

"Now that we're not going to the Olympics, the world will never know whether or not I could have won the high jump."

OPINION

Primary system is a farce

This was to have been the year when the American presidential election was elevated to hitherto unattained eminence. Thirty-five states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico — roughly double the number of a dozen years ago — scheduled primaries. Relative newcomers were going to have a real shot at the big prize. And the national debate was to reach a level commensurate with the massive problems confronting the United States. What a dream! What a comedown! Barely into April, the races have been resolved. Jimmy Carter once again will carry the Democratic colors. The GOP standard bearer, barring some wholly unexpected development, will be Ronald Reagan. Neither fits the image of presidential greatness. What went wrong? The winners in early primaries establish momentum and become favored wards of the print and electronic media. The new politics makes it possible for an inexperienced, issues-ignorant nobody to come out of nowhere and win on the strength of a slick set of slogans. And maybe to win again. Or for a fading, issues simplifying somebody to do the same thing. Our standard of quality is no longer based on past achievement or future promise as much as it is cumulative success in the primary process itself. The losers are sunk without a trace. Between now and 1984, Americans must devise a nominating system that can produce better choices.

The Denver Post

the small society by Brickman



THE BATTALION

USPS 045 360

LETTERS POLICY
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.
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.
United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it. Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved. Second-class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

MEMBER
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Congress

Editor Roy Bragg
Associate Editor Keith Taylor
News Editor Rusty Cawley
Asst. News Editor Karen Cornelison
Copy Editor Dillard Stone
Sports Editor Mike Burrichter
Focus Editor Rhonda Watters
City Editor Louie Arthur
Campus Editor Diane Blake
Staff Writers Nancy Andersen, Tricia Brunhart, Angelique Copeland, Laura Cortez, Meril Edwards, Carol Hancock, Kathleen McElroy, Debbie Nelson, Richard Oliver, Tim Sager, Steve Sisney, Becky Swanson, Andy Williams
Chief Photographer Lynn Blanco
Photographers Lee Roy Leschper, Steve Clark, Ed Cunniss

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editor or of the writer of the article and are not necessarily those of the University Administration or the Board of Regents. The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting enterprise operated by students as a university and community newspaper. Editorial policy is determined by the editor.

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY
APRIL 15, 1980

With issues confusing voters, candidates may win on charisma

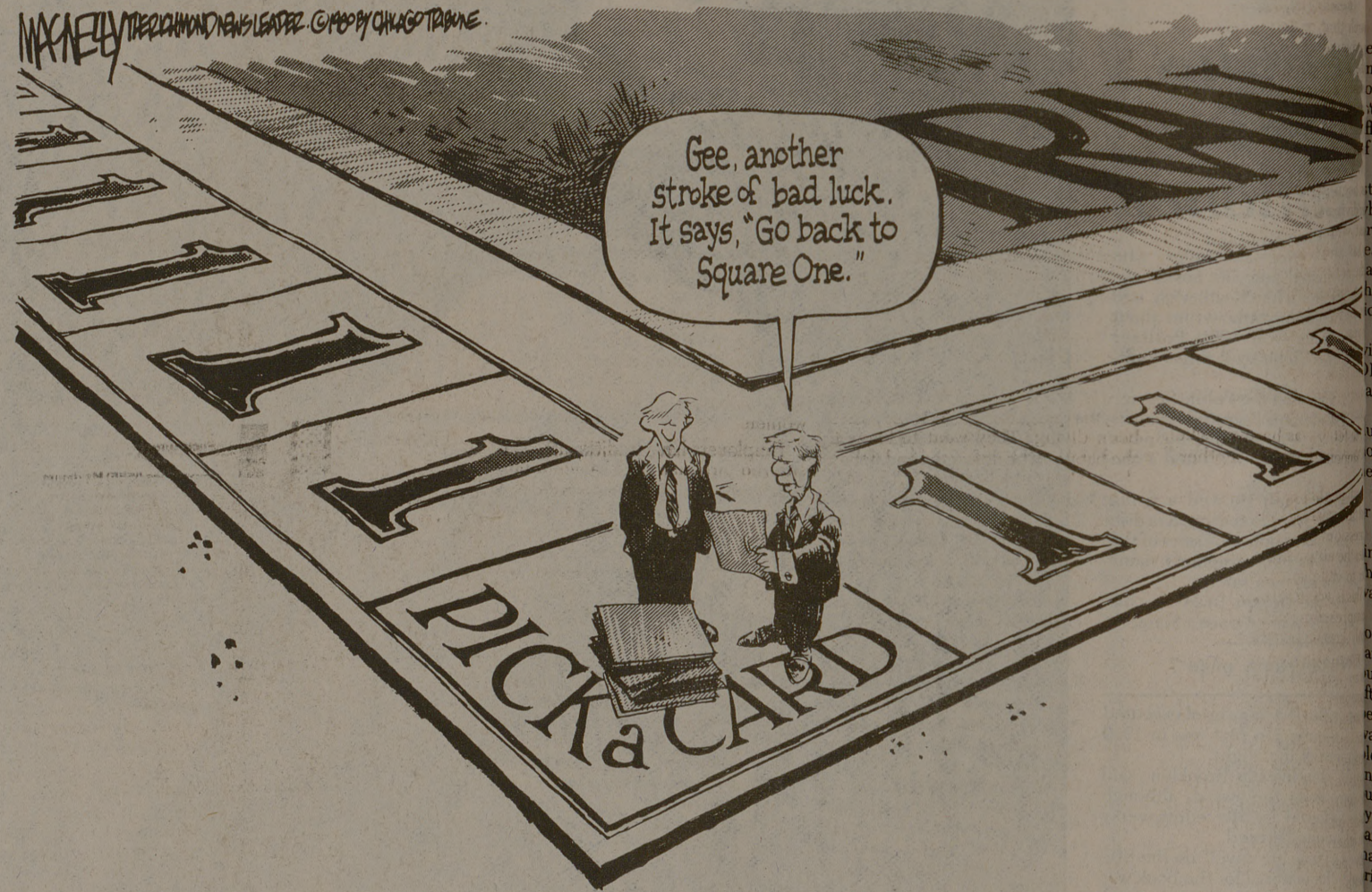
By DAVID S. BRODER

Would gasoline rationing work, or just add the aggravation of bureaucratic frustration to the costs of ever-higher energy prices? Would wage and price control cut inflation by two-thirds, or simply set the stage for a worse inflationary spiral down the road? Would the hostages be freed if the United States cut off diplomatic relations with Iran, or threatened unspecified retaliation if they are not back in our hands by a date certain? Or would such a step simply increase their peril while dramatizing the impotence of America in this situation? Will the grain embargo hurt the Soviet Union, or open up the opportunity for Argentina growers to profit at the expense of American farmers in the Russian market? Will an American boycott of the summer Olympic Games in Moscow embarrass the Russians in the eyes of the world, or simply leave the U.S. athletes frustrated spectators while their international rivals compete? Does a deep cut in federal income taxes promise the restoration of incentives for

growth and productivity in the American economy? Or does it guarantee deeper deficits, more federal borrowing, higher interest rates and worse inflation? These are some of the issues the voters are being asked to decide as they weigh the choice of the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees. All of these questions — and more — are being argued on the campaign trail in 1980. Despite the complaints that the candidates and the press are "ignoring the substantive questions" in this election year, the impression of this reporter is that just the opposite is true. There is more issue content in this campaign than in any other recent election. Candidates have found that the voters are insisting on such discussion, because they recognize the seriousness of the problems facing America at the start of this new decade. It is no coincidence that Ronald Reagan, the Republican front-runner, is also the Republican whose advertising and speeches have been strongly issued-oriented from the start. John B. Anderson escaped from the GOP pack by stressing

"the Anderson difference" on the issues. George Bush, getting the message, switched his faltering campaign from vague talk about being "up for the Eighties" to specifics on foreign and domestic policy. Ted Kennedy's whole struggle has been to shift the focus from personal issues to substantive policy questions. And Fritz Mondale, the chief surrogate for President Carter, has talked endlessly — and specifically — of the administration's energy, economic and foreign policy initiatives. If there is a problem in the content of the 1980 campaign, it is not that issues are being ignored or incompetently defined by the candidates. The problem is that the propositions the voters are being asked to judge are not questions on which most prudent people would want to give categorical answers. There is little in the national experience — or in most people's personal experience — that prepares us to cope with a world of double-digit inflation, recurring energy shortage, nuclear parity, Islamic militance and Asian tribal wars. The solutions to these problems are less obvious than the experts would like to pretend. If there is great volatility in voter opin-

ion, as there has been, it may be an irrational response to a game we have dealt with for a long time. Faced with this kind of situation, the impression is that voters are putting aside the search for answers to policy questions they cannot resolve satisfactorily for themselves and are focusing on something else: the character, capacity and likability of the candidates. Those judgments have been made in the past. Each state brings its own custom of active participation in the process for the first time. Those who would decry the process because it seems to produce presidential candidates of whom they do not approve are probably not doing so. Rather than wracking their brains to resolve inherently equivocal propositions, the voters are making precise judgements on the skills and character of the candidates. That may not meet everyone's idea of excellence in picking a President, but it is a better system than the one we have had. (c) 1980, The Washington Post



Salting streets in Hamburg killed trees
Massive effort used to spare foliage

By GUNTER HAAF
International Writers Service

This winter, for the first time in years, the municipal authorities in Hamburg used cinders rather than salt to than the city's icy streets. But the change, brought about under pressure from environmentalists, has come late. For the millions of tons of salt already spread across Hamburg in years past have caused irreparable harm to its trees, and the prospect is that the only green that may be visible in the future will be traffic lights. As far back as 1968, Hamburg botanist Ulrich Ruge was warning that salt was destroying the city's foliage, and his observation was echoed in other quarters elsewhere in the country. Engineers pointed out, for instance, that salt had a corrosive effect on steel bridges. And hydrologists complained that salt, used to create traction on rural roads during snowy winters, was polluting streams

and lakes. Professor Julius Speer of Munich discovered, for example, that Schlier Lake in Upper Bavaria had a salt content that approximated that of the Atlantic Ocean. Until recently, these findings made little impact on local officials, who argued that their primary responsibility was to motorists. But last December, a new study presented to the environmental commission of the Hamburg city legislature altered old attitudes. The study, undertaken by a university research group here, concluded that salt is not washed away when snow melts in the spring, but accumulates from year to year in the soil bordering streets, thus attacking trees, shrubs and other plants. The researchers documented their conclusion with photographs showing that numbers of shade trees lose their leaves unusually early as a result of salt infiltrating into their roots.

The lindens that line the Esplanade, one of the main thoroughfares here, were found to be standing in soil that contains 55 times more sodium and 24 more chloride than normal. A heavy concentration of sodium is dangerous because it displaces potassium, which is vital to foliage. It also kills nutrients and chokes roots, affecting trees in much the same way as drought. Even if no more salt were spread on streets, the soil in this city is so highly saturated with sodium that many trees cannot survive. The older ones will die first, and the younger ones are likely to be stunted. A similar phenomenon is taking place in Vienna, where studies indicate that between one-fourth and one-third of that city's trees will be lost within the next decade because of salted streets in winter. Besides fighting against salt, moreover, specialists here have been campaigning to

care for trees in various other ways: surgery, irrigation and building to reduce sodium chloride pollution through flooding. This effort to save trees is extremely expensive, often eating into environmental budgets. For the cost of liquid fertilizer enriched with potassium, organisms may be more than made up for. The increasing costs of research certainly contributed to the decision to curb the use of salt, since the estimated that prevention is cheaper than attempts to cure dying foliage. A good deal of damage has already been done. But it looks as if a lesson learned — and in time, hopefully apparent in this city's greenery.

(Haaf writes on science and nature for Die Zeit, the West German newspaper.)

THOTZ



By Doug Grant