

# SLOUCH by Jim Earle



"I'm getting encyclopedias, I belong to all of th' book clubs, I have been signed up for at least 50 magazine subscriptions. If I ever find out who did this to me, I'll kill him!"

# OPINION

## Abscam: so what else is new?

Politicians work hard at perfecting their graft. Instead of being able to relax like everyone else, these men and women have to work hard. To be elected, they have to give a lot of speeches, eat strange foods and kiss babies. After they're elected, they have to work even harder. They have to legislate, give more speeches and worry about re-election. In theory, politics is good, hard work. However, a lot of politicians have a hard time doing their jobs, and apparently, a few of them even have a hard time being honest. But everybody knows that. We expect politicians to be dishonest. The honest politicians are the ones to worry about. Figure that one out. Political shenanigans like Abscam, Brilab, Watergate, and Teapot Dome surprise no one. If that's the case — and it is — the news about congressmen and state politicians accepting bribes from undercover FBI agents probably isn't worth mentioning. All these investigations prove is that politicians deserve the public's mistrust. So, what can be done? Nothing. Unfortunately, a better political system hasn't been developed yet. The only solution I can offer is to keep voting the crooks out of office until we can get it right. This is an election year.

## the small society by Brickman



Washington Star Syndicate, Inc. 2-19 Brickman

## THE BATTALION

USPS 045 360

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Address correspondence to Letters to the Editor, The Battalion, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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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# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY  
FEBRUARY 19, 1980

## Kennedy's 'victory' in Maine is like a dog playing checkers

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK

United Press International  
The classic shaggy dog story is about the man playing checkers with a cocker spaniel in the park.

A passer-by stops and expresses admiration for the intelligence of the pooch. The man looks up with irritation and says, "Heck, he's not so smart. I beat him three out of four."

The recent Maine Democratic caucuses brought that story to mind. President Carter got 45 percent of the vote; Sen. Edward Kennedy 39 percent; Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. 14 percent.

Kennedy, who got beat 2-1 in the Iowa caucuses last month and trailed by 19 points in a poll released before the Maine caucuses, called the outcome "a virtual dead heat." His chief Maine supporter, Gov. Joseph Brennan, said Kennedy had won "a great victory."

Jody Powell, speaking for Carter, noted somewhat acidly that where he came from, winning required coming in first. He added: "If Kennedy can't win in New England, where can he win?"

Kennedy's comeback, in the face of dire predictions, was a feat as remarkable as teaching a dog to play checkers. But it still was a second place effort, and some might consider it even more noteworthy that a Southerner, president or not, could beat a Kennedy in New England.

Actually, there was more at stake in Maine than the order of finish in the voting. A little recent history is in order.

Six months ago, Carter was at rock bottom in the polls and Kennedy was way up. It was assumed that if the Massachusetts senator challenged the president, he would be able to get a fast start by winning the early primaries and caucuses in New England.

That expectation was reversed when Carter's poll ratings boomed and Kennedy's slumped late in 1979 and when the president beat the senator in the Florida straw votes and the Iowa caucuses. The polls showed Carter ahead in Maine and New Hampshire. There was speculation about Kennedy quitting.

By beating the point spread, Kennedy managed to transform a potential disaster into a respectable defeat. If he didn't have to beat Carter in Maine, he certainly could not have sustained another 22-point loss. So it is not completely illogical that a 6-point loss looked like a tie to the senator and victory to Brennan (whose political credibility was on the block even more than Kennedy's).

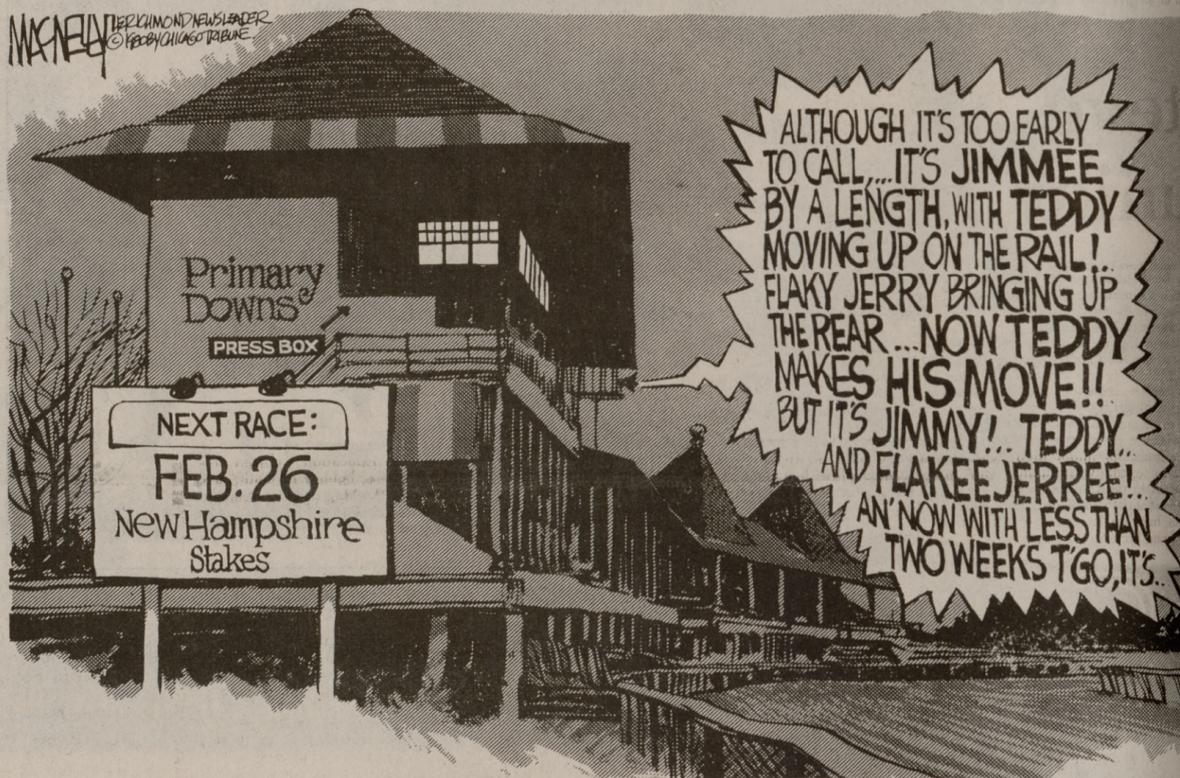
But Kennedy has two problems, one of which needs solution in the next couple of weeks. There have been a lot of changes in U.S. politics in recent years, but candi-

dates still are expected to have a substantial power base, a constituency will back them against all comers.

So Kennedy really needs to do better, in New Hampshire next week, the very least in Massachusetts. But that he does have a New England base, it would be hard to see how his campaign would be regarded as anything but dead.

The second Kennedy problem is the basic purpose of the caucuses — to divide national congressional delegates among the candidates. The date who gets the most votes gets the delegates; the candidate who gets the delegates gets the nomination.

So Kennedy has to start beating Carter in some of the primaries. If he does, he can't win the nomination. And that's the checker game is all about.



## Carter needs to end exile in White House for sake of 1980 campaign

By DAVID S. BRODER

It has been evident for some weeks that President Carter's decision to reject personal, public participation in the campaign for the Democratic nomination as long as the American hostages remain in Tehran is detrimental to the policy dialogue the public wants to hear in an election year.

But now it is becoming that his self-isolation is also damaging to him and to his presidency. The best evidence of that was the Wednesday evening press conference, which mixed serious discussion of substantive domestic and international issues with some exceptionally rough political invective in a manner that was disconcerting and, yes, divisive.

Perhaps, if we are fortunate, the hostages will be released soon and Carter can do what he is plainly eager to do — go out and campaign for renomination. But if that does not happen, the President really needs to take another look at his pledge to abstain, for it is hurting him politically,

frustrating him personally and exacerbating the divisions within the party and country that Carter says he is anxious to contain.

The questioning of the President at his first televised White House press conference in over two months was exceptionally pointed — and Carter was in very good form in his replies. On issues ranging from draft registration and energy prices to Yugoslavia and the defense budget, he gave the kind of answers a presidential press conference ideally ought to provide — clear insights into the tone and direction of the Chief Executive's thoughts.

In that respect, it was a model of what a press conference ought to be and a reminder that the country is deprived of something valuable when there is such a long interval between these sessions.

But when Carter was asked political questions about Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's campaign criticisms of his foreign policy, a different, jarring note entered the proceedings. The President unloaded on

his challenger a series of verbal blockbusters that seemed out of place for a man so assiduously devoted to national unity.

Let there be no mistake: I am too old to be shocked when one politician says another is guilty of exaggerations, misrepresentations and plain falsehoods. And Carter, in my judgement, had every reason to take umbrage at Kennedy's harsh attacks on his conduct of foreign policy.

The senator's contention that the seizure of the hostages was the "predictable" consequence of the admission of the Shah to this country for medical treatment carried the ugly implication that American sanctuary is subject to veto by any mob of militants that might be affronted by an act of compassion.

His claims that Carter dragged his feet on negotiating the release of the hostages or was oblivious to the Russian threat to Afghanistan are equally open to rebuttal.

But the place for those rebuttals is the same place from which the attacks came —

a campaign platform, not a White House press conference. To unleash such a tirade from a presidential forum, to live on all four networks, when there is no comparable opportunity for rebuttal to use the White House as a protected base from which the President can "pet-bomb" his political challenger.

Carter is entitled to defend his policy the length and the pitch of voice at a White House press conference. But the rebuttal into the compass of a conference answer invites the kind of generated and divisive rhetoric which, in fact, employed.

It would be far better for the President for the office and for the country if he ended his self-imposed political exile and make his campaign speeches from a stump — not from White House press conferences.

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## THOTZ



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