

"Although I can appreciate your fondness for taxidermy, don't you feel that we might give it a lower priority?"

**OPINION**  
**From Russia with...**

President Jarvis Miller is home — and with more, we suspect, than souvenirs from Europe.

Gov. Bill Clements says the agricultural trade mission was a success.

Some of the deals that were made or discussed on the trip will probably involve Texas A&M, enriching both the University and the foreign nations.

One other benefit, however, may not be so apparent. That is the political pay-off.

In addition to Miller, regents Clyde Wells and Norman Moser — agricultural leaders in their own right — accompanied the governor on the tour.

A university president and two regents are rarely able to spend three weeks with the governor in such close quarters.

This is just speculation, of course, but Miller may have been playing catch-up as he was touring Russian wheat fields.

Texas A&M and Jarvis Miller — then director of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service — had a good friend while Dolph Briscoe still had the governor's chair.

When he was defeated in the 1978 Democratic primary by John Hill, A&M's leaders switched their support to the new man.

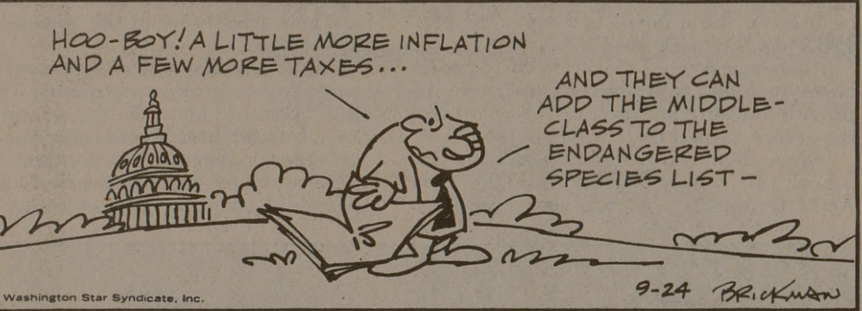
But he was the wrong new man. Clements squeaked by Hill and took the mansion for the Republicans, for the first time since Reconstruction.

And A&M's leaders were without a good friend in the governor's office. They still had powerful allies, of course, in the Texas and U.S. legislatures. But the executive branch is a fertile field to cultivate, especially since the governor can veto whole university programs on his whim.

And so this three-week tour becomes more important. One A&M official said, in fact, that it was very valuable politically.

We don't doubt it. Welcome home, Dr. Miller.

the small society by Brickman



**THE BATTALION**

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**BRODER** Talmadge was denounced, not censured, Ethics Committee acts as Senate umpire

By DAVID S. BRODER  
United Press International  
WASHINGTON — What is so admirable about the Senate Ethics Committee is that it handles the little cases and the big ones with equal aplomb.

There were headlines across America last week when the Ethicsmen decided to recommend that Sen. Herman Talmadge (D-Ga.) be "denounced" for his use and abuse of Senate funds.

Some people thought he should be "censured" and others thought he should be "condemned," but after 15 months of deliberation the ethics committee was unanimous in saying that "denounce" was the appropriate verb form for the category of impropriety in which Talmadge was involved.

The clarity of the committee's judgment came as no surprise. Ten days before the big decision on the Talmadge case, the Congressional Record included a compilation of 92 recent ethics committee rulings, which cumulatively constitute perhaps the best display of ethical non-equivocation in America political history.

Non of the cases had the human drama of Talmadge's ex-wife's testimony about the suit pockets overflowing with currency. But several of them had their own fascination.

Interpretive Ruling No. 236 of last March 19, for example, will go into the annals as "a page is a page" doctrine of almost poetic purity.

In its post-Watergate ethics fervor, the Senate decreed, among other things, that franked (or postage-free) newsletters should not be mere propaganda pieces about the senator distributing them. For that purpose, it set a limit of five "personally phrased references to a senator per page."

That seems straightforward enough. Even the dumbest senator can count to five, so its application appeared to be easy. But wait. Some crafty senatorial mind spotted a loophole and inquired cleverly: "What is the definition of a 'page' for purposes of the personal reference rule?"

The source of the inquiry is shielded in anonymity, but the reply has been published now for all the world to admire. It is a pleasure to quote:

"The committee has determined that a 'page,' for purposes of the limitation on the number of personally phrased references to a senator in a franked mailing, is each side of an 8 1/2 x 11 inch, or 8 1/2 by 14 inch sheet of paper, irrespective of the number of folds utilized in the design of the matter mailed. Thus, if a newsletter is on a legal-size sheet of paper and has print on both

sides, it would be a two-page newsletter for the purposes of the franking regulations, even if the paper were folded to resemble a four-page pamphlet."

Fold it as you will, the committee told Senator Anonymous, there can be only ten personally phrased references to yourself on that kind of paper. It was an admirable opinion, reminiscent in its logic of Abraham Lincoln's favorite anecdote about how many legs a dog would have if you called its tail a leg. But the committee buttressed its holding by noting that "this interpretation is in accord with the definition of a sheet of paper used by the Committee on Rules and Administration for purposes of members' paper allowances," which seemed to put down anybody who might be inclined to quibble.

Consistency, thy home is in the Senate. And virtue's, too. Since the Senate got seriously into ethics coding a couple of years ago, the committee has issued no less than 242 of these interpretive rulings. They seem to come out at the rate of one every three days, as often as one can expect an assemblage of 99 men and a woman to generate an ethical quandy. The ethics committee has a staff of 18 to keep up with the work.

They call the issues as they see them, just as good umpires are supposed to do. A

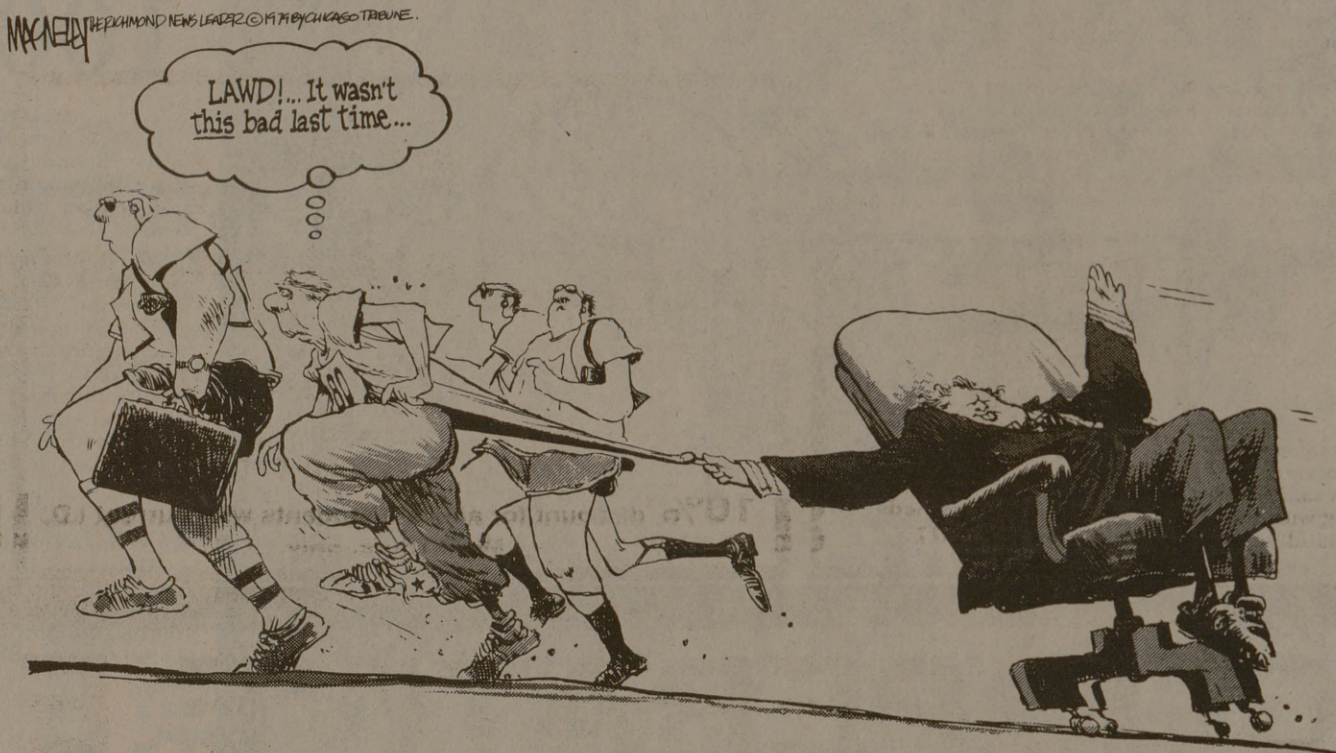
Senate employee was given a go-around for taking travel expenses and an honorarium from a foreign organization in connection with a seminar on unemployment, the committee told firmly that an expenses-paid trip on the weekend immediately preceding the seminar would be permitted.

Weekend real-estate selling was also out of line for another employee. Talmadge was told that he could not have a senator-boss write a book in his name. The provided the book was not on sale in the in which the senator was up for election.

There are all sorts of fascinating details being drawn by the senate's ethics experts. One of the new rulings permitted a senator to draw royalties on recordings he made, which will bring joy to the fiddle-playing majority leader, recording star, Sen. Robert C. Byrd (W. Va.).

If I read that ruling right, there is nothing to bar Sen. Talmadge from going on a fiddle playing tour with a few other fiddle players together and recording a self-singing, "I've Got Those Downs Dumps-Cause-I've-Been-Denounced-And-I-Might-As-Well-Be-Dead-Blues."

But that's just my reading. If Talmadge wants to be safe, he ought to study Interpretive Ruling No. 243. (c) 1979, The Washington Post Co.



**The asylum key-keepers have become the inmates**

The flap over Russian troops in Cuba is another example of what happens when grown men try to make sense out of nonsense.

It is nonsense to believe somebody didn't know before two weeks ago that Russian troops were in Cuba, particularly when public officials have made it perfectly clear somebody did.

It is nonsense to say the United States

can enforce Salt II if its intelligence system was, as some contend, so inept that it couldn't detect the presence of 3,000 Russian combat troops 90 miles from Florida.

It is even more nonsense to believe it really makes any difference whether Russian troops are in Cuba or not when the Soviet Union is perfectly capable of annihilating the United States with long-range missiles.

It is nonsense to believe SALT II will significantly advance the cause of nuclear disarmament when the U.S. is planning to build an MX missile system not covered by SALT II and which can only encourage the Soviet Union to build similar missiles.

It is nonsense to take U.S. or Russian politicians seriously when they have all become trapped in their own web of deceit, pretending nuclear disarmament

progress is being made even though stockpile nuclear arms and troops are increasing.

The keepers of the keys to the asylum have become the inmates and doubt it yet. The only thing the rest of us can do is hunker down and hope somebody will rescue them before it's too late.

Barre-Montpelier (Vt.) Times-Argo

**LETTERS** Amino acids don't explain the complexity of life only an intelligent creator could build

Editor: In a recent article (Sept. 11), Dr. Ponnamperna claimed that his discovery on amino acids, which termed he termed "seeds of life," on meteorites proves that life is at least 3.8 billion years old. The question is, however, just how close to life are these "seeds"?

Dr. Richard B. Bliss, former science consultant for Educational Consulting Associates, states the following in regards to the combination of amino acids into proteins:

"There are 20 different kinds of amino acids, and the average protein consists of 300-500 such units in a chain. The number of possible proteins with only 200 amino acids per chain 20 to the 200th or 10 to the 260 (the number 1 followed by 260 zeros)! The whole known universe contains far less than 10 to the 100th atoms and 20 billion years is far less than 10 to the 20th seconds. So even if these proteins were as numerous as atoms in the universe, and even if a new set of proteins were produced every second for 20 billion years, the chances of finding our particular protein with 200 specified amino acids is still about zero (1 chance in 10 to the 140th)!"

The Russian biochemist, A.I. Oparin, who is the "father" of the modern view of chemical evolution, was very conscious of this problem when he wrote:

"...the spontaneous formation of such an atomic arrangement in the protein molecule would seem as improbable as would the accidental origin of the text of Virgil's Aeneid (a Latin epic poem) from scattered type."

When considering that this type is still dealing with just the proteins (one step above amino acids) one can only be

amazed at the complexity of an entire gene. Impossible is almost too mild a term for such an event, and living systems require much more than one gene!

The only sensible alternative for the "organization" of such a complex entity as a cell, (and evolution even claims the entire universe evolved) is that it must, as all machines, art, music, etc., has an intelligent Designer and Creator. If one would seriously consider the tremendous amount of scientific information which supports the case for special creation, I am sure that they would come to the same conclusion: It takes intelligence to design; irrationality only leads to further irrationality.

—Gary L. Campbell, '76  
Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 17 other signatures.

**No film politics**

Editor: In response to Mehmet Sahinogulu's letter of September 20, we would like to express our views on MSC Aggie Cinema's programming. We attempt to bring the students and faculty of Texas A&M University quality movies at a low price. MSC Aggie Cinema chooses its films largely on the basis of box office performance, favorable reviews, and popular demands. Through devices such as student survey polls and committee member input, we try to select a wide range of films which would satisfy various tastes. While "Midnight Express" dealt with sensitive subject

matter, we presented it as entertainment and not as political or cultural comment.

—Christine Smith  
—Andy Hartman

**Just 1 thing to do**

Editor: To Lenwood S. Adams, '80: Who are you to judge?

—Tony Jennings

Editor's note: The above refers to a letter printed in The Battalion Sept. 20 concerning homosexuals in the church.

by Doug Graham

