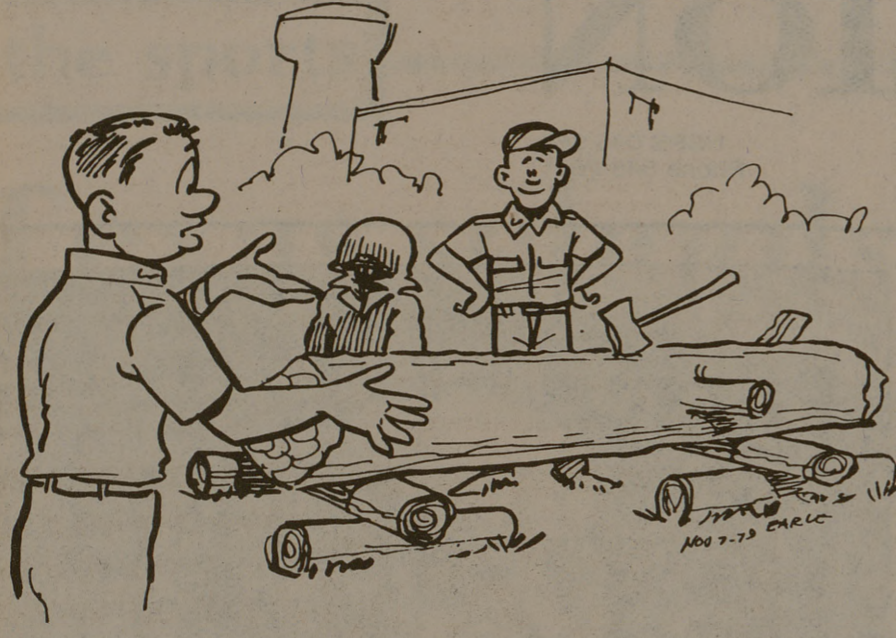


SLOUCH by Jim Earle



"No one told you that campus trees were ineligible for the bonfire?"

OPINION

Lots of energy?

Too many wine makers produce vinegar, as the saying goes, and the same may be happening with America's energy policy in Congress.

As of last week, 888 bills wending through Capitol Hill applied to some part of the energy problem.

In the House of Representatives, 83 committees and subcommittees have their fingers in the energy pie. Every eligible congressman belongs to at least one of the committees.

But one congressman, Rep. Jerry Patterson, D-Calif., is trying to whittle down that list of committees. He has begun four weeks of hearings before his "Committee on committees" to see if the House should have one or two supercommittees on energy.

Usually that sort of proposal does not pass, since nobody wants to give up his little bit of power. But this time, because of the emergency nature of the problem, the whittler may get more support.

We hope he does — because more heat than work is being produced with all that energy on Capitol Hill.

Keene (N.H.) Sentinel

Politics not like sports

Increasingly — especially since the advent of television — presidential races have taken on many of the aspects of spectator sports. Candidates work up game plans and strategies designed to win primaries and caucuses and eventually "the big one" in November. And all too frequently, the media — and, once again, especially television — dwell endlessly on these tactical elements, pushing aside all-important matters of substance.

This politics-as-sports reporting is at least silly, and it could eventually pose a threat to our democracy. For, despite all the similarities, politics are really not like sports at all.

In sports, when the winner is declared, it's all over. In politics, when the winner is declared, that's just the beginning. It behooves self-governing citizens to find out who we are electing, not just how they intend to get elected.

by Brickman



THE BATTALION

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VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 7, 1979

ANALYSIS Child custody decisions in France have not caught up with divorce law

By FRANCOIS DUPUIS
International Writers Service

PARIS — Germain Ravera, a construction worker here, is currently going through his fifth trial on the same charge. He refuses to return his 10-year-old son to his former wife, who was awarded custody of the boy after their divorce.

A banal affair, to be sure, but one among many similar cases that underline the extent to which France, in contrast to other modern nations, has been unable to adapt easily to social changes.

Divorce has been traditionally rare in France, partly because of the influence of the Catholic Church, partly because the family was considered sacred, and partly because the rights of women to reject their husbands were limited. In recent years, however, old practices have disappeared.

The law, responsive to new attitudes, has become more flexible. And divorce, while not as frequent as in the United States, is no longer a taboo. Last year, for example, one out of five French couples divorced.

But despite this shift, the courts still regard divorced fathers as unfit to raise their

children. As a result, wives are awarded custody of kids in 85 percent of divorces. Moreover, more children are sent to institutions or put in the care of grandparents than are given to their fathers.

A growing number of men are beginning to argue that the claim of women for equality ought to carry with it the possibility for divorced fathers to keep their children. They point out, among other things, that the large proportion of women who work are no better qualified to care for kids than their former husbands.

In typical French fashion, these men have even formed an association, the Paternal Condition, to lobby on their behalf. They have so far registered little progress, however.

The police are reluctant to get involved, since they find that fathers deprived of their children often react violently when threatened. Besides, cops here hate to intrude into family squabbles.

Judges, on the other hand, tend to be tough. Last year, for instance, they sent 400 divorced fathers to jail for violating the custody decisions. The Ministry of Justice estimates, in addition, that several hun-

dred men fled the country with their kids last year rather than obey court rulings.

One judge here defends his usual inclination to give the custody of children to their mothers on the grounds that he is only conforming to the social consensus. As he puts it:

"Society believes that a mother whose child is taken away from her is a bad woman, and her reputation is therefore damaged. A father deprived of his kid doesn't suffer the same opprobrium."

On the contrary, men who fight to keep their children face serious battles, even when the kids themselves plainly express a desire to stay with their fathers. Such has been the experience of Germain Ravera, the construction worker whose trials have been dragging on for months.

Ordered to live with his mother, Ravera's son Pascal fled home and hitch-hiked 150 miles to rejoin his father. The mother formally charged her ex-husband with kidnapping the boy, and the police arrested Ravera.

During an initial hearing last year, psychiatrists testified that the child ran the risk of mental trouble if he remained with

his mother. But the judge returned to his mother, calling on Ravera the "pursuit of his illusions."

But Ravera defied the verdict now on trial again. He could be sent to as much as a year in prison.

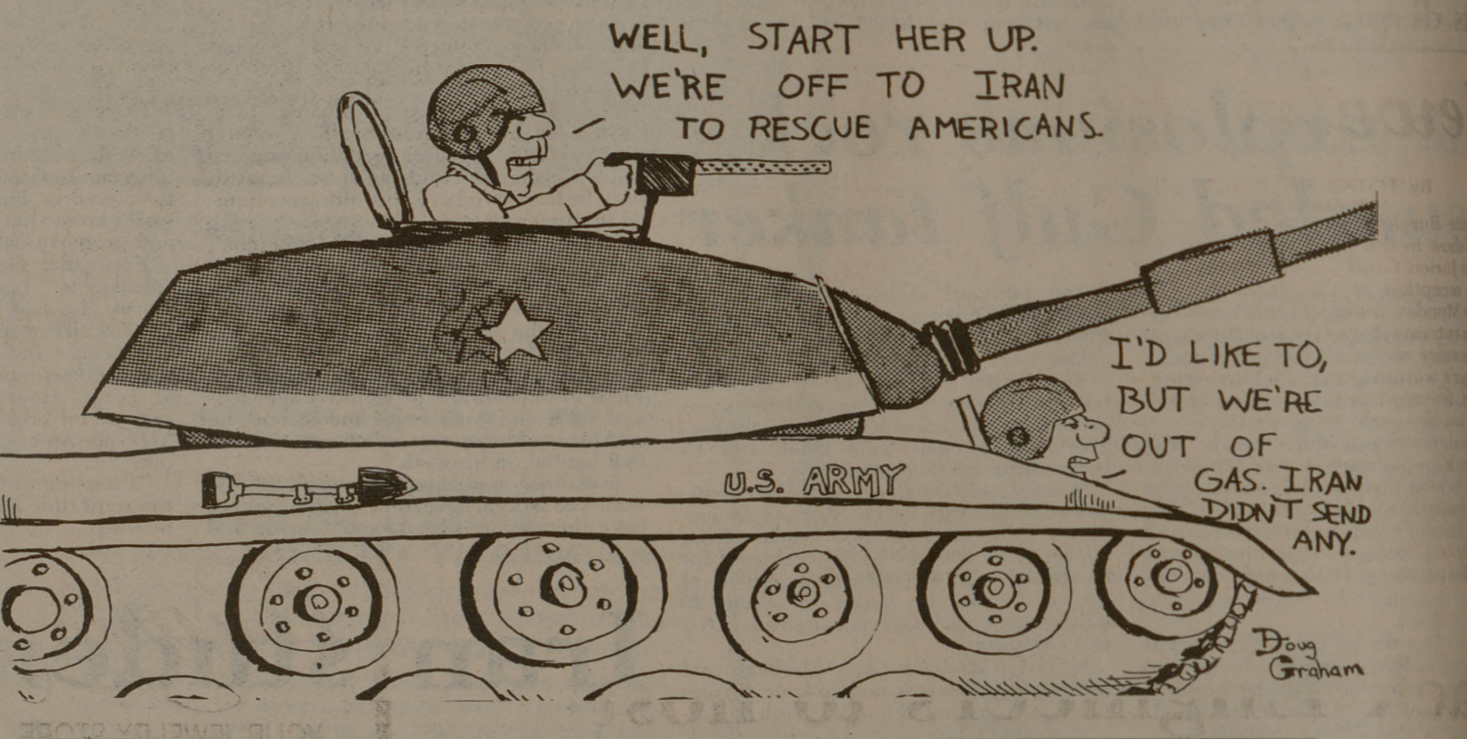
The publicity given Ravera's case lately focused the spotlight on dramatic cases, like that of Roger, who killed himself a couple of years ago because he feared that his son would be taken from him.

Most disputes between estranged bands and wives over children are national, though.

All this indicates, then, that custody decisions have not yet caught up with the divorce laws, largely because of tradition and marriage are viewed as sacred.

This emerged not long ago in a man who murdered his ex-wife to allow him to see their son. The problem, the prosecutor said, is that fathers can breast-feed them, be given to their mothers — like it or not.

Dupuis writes on social issues for *Nouvel Observateur*, the French



DICK WEST Could illnesses such as 'authoritis' be the cause of our national malaise

WASHINGTON — When President Carter lamented last summer that America was gripped by a "national" malaise, he didn't seem to know for sure what was causing it.

Well, if you can tell something is wrong but can't quite put your finger on it, a good place to look is on health insurance forms.

Permit me to introduce Norman Johnston, senior claims examiner for Tolley International Corporation, which administers some 1,200 employee benefit plans.

In the course of processing insurance claims, Johnston has encountered all sorts of mysterious maladies. Twenty years ago,

he started writing them down, and has now compiled a list of more than 250 ailments completely unknown to medical science. I recently arranged to inspect the collection and found that most of the entries apparently have no bearing on the malaise Carter spotted. I think, for example, that we can dismiss "impounded feet," "erotic bowels," "Cologne trouble" and "gastrik dizzy stress." The poor devils who mentioned those afflictions on their insurance claims undoubtedly had cause for distress, but they sound more like one-shot infirmities than the roots of national malaise. And the same goes for "serious liver."

However, a few of the insurance ail-

ments definitely qualify as the sort that could lead to malaise. For one, "blabbar trouble."

Anytime the country experiences an outbreak of "blabbar trouble," particularly in the CIA and other high places, malaise is likely to be close behind. "Protestant trouble," which presumably spread to American from Ireland, also could be a contributor, as could "authoritis."

Although I'm no doctor, I can recognize "authoritis" as an acute form of "blabbar trouble" that frequently strikes former government officials who then write gossip books about their erstwhile colleagues.

Although all of these ailments are suspect, a more probable cause of national

malaise is "science trouble" and "national sociology of the eyeball."

You need only consider the waste material to see how "science" can make you feel bad.

As for "information of the gobs and di almost nothing is more malaise-al program than reading a newspaper full of information, of which there are plentitude this year. Still others to inflation as the prime cause of which may mean that "removal of gous gland" is the only cure. "gland" surgery sounds rather dreary. But it certainly beats a "operation."

LETTERS Theft victim buys back own books, urges others to report losses quickly

Editor:
I live in a north dorm and eat in Sbsa Dining Hall. I often go into dinner and leave my books on the table near the entrance with all the other books and bike packs.

On Thursday as I left Sbsa, I couldn't find my three engineering textbooks that I had left on the table — however, my three notebooks were in the same spot that I had left them 15 minutes earlier. I thought someone had mistaken my books for theirs and would return them to the table the next day.

Saturday morning I realized that my books were obviously lost and I needed to get some other ones. I went to all the bookstores in Northgate and finally found some used books for two of my classes at the University Bookstore. Before I bought the books, I looked inside and they were my own books with all my class notes and scible marks!! I was horrified that a fellow Aggie could so calmly make a "quick buck" at the expense of another Aggie.

I had to buy back my two books for \$39 — when I had paid \$44 for them only eight weeks earlier. The bookstore acknowledged that this has occurred several times this semester. They also have a list of stolen books so they can try and confiscate these books before buying them back. This way they can call the book's owner and return them.

Please, let's try and find some way of stopping this ring of "book thieves." Also, let's tell people to report their stolen books to all the bookstores as soon as possible so the stores won't buy back the stolen books. Maybe this will help people get their books

back without paying for them again like I had to!
— Mary Ann McStravick, '80

Frat says thanks

Editor:
The Brothers of Sigma Chi wish to thank all of the Aggies for their support of our recent Fiesta Party.

The behavior of the exceptionally large crowd at the Starlight Ballroom was excellent and made us proud to be Aggies. We sincerely hope all of those in attendance

enjoyed the festivities as much as we did. Sigma Chi was happy to be able to bring the quality entertainment of Morning to A&M, and the group was equally pleased to perform for the Ags. We hope to be able to bring talent of equal caliber in the future. Thanks again Ags, see you at the Derby Day Dance in the spring.

— Chuck Stark
President, Sigma Chi

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 112 other signatures.

Freedom found

Editor:
Thursday afternoon during the 12:30 class break I was around Hall and listened to a guy sharing public Jesus Christ.

I think it's good that we have here in America to say openly and believe religiously, politically, etc.

A good example of the First Amendment.
— Grant Bart

THOTZ by Doug Graham

