

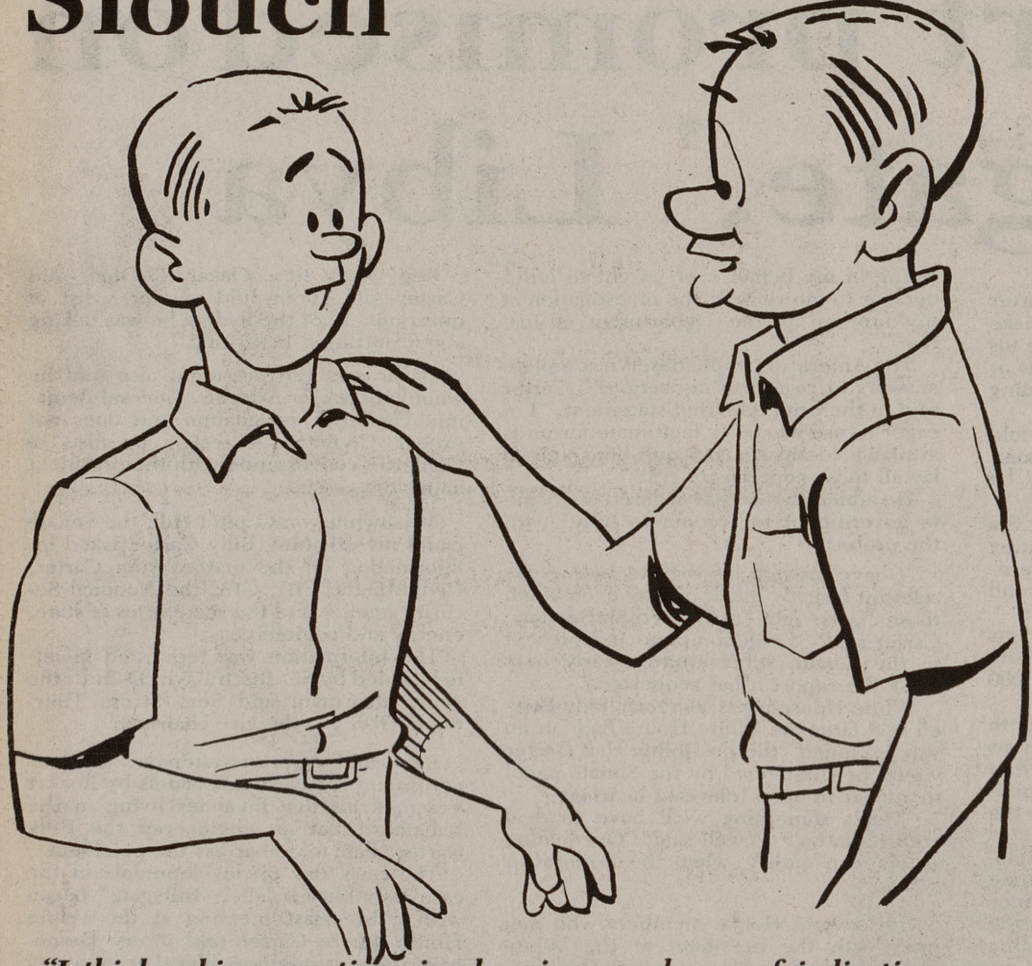
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

WEDNESDAY
JULY 30, 1980

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"I think asking questions in class is a good way of indicating your interest, but this is not the time of the semester to ask what the textbook is for th' course."

Presidential election unlike race in Canada

by DAVID S. BRODER

MONTREAL — Looking back at Detroit and down at Washington, D.C., from the perspective of this civilized Canadian city, what strikes you is the fragility of Ronald Reagan's current political ascendancy.

Nothing could be clearer than the fact that Reagan and George Bush would defeat Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale handily — and probably by an overwhelming margin in electoral college terms — if the election were held today. And nothing could be more irrelevant.

That thought is perhaps underscored by the recollection that the last time I visited here was in the spring of 1979, when the Canadian Conservatives, under the leadership of Joe Clark, were as certain as Reagan and the Republicans are today of ousting the government.

But here we are — a bit more than a year later — and Clark is still the leader of the opposition and Pierre Elliott Trudeau is still prime minister. It is a reminder that elections are won at the ballot box, and not at the betting table.

True, Clark and the Tories did have a taste of power — winning in May of 1979 and being turned out nine months later, in February of 1980. Reagan is protected from that particular embarrassment by the guarantee of a four-year presidential term, a bit of insurance which the parliamentary system lacks. But the Clark analogy cannot be dismissed that easily.

What fueled Clark's confidence in 1979 was the evident public disillusionment with the long reign of Trudeau and his Liberal Party. The prime minister had been in office for 11 years and the Liberals had been the majority party in parliament ever since 1963. They had plainly worn out their welcome — for many of the same reasons that make people impatient with Carter and the Democrats. Inflation was out of hand, living standards in decline, and weariness with the party in power widespread.

Clark won by asking, as Reagan asked in his acceptance speech last week, "Can anyone look at the record of this administration and say, 'Well done?'"

Yet only nine months later Clark lost because by then the voters had begun to understand that the alternatives he was offering were even less palatable. He managed to conceal those alternatives during the 1979 election campaign, in part because the campaign was brief and in part because the

Canadian press was so turned off of Trudeau at that time it scarcely bothered to examine Clark's program or credentials. Once the examination began, he fell victim to scrutiny.

Reagan is unlikely to avoid such scrutiny in his campaign. There are more than three months to election day. Knowing that Reagan is today the favorite to win the White House, every reporter must consider his or her principal obligation to examine and test Reagan's policy ideas and skills.

That examination process began in earnest in Detroit last week, and Reagan won mixed grades on most report cards. His acceptance speech was masterful — a well-conceived, well-written and well-delivered restatement of his familiar conservative themes, couched in language that was inclusive, not parochial, and phrased in a tone that was clearly presidential.

But the words were better than the deeds by Reagan in Detroit — particularly the handling of the one crucial decision of the week, the choice of a vice president. By the time he came to Detroit, Reagan had let his staff back him into a position where he almost had to take Bush, whose credentials never quite overcame Reagan's personal reluctance to accept him as a partner.

When Reagan bolted at the last minute and began a foredoomed flirtation with former President Ford, his staff was dragged along on what some of them, at least, were wise enough to recognize as a fool's errand. But by the time the nomination of Bush was back on track, the convention, the press and the public had been treated to a disquieting example of Reagan's uncertain leadership instincts.

The lessons many journalists have drawn is an old one: Watch what he does, not what he says. That watching will be particularly acute in the series of debates coming up this fall between Reagan and Carter, and perhaps independent candidate John B. Anderson, as well.

Here in Canada, Clark and Trudeau did not meet face-to-face until almost the eve of the 1979 election, when the outcome was all but certain. By contrast, Reagan and Carter will face off for the first time in September, and that debate can either lock Reagan into his favorite's role or raise new and potentially crippling doubts about his leadership capacity.

Until then, it would be a risky bet for anyone to assume this contest is over. If you doubt that, just ask Prime Minister Clark.

(c) 1980, The Washington Post Company

Men, machines and nature

by DILLARD STONE
Battalion Editor

We humans think we have it licked. Sitting back in our air-conditioned, environment-controlled surroundings, we are masters of all that we survey. The world is ours.

Or so we think. For me, this summer has provided two examples — in two very diverse areas — of how man is not the master of his surroundings that he thinks he is. One example is national in scope and natural in origin; the other example can be found in *The Battalion* newsroom, and deals with problems of a mechanical nature.

It appears that the month-and-a-half-long heat wave which afflicted 16 states this summer has finally dissipated. Although the death toll nationwide exceeded 1,200, no new heat-related deaths have surfaced in the past few days.

Of all instances of nature run amok, extremes of heat are always the most ominous, the most oppressive. Heat waves are unlike long periods of sub-freezing temperatures, which can be withstood by bundling up and staying inside.

The fundamental difference is in the common denominator of the two: temperature. When the heat's on, it's a thing to be avoided like the plague; when it's cold out, heat is a precious commodity, a scarce natural resource. In the former, we try to get rid of

excess heat in our environment; in the case of the latter, we try to conserve what heat is present, and even to manufacture some of our own.

It's easy to add the heat to our environment in the winter, but keeping the heat out in the summer is another matter.

During a cold spell, certain environmental changes can be made to alleviate the interruption of normalcy. Those limitations, or others like them, are more difficult to make during a heat wave. Which makes the presence of a searing Sol for days on end all the more ominous.

It's Mother Nature saying, "I DO have control after all."

Area Two in which I've found that man doesn't have the final word is in *The Battalion*'s computer copy production system.

Newspaper production has come a long way in the last decade. Typewriters and note pads are now fast becoming obsolete; they're being replaced in favor of video display terminals and tape recorders.

Red pens as editor's tools are disappearing. No longer is an editor's worth determined by how quickly he can reduce a reporter's copy to "blood." Copy is now written and edited on the VDTs, and editors now become adept at moving a cursor around on the screen.

It's marvelous. It's efficient. It's great. It's easy.

Until the computer fouls up. Then you're in big trouble.

For the past two days, we have been in trouble. Our computer crashed last week; copy preparation just isn't the same any more. Ronnie Milsap, you're wrong — the fault was it used to be.

We've had to revert to the archaic system of writing and editing a newspaper. And it's a strange word, for not five years ago the same "archaic" system was in use here.

Until it got supplanted by modern nology.

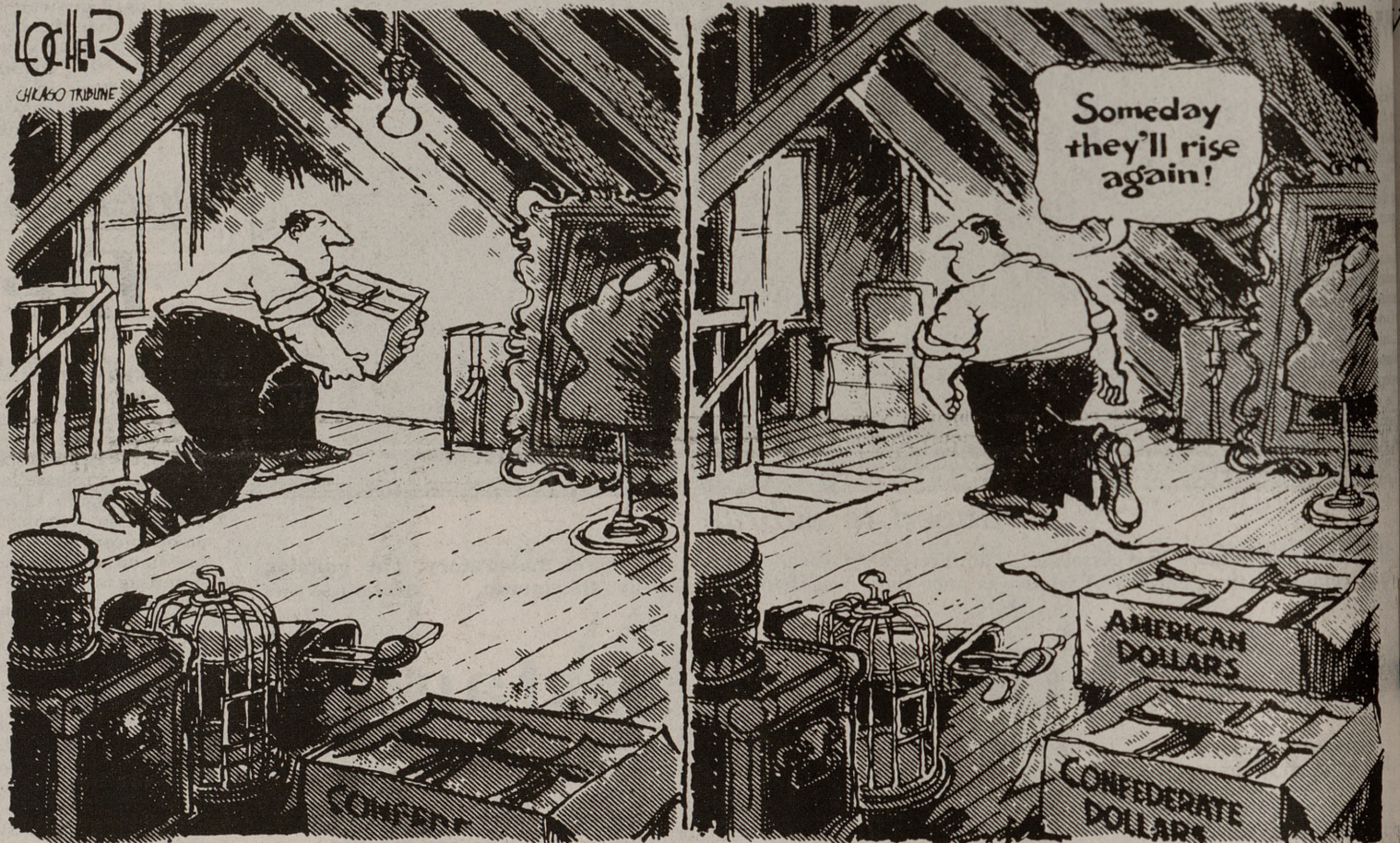
Now, temporarily at least, the old days are in turn supplanting the modern era.

It's back to the basics at *The Battalion* that I'm complaining; everyone needs to know how it was done in the Stone Age, because some papers haven't advanced that age yet. But I'd still rather play with computers.

I guess what we've got is the computer saying, "I am the one in control."

For the moment, at least, the computer control. For the moment.

I hope the man from the computer comes arrives soon to fix the machine. It'll help immensely; at the same time, it will demonstrate that man may not have final control of the environment, but he at least has control of the ultimate fate of his creations. Somehow that's very reassuring.



Dem confab promises to be bloody

Schedules must agree at convention

by DEAN REYNOLDS

WASHINGTON — "They're going to have to do it our way unless they want trouble," asserted Jim Flug, a longtime aide to Sen. Edward Kennedy.

Flug was talking about the convention and the procedures the Democrats will follow next month in New York. And while it may sound like an excess of bravura, Flug's statement underlines what many are coming to take for granted: The Democratic National Convention is going to be bloody.

Stung by the repeated reversals on the party platform and rules fights, the Kennedy campaign, still boasting of 1,200 or so delegates, is spoiling for a showdown with President Carter's legions — a fight that could alienate Kennedy from the main wing of the party for years to come.

Flug speaks for the entire campaign when he expresses dissatisfaction — to say the least about the way pre-convention maneuverings have been going. The top-heavy Carter support has steamrolled most Kennedy positions on the platform and the rules committee seems bent on making permanent a controversial item on delegate loyalty.

The item the Kennedy people find so offen-

sive is the product of party reformers who were determined to keep the nominating process within the purview of the primary voters and not the party professionals meeting behind closed doors.

It effectively binds delegates selected in the primaries to vote for the candidate they were chosen to represent.

Kennedy's people insist the worsening fortunes of the president tempt many delegates pledged to Carter to bolt for the Massachusetts senator and that binding them to Carter is a deprivation of their rights.

The rule in question would permit any candidate to replace a delegate deemed a potential defector. If that rule is passed by the convention Carter would have a solid lock on the nomination because he has 300 votes more than he needs.

Most experts believe Kennedy's continued challenge is quixotic whether the delegates are bound or not. But not Kennedy. And not his partisans.

There is a very tentative schedule circled by convention manager Bill Dixon earlier this month that would place the rules fight probably on Monday afternoon, Aug. 11. Kennedy people are not enthusiastic about this idea and can be expected to fight for prime time exposure.

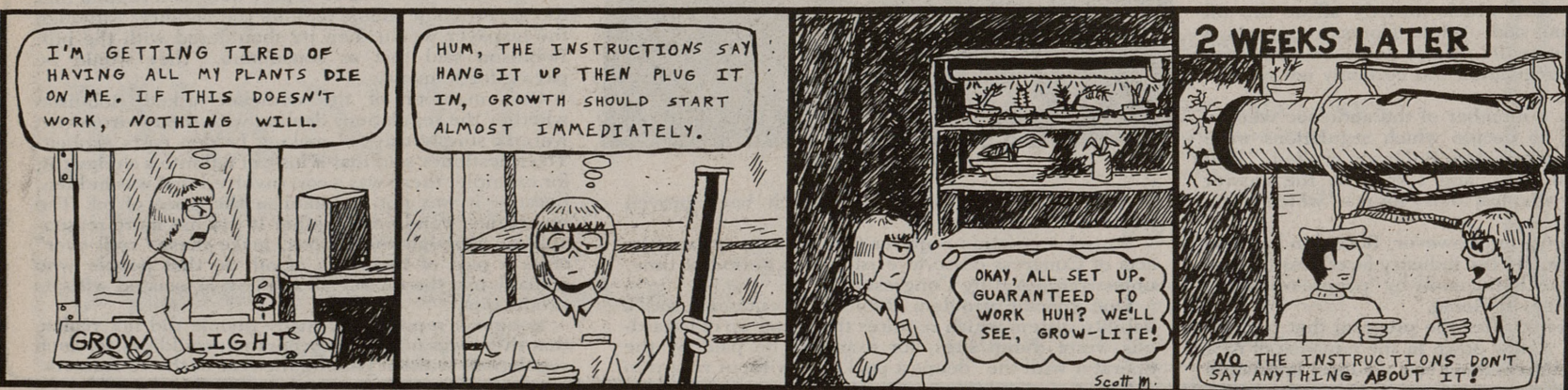
The situation is fluid, however. The dozen anticipated minority reports on platform alone have provoked numerous alterations in the original schedule.

Kennedy plans to make a fight of economic planks if nothing else. As he said in his recent speech, "The Democratic Party must reclaim the economic issue as its own."

Platform squabbling would be anti-climactic if the "bound delegate" rule has already been approved, but the Kennedy forces could make it interesting television.

And that is why Flug insists there is going to be a consensus on the convention schedule, or a very messy show will be displayed to millions of television viewers.

Warped



THE BATTALION

U S P S 045 360

MEMBER

Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Congress

Editor Dillard Stone
City Editor Becky Swanson
Sports Editor Richard Oliver
News Editor Lynn Blanco
Staff Writers Uschi Michel-Howell,
Debbie Nelson, Cathy Saathoff,
Scott K. Meyer
Photo Editor Janet Golub

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M University and Bryan-College Station. Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editor or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M University administrators or faculty members, or of the Board of Regents. Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer. Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

The Battalion is published Tuesday through Thursday during Texas A&M's summer school schedule. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 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.