

# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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## Carter ready for mid-term conference

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — There was a time when the White House feared that the Democratic Party's mid-term conference, scheduled for Memphis this weekend (Dec. 8-10), might be the birthplace of a dump Carter movement. But that danger disappeared when Camp David froze his potential challengers in their tracks.

There was a time when the White House feared that the Memphis mini-convention might turn into a monster gripe session, with dozens of defeated Democratic candidates and officeholders descending on the scene to blame their losses on Carter and his policies.

But that danger was diminished by the modesty of the losses the Democrats suffered in last month's election, and by the fact that the President and his aides did all in their power to save those few Democrats who were defeated.

With the dangers of political revolt and post-election recrimination effectively removed, there is really only one question on which Memphis can possibly shed some light. That is how much, if any, resistance Carter will encounter as he reshapes the

Democratic Party's domestic agenda from its traditional emphasis on social programs to a new priority for anti-inflation spending cuts.

The President is dispatching about 100 top White House and agency officials — to Memphis — at their own expense — to defend his programs to the 1,800 or more grass roots delegates who are expected there. The one whose work is most critical to the turnaround Carter is attempting is James T. McIntyre, Jr., the director of the Office of Management and Budget.

While the delegates are packing their bags for Memphis, McIntyre and his budget aides are busy in Washington feeding memos to the President to counteract agency appeals from cutbacks in social programs. OMB has ordered these cuts to meet Carter's goal of reducing the fiscal 1980 budget deficit below \$30 billion.

Public service jobs for the hard-core unemployed and for jobless youths will be reduced by the OMB edicts. So will federal spending for health, education and alternative energy research. Many other programs will be forced to absorb the impact of inflation without increases in their current

funks. If Carter backs the McIntyre decisions — and there is every reason to believe that in most instances he will — the budget submitted in January probably will be the tightest in terms of real-dollar growth of domestic programs that any President has proposed since the Eisenhower years.

Carter's judgment is that this is exactly what the voters want in a time when persistent, high-level inflation has eroded the value of the dollar and jeopardized most families' ability to manage their own budgets.

The question is whether the constituencies of the Democratic Party that have traditionally fueled the demand for expanding domestic programs are now prepared to accept Carter's judgment and priorities.

There are important groups of Democrats — the mayors, the minorities, the unions, the teachers and the elderly — who want more from government, not less. All of those groups will be represented in Memphis.

But the advance prospect is that if they want to challenge the changed direction of the administration, they will have to do it

on their own. Most of the elected officials who have been spokesmen for their causes in the past will either be absent from Memphis or muzzled by the fairly restrictive mini-convention debate rules.

The notable exception is Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), who is coming to debate the case for national health and White House aide Stuart Eizenstat and Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

But Kennedy's stay in Memphis is expected to be brief, and his dissent is likely to focus on that one issue.

For the rest, the opposition is being organized by people on the fringes of the Democratic Party: by socialist author Michael Harrington and his "Democratic Agenda" movement, and by community organizer Wade Rathke and the loose-knit coalition of community groups which calls itself ACORN.

If the dissent is confined to those quarters, there is little doubt that the budget-cutting philosophy will remain dominant in Carter's remodeled Democratic administration.

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## Democratic Leader Byrd takes the test

By CHERYL ARVIDSON

WASHINGTON — Republican gains in the Senate will put Democratic Leader Robert Byrd's talents as a compromiser to their sternest test if any change is to be made in the Senate's ability to stop bills from being talked to death.

The filibuster is a time-honored tool whereby minority opponents take to the floor to talk at length to block legislation from coming to a vote, regardless of whether the bill has enough votes to pass.

To deal with the filibuster, the Senate in 1917 adopted a procedure — known as cloture — to limit debate and schedule a final vote if two-thirds of those present and voting want to end the talkathon. The two-thirds requirement was changed to 60 of the 100 senators in March 1975.

once again. However, Howard Baker, the new Republican leader, rallied his GOP forces to hold firm against any change.

Although there were only 38 Republicans at that time, they voted as a bloc and got enough help from conservative southern Democrats to wage an unbeatable filibuster. Byrd was unable to muster the necessary 60 votes to invoke cloture and finally had to pull the proposed rules change off the agenda so the Senate could move on to other business.

In the November elections, Senate Republicans gained three more seats and reached a total of 41. If Baker can keep his forces solid again, the GOP alone has more than enough votes to stop a cloture vote on any proposed change in the filibuster rule and kill the rules reform effort.

If Byrd wishes to close the loopholes and end the "post cloture" filibuster, he will have to strike an acceptable deal with Baker. In 1976, Byrd's best efforts at compromise could not satisfy the minority, which is always edgy about its debate rights, and Baker has even more bargaining chips this time.

Ironically, the real loser if Byrd and Baker fail to reach an agreement on a change in the cloture rule will be the Democratic process.

This whole system of government is based on a majority vote. In the Senate, that means 51 votes should pass a bill. The present rules are being used to effectively force that figure to 60 for controversial legislation — the number of votes needed to invoke cloture — and even that fails to guarantee a final vote.

If the "post cloture filibuster" is allowed to rage with no constraints, the American public will find that a determined handful of senators could block even the most broadly supported piece of legislation before the Senate.

Opponents argue the "extended debate" of a filibuster is needed to stop bad legislation. Byrd's reply is terse:

The way to stop bad legislation is to put it to an up or down vote and let the majority rule.

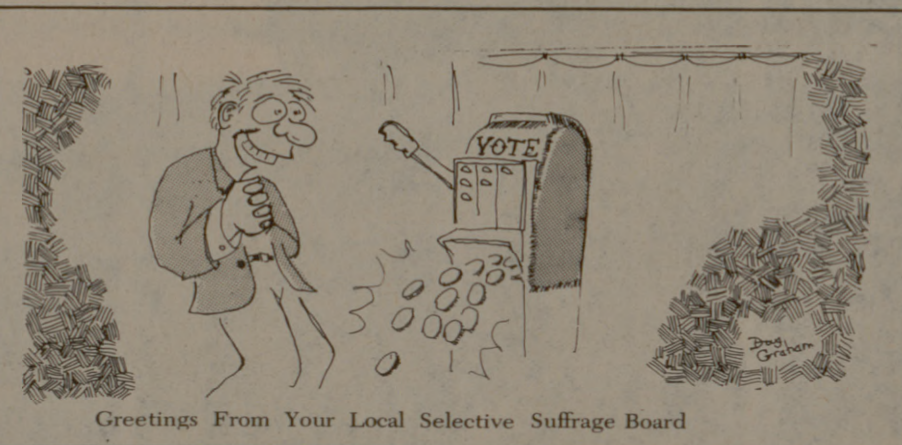
### Washington Window

The concept behind cloture is simple. After the Senate agrees to a motion to shut off debate, the bill in question becomes the sole business before the Senate and each senator is limited to one hour of additional talking time. Eventually, the opponents will use up their allotted time and when no one else wants to speak, the bill gets its long-awaited final vote.

But in recent years, the late parliamentary genius Sen. James Allen, D-Ala., found a way to keep cloture from doing what it was intended to do if opponents were really determined to stop a bill.

Allen became the architect of the "post cloture filibuster," taking advantage of loopholes in the cloture rule that fail to include in a senator's one-hour talk limit the time consumed by quorum calls and roll call votes on procedural or substantive motions.

When Byrd became Senate Democratic leader in 1976, he tried to close loopholes in the cloture rule to make the Senate's debate-limiting procedure meaningful



## Tax credit voting

By DICK WEST

WASHINGTON — Campaign spending, according to post-election computations, hit new peaks in this year's congressional races.

Yet the turnout at the polls remained deplorably small, again representing less than 40 percent of the eligible voters.

The lesson here is clear: we can no longer leave it up to the candidates themselves to arouse the electorate enough to go to the polls.

Although big spenders may be able to buy enough votes to beat their opponents, lavish outlays evidently have little impact on suffrage per se.

In other words, while a well-financed campaign may influence the way some voters who vote vote, it provides no balloting stimulation for voters who don't vote.

If, as many political scientists believe, present voting patterns are inimical to the democratic process, something should be done to provide more voting incentive.

I've been giving this matter a lot of thought and may have the answer.

As every taxpayer knows, presidential campaigns are now financed from public funds that we consign to that purpose on our income tax forms.

So why not take this process a step beyond and use the tax form to encourage voting?

Specifically, why not allow a tax credit for

taxpayers who exercise their franchise in national elections?

Tax loopholes have become America's most powerful motivating force. They can induce people to insulate houses, contribute to charity, drink three martinis at lunch and otherwise behave in ways that are counter to their basic natures.

People, in short, will do almost anything for a tax break — maybe even vote.

What I'm proposing, in effect, is a reverse poll tax. Whereas some of us once paid taxes for the privilege of voting, we would now collect refunds for taking the trouble.

The size of a tax credit necessary to incite majority voting would have to be determined at congressional hearings.

In the tales of vote-buying that I've heard, \$5 was a frequently mentioned figure. But that money went to people who probably would have voted anyway.

The concept of rewarding someone for the act of voting, rather than for voting for a particular candidate, presents an entirely new statistical challenge.

It will be argued, no doubt, that anyone who won't vote without tax incentives doesn't deserve the right to vote. I look at it this way:

Voluntarily voting is our most precious heritage and is worth preserving at all costs. For if the tax credit fails to flush out the slackers, the alternative may be a voter draft.

### Letters to the Editor

## Dorm activity fee needs challenging

Editor:

How just is a mandatory activity fee? If you live in a programmed hall, you are required by your dorm to pay an activity fee. This fee is applicable to social, educational, recreational, and other activities.

Are you aware that the fee, although mandatory by your dorm, is not required by the University? We have recently become aware that there is an option in this matter. If you feel, as we do, that one should have the right to pay and participate or the privilege not to pay and not participate, then direct your grievances to your dorm council. Organize a group of fellow residents with similar grievances, and present your opposition to this "representative body."

We feel certain from past experience that we are not alone in opposition to this fee. Organized opposition cannot be ignored.

— Cherri Marsh, '79  
Carloyn Kresta, '79  
Mitzi Micheli, '80  
Linda Roderick, '80  
Stephanie Moy, '79  
Vickie Tenhet, '78

### Uniformed voter

Editor:

Hey class of '82, are you satisfied with the representatives you have elected? What? You say you don't know you have any? Well you are not alone. The election was barely publicized, the responsibilities of office were unknown, and some of the candidates did not even show up for their speeches.

As a freshman this year I have had to

adjust to many new experiences. I have learned about dorm living, organizing time, and what not to eat in Sbsa. But I do not know what a freshman senator is much less what his duties are.

Why not form a group to gather information on the candidates stating their proposed projects and listing their responsibilities. This pamphlet would inform the voters. It would also create fair and intelligent voting by reducing those votes based solely on popularity or good looks.

Voter apathy is bad when the people are informed. Blame is to be placed elsewhere when no information regarding the candidates is available.

— Sandie Winnie, '82

### Readers' Forum

Guest viewpoints, in addition to Letters to the Editor, are welcome. All pieces submitted to Readers' forum should be:

- Typed triple space
- Limited to 60 characters per line
- Limited to 100 lines

# TOP OF THE NEWS CAMPUS

## Account statements won't arrive

Bill Lancaster, Texas A&M University budget and payroll services manager, announced that faculty statements of account from the teachers' retirement system in Austin will not be available this semester because of a paper strike. The statements are normally distributed in November of each year. Lancaster said he does not know when the statements will be available.

# STATE

## Tower election results certified

Final tabulations made Thursday by the State Canvassing Board in Austin certified the election of Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, over Rep. Bob Krueger, D-Texas by a 12,227-vote margin. The canvassing of the Nov. 7 U.S. Senate election had been delayed because Krueger's staff had conducted a recount of the close race. That recount had not changed the final figures too much from the first preliminary count where Tower led by about 12,000 votes.

## Olson to head insurance board

Rep. Lyndon Olson Jr., D-Waco, was appointed Thursday by Gov. Dolph Briscoe to head the State Board of Insurance in Austin. Olson replaces Hugh Yantis whom Briscoe had appointed after the resignation of Joe Christie last year. Yantis was forced to step down when the senate failed to confirm his appointment during the special legislative session.

## Elsie the cow may be in trouble

Borden, Inc. and a San Antonio milk marketing plant recently came under fire when the companies refused to open their business records to Agriculture Commissioner Gil Dozier. He said the association between the two companies was being investigated for possible anti-competitive practices. The San Antonio company, Southern Milk, had just become the marketing representative for Baton Rouge area dairy farmers. Dozier questioned a board member of Southern Milk about measures that might protect farmers against extensive use of their milk to produce cheese and other dairy goods that bring the farmer a lower price than milk sold in liquid form. He also questioned its anticipated \$1.2 million yearly earnings in Louisiana and the possibility that farmers would have to pay additional charges for the shipment of surplus milk to distant markets. He added that he may request an order compelling the company to disclose the business records.

# WORLD

## Smoke damages Notre Dame

More than 200 Montreal firemen brought under control a fire Thursday that gutted a chapel and for a while threatened the Notre Dame church, a landmark in the city's old quarter. Parish priests say the church was damaged by smoke and six inches of water on its floors. It will be closed to tourists and worshippers for at least a week pending a full assessment of damages. District Fire Chief Lucien Seque said an arson squad would be called in to investigate the cause.

## Oil prices to go up next year

Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani has reported that members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries have "agreed not to freeze oil prices at the Dec. 16 Abu Dhabi meeting" and that oil prices will go up next year. He mentioned no figures, however OPEC states say prices will probably be raised by 5 to 8 percent at the Abu Dhabi conference with an increase to be implemented gradually.

## Propaganda charges defended

South African President John Vorster Thursday opened an emergency session of parliament by defending the government against charges it secretly spent \$73 million for propaganda purposes including a pro-government newspaper and a chain of black movie theaters. He insisted that South Africa was simply countering the unconventional methods of its "enemies" with unusual methods of its own. He conceded to the packed Assembly that because the funds were not debated publicly, the government "realizes that a heavier responsibility than usual rests on its shoulders to ensure that the special funds are used to the best possible advantage and with the greatest responsibility." Vorster added that if allegations that the government is using the funds to further its cause, then "action must be taken against the bodies and persons concerned."

# THE BATTALION

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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.

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