losses.

Rather than trying to legislate a ban on self-subsidized campaigns in the face of the Supreme Court decision, the next Congress could more usefully address itself to the changes in the campaign finance law that really would make elections more competitive and fair.

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# TOP OF THE NEWS CAMPUS

## 10th annual Turkey Trot at A&M

The 10th annual Turkey Trot Thanksgiving run will be held Thursday at Texas A&M University. The event, sponsored by Texas A&M's Health and Physical Education Department, will begin at 8 a.m. in front of G. Rollie White Coliseum. No entry fee will be charged and participants do not need to register in advance. The 3.1-mile run will be routed around the Texas A&M Golf Course. Participants will receive certificates at the end of the run, and there is no age limit for entrants. "The emphasis is on non-competitive running or walking for people of all ages," said John Chevrette, run coordinator.

## Commencement speakers named

Robert R. Herring, chairman and chief executive officer of the Houston Natural Gas Corp., and Herb Reynolds, executive vice president of Baylor University, will address Texas A&M University graduates at commencement ceremonies Dec. 8 and 9. Officials expect about 1,800 students to receive graduate and undergraduate degrees at the two ceremonies, which will be held at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 8 and at 9 a.m. Dec. 9, both in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Lt. Gen. James V. Hartinger, commander of the 12th Air Force, headquartered at Bergstrom Air Force Base, will be the commissioning officer at the program for Corps members entering military service. The commissioning is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Dec. 9, also in G. Rollie White Coliseum.

# STATE

## Harris County ballot recount

A recount of ballots in Harris County will begin Wednesday because no notice was given of an official vote canvass made two days after the Nov. 7 general election. Harris County commissioners earlier had maintained recount requests by defeated senatorial candidate Bob Krueger and gubernatorial candidate John Hill were useless because they were made after the official canvass. The recount will involve only voting-machine ballots. A state district court ruling is required to recount punch-card ballots. "I don't anticipate any changes," said J. Lindsey, county commissioner. "We can get this done and we can certify who the governor is."

## Clements discusses major issues

Governor-elect Bill Clements met Tuesday with Speaker Bill Clayton to discuss tax reduction, appointments and major issues of the 1979 Legislature. Clements planned similar meetings with other state officials to smooth the way for his inauguration in January as the state's first Republican governor in 105 years. When asked about problems his administration will face, Clements said, "The biggest single item and the one most difficult for us to get into is the budget. Clements hinted, but would not say definitely, that Briscoe might leave some vacancies on state agencies so Clements could fill them with appointees of his choice."

## Hughes change of venue sought

Attorneys for the state of California Tuesday urged a federal judge to transfer continuing litigation over the estate of Howard Hughes from Texas to Denver or Los Angeles. The California lawyers argued Texas jurors would be prejudiced in considering the case by the prospect of the state collecting \$150 million in estate taxes. Texas Attorney General John L. Hill personally argued against the California motion for change of venue and petitioned to require 22 potential Hughes heirs to be included in the proceedings. Thomas said extensive publicity given the Houston court proceedings and the recent unsuccessful campaign by Hill for governor would make it difficult to obtain a fair trial in Texas.

## Laws on booze ads may change

The government said Tuesday it wants to revise its 40-year-old regulations covering the way beer, wine and liquor may be advertised to American consumers. Among other things, it wants to find out whether booze ads based on sex appeal fall under a ban against "obscene and indecent" advertising. Another area which may be revising, it said, is the current ban against the use of comparative advertising. After receiving comments on the questions it raises, the bureau will decide whether to propose new advertising rules. The regulations were originally adopted in the mid-1930s and have remained basically unchanged since that time, the agency said.

# WORLD

## America to import Chinese oil

Coastal States Gas Corp. Tuesday said an agreement signed last week with the People's Republic of China will make Coastal the first American company to import Chinese oil. "Coastal regards this landmark contract as a significant new development in the company's worldwide oil operations," said Chairman Oscar Wyatt Jr. "We are highly honored to be chosen as the first U.S. importer of crude produced in the People's Republic of China." The oil is low sulfur, light gravity oil, produced from the Taching Field in Northeastern China. Wyatt said. It will be loaded aboard Coastal tankers at Talien harbor for transport to Coastal's refinery at Hercules, Calif.

## Bus explosion injures Syrians

A powerful explosion ripped through a busload of Syrian peacekeeping soldiers Tuesday as it was passing through the mountain town of Aley, police sources said. No accurate casualty figures were immediately available, but initial reports from the town 12 miles east of Beirut said the bus was full and that a number of soldiers had been killed or wounded. It was not immediately clear if the explosion was caused by a bomb placed inside the bus itself or in a car near the bus at the time of the blast. The Syrians have been involved in major fighting with rightist Christian militias since the end of the 1975-76 civil war.

# THE BATTALION

LETTERS POLICY  
Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

Address correspondence to Letters to the Editor, The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77842.

Represented nationally by National Educational Advertising Services, Inc., New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday from September through May except during exam and holiday periods and the summer, when it is published on Tuesday through Thursday.

Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester; \$33.25 per school year; \$35.00 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Address: The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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## Dolly may never simulate baby again

By DICK WEST  
WASHINGTON — Just in time for Christmas, there's a unique new toy on the market called "The Magnificent Doll."

Its magazine advertisements, which are a little hard to believe, claim that "Our dolls don't walk, talk, eat or do embarrassing mechanical things."

Sensing this might be the beginning of a trend, I paid a visit to The Future Is Yesterday Foundation, a privately endowed "think tank" and research center.

Although the foundation is not specifically involved in developing new playthings, I figured the director, Sam Harkenback, would know what was going on in the toy world.

I put it to him straight. "How does a doll that doesn't walk, talk, eat or need potty

training work?"

Harkenback smiled mysteriously. "The technical details are a trade secret. About all I can tell you for publication is that the achievement was the usual combination of genius and hard work."

### Humor

"The first big breakthrough, on which some of our engineers acted as consultants, was the design of a non-crying doll. It was incredibly realistic.

"To look at it you would never guess that if you picked it up and turned it over it wouldn't go 'Ma-Ma.'"

I shook my head in wonderment. "It's

amazing what modern technology is capable of. That one feature alone could be revolutionary enough to dominate the Christmas doll business."

"The non-crying doll merely proved the principle that made the rest fall into place," Harkenback continued.

"Once we had stifled the audible part of the doll's cry, the next big step was to stop it from shedding tears. Otherwise, it would appear the doll was silently weeping, or else had hay fever.

"From that point on, it was just a question of time before walking, talking and eating also could be eliminated."

I said, "What about diaper wetting?"

"If you can do away with moisture from a doll's eyes, it's obvious that dampness

elsewhere also can be halted," he replied.

I told Harkenback I recently saw a television commercial touting a doll that could be made to simulate diaper rash.

"Will it be possible in the future to produce dolls that don't break out with diaper rash?" I asked.

"That's a toughie," he admitted. "At the moment we don't know enough about the causes of dolly diaper rash to know whether we can eradicate it. However, I have every confidence that some day we shall overcome."

Before leaving, I solicited an estimate of how far the new trend in dolls might go.

"I would say," he replied thoughtfully, "that the outer limit might be a doll that could be put on its back without its eyes closing."

## Letters to the Editor

### Class of '91 supports the team

Editor: The fourth grade at Henderson Elementary School was asked to give their predictions for the up-coming A&M-TCU game.

The class came up with the following possible headlines for the Sunday paper:

- Aggies bomb TCU 69-4
- Aggies throw away TCU

- Aggies throw watermelon at TCU
- Aggies beat TCU 99-3
- Aggies stomp TCU 52-0
- Reveille eats Horned Frogs

Beat the class of '91 out of TCU.

### Slouch by Jim Earle



— 33 fourth graders  
Miss Judy Skivanek (teacher)  
Lee Maverick, '81 (teacher-aide)

### Closing off study

Editor: TAMU has some outstanding facilities; Sterling C. Evans Library could be considered among these. A pity that it isn't used to its utmost.

Considering that the library is probably the prime spot for students to study, it seems that it should respond to this important function to its reasonably utmost capability. Instead the library closes at 6 p.m. every Saturday evening. This has hurt and bewildered countless numbers of students who want and need to use the library at this time.

The question is — why?

If it is because "all university libraries do that," then I am surprised to learn of A&M's desire to follow — not lead. If it is because the library lacks the personnel then the university should use part of its massive income towards hiring more.

There is no excuse. It can only serve to lower the calibre of learning and academic quality at Texas A&M University.

—Jim Landwehrmeyer, '82

### Monthly gripes

Editor: In regard to Mr. Lane's latest of many previous publications (Letters to the Editor, Battalion, Nov. 20), I have several questions to direct to him:

- (1) Do you file periodic complaints to God when it rains?
- (2) Do you curse when the sun comes up in the morning?
- (3) Do you complain when the MSC bells ring on the half hour?
- (4) Do you have to express your discontent at everything?

I have suffered through your periodic once-a-month complaints to the editor concerning people waking you up for working on bonfire (publication number 3), the Robert Harvey grade escapade (publication number 5), your description of 18-year-old CT's with 9-year-old mentalities (publication number 7), discourteous attitudes by participants of intramural games you have refereed (publication number 8), philosophies of head football coaches (publication number 9), etc.

I look forward each month to see what you will next find wrong with this university and its students in your attempts to alienate yourself from as much of the student body as possible.

In conclusion, I must warn all TAMU students that Mr. Lane is sitting by his television in his usual observant somber state waiting for someone or something to next complain about.

His sole ambition in life is to empty his ballpoint pen and use up his typewriter ribbon. Please try not to give him any reason to further develop his inherent tendency toward literary platitude.

—Randy Markel, '79