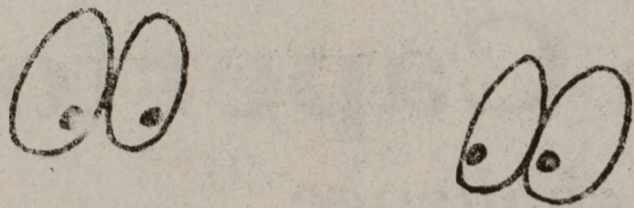


SLOUCH by Jim Earle



EARLE
MARCH 1-80

"You're right. Both of us need to get some sun."

OPINION

Iran should be taught lesson

No one should be surprised that Ayatollah Khomeini, the religious fossil leading his people in a return to the Dark Ages, has rejected the release of the U.S. hostages until at least May.

The drastic decision by Khomeini to cut off the United Nations places the direct responsibility on President Carter, who thus far had taken little action to achieve any solution save one arrangement of dialogue after another.

There are those who believe Carter is milking a good political opportunity with little intention or resolve to make a tough decision. What happened to the economic and military blockades?

The latest comments of the president mean the situation is grave. That's a real bulletin, especially to the hostages.

We have had enough of inaction which, if Carter holds true to form, will continue through a new series of delay tactics as the Democratic campaign in the United States continues to roll along for the president who says nothing and does little.

Martinsburg, W.Va., Evening Journal

the small society

by Brickman



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

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VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY
MARCH 21, 1980

German political parties in debt despite government funding

By WOLFGANG WAGNER

International Writers Service
HANNOVER, West Germany — Here, as in the United States, voters go to the polls in the fall to choose a federal government. And here, too, the major political parties are confronted by the problem of financing their campaigns.

West Germany's parties are so deeply in debt that, were they businesses, they would have long ago been forced to declare bankruptcy. It is doubtful, indeed, how they will get through this election year.

At the end of 1978, according to their own disclosures, the ruling Social Democrats headed by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt were to hock to the tune of \$21 million. Their principal adversaries, the Christian Democrats, owe some \$17 million to their creditors.

The insolvency of the parties is due largely to the fact that they are almost constantly engaged in elections of one kind or another — and campaigns cost money.

The federal legislature is elected every four years, but each of West Germany's states renews its parliament during that period, and there are also numerous municipal and other local contests.

In contrast to the United States, where individual candidates raise a large proportion of their own campaign funds, politicians here are heavily underwritten by

their parties, whose coffers are supposed to be filled by the dues paid by their members.

Party dues are calibrated to the incomes of members. But nearly all party members declare less than their real incomes in order to keep their contributions down to a minimum. As a result, the parties cannot collect enough to cover expenses.

In the past, the parties had also relied on private contributions. But this practice has been discouraged by a legal ruling as well as by an investigation, still going on, that was triggered by that decision.

In 1966, the West German equivalent of the Supreme Court severely curbed the tax deductions that could be taken for donations to political parties. This judgment was based on the court's opinion that unlimited deductions favored the Christian Democrats, whose supporters tend to be richer than those of the Social Democrats.

A couple of years ago, however, it was discovered that the Christian Democrats had been doing that decision through the device of a dummy company, created by a well-known businessman, that was acting as a channel to funnel money into the party treasury.

Though the case has not yet been fully probed, its revelation has aroused suspicion that all the political parties are resorting to similar subterfuges. One consequ-

ence has been that donors, fearful of having their ledgers examined, have simply cut off gifts to the parties.

In 1976, for example, donations to the Social Democrats roughly totalled \$20 million. By 1978 they had dropped to less than \$500,000.

Under new laws passed since the court rulings, the government has been subsidizing the parties, both by furnishing funds for elections campaigns and by awarding a premium of \$2 for each vote a party musters.

This arrangement has benefited the parties to some extent. During the election for the European Parliament held last June, for instance, the parties curtailed their expenditures but received the same government subsidies they would have gotten for a domestic political campaign. Thus they were able to pay off some of their debts.

But in the big election campaigns, such as the one now unfolding for next fall's national contest, government subsidies are insufficient.

Another innovation that is helping the parties is a law under which they can claim funds from the government for the "social and democratic political education" of citizens. They have established foundations for this purpose, and their total subsidy last year amounted to about \$40 million, with the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats sharing the major portion of

the sum.

It is no secret, however, that the government has been subsidizing the parties to a certain percentage of their "national" subsidy into campaigns. Among other things, they use to woo West German voters.

Even so, the debts are piling up. The parties here maintain practical organizations that are run. Every town and village has many has its party offices at least one full-time employee salary.

Faced by rising costs, parties are strenuously seeking new sources of money. They have been successful in persuading the Court to contemplate an increase in deduction for donations. But the deduction, now being considered, is not being considered.

So, as the current election gathers momentum, West Germany receives a paradox. Through its aid to the country into one of the world's poorest economies. Their political system, however, simply ends meet.

(Wagner, editor of the daily Allgemeine Zeitung, writes on affairs in West Germany.)



Readers' Forum

Hong Kong club active on campus

By CAROLYN ADAIR

The Hong Kong Club is one of the oldest and most active recognized student organizations. The club has contributed to the University community both through individual activities and by being one of the most active in the International Student Association and to International Student Week.

During the last four years, the Hong Kong Club and its members have received seven certificates of appreciation from the International Student Association for outstanding contributions.

Food is always a specialty of the club. For every International Student Association food fair and banquet in the last three years, the Hong Kong Club has prepared about one-third of the food. In the 1979 International Student Association Food Fair competition, the Hong Kong Club fought off strong competition from the Thai Student Association to win the first place.

Along with promoting contact among our members, the club helps to build friendship with Chinese students at other schools. With a few exceptions, the Hong Kong Club sponsored or coordinated

almost every interschool sport meet and party between the Chinese students at Texas A&M and the Chinese Associations of Texas Women's University, the University of Texas, the University of Texas at Arlington and the University of Houston and Rice University. Their dance group performed for China Night events at the University of Texas, University of Houston and Sam Houston State University.

Besides providing services and organizing activities for club members, the Hong Kong Club tries to bring an insight of the Chinese culture to the school and commu-

ity through displays, speakers and

During the two years, they put on cultural displays. After a co-sponsorship show, "Capture the Spirit of the Hong Kong Club," the MSC Committee was attracted by the culture and beautiful scenery of Hong Kong.

The Chinese student members have contributed much to the international sphere of the Texas A&M campus. Carolyn Adair is Director of Activities for Texas A&M.

By Doug Graham

THOTZ

