

# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY  
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## Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I'm highly concerned about our situation in Iran, we have a crucial football game over the weekend, inflation is spiraling upward, and now he wants to give us an examination on top of all this!"

## Americans get serious about election issues

By DAVID S. BRODER

DES MOINES — In the course of a misspent 20 years on the political trail, I have attended dozens of Democratic dinners where the drunken din was such that no one, including the speaker, had any idea what was being said.

Hubert H. Humphrey had standard advice for other Democrats going to such notoriously besotted affairs as the Philadelphia or New Jersey dinners. "You say, 'Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz — Franklin Delano Roosevelt! Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz — Harry S. Truman! Buzz-buzz-buzz-buzz — John Fitzgerald Kennedy!'" Humphrey advised. "And then you get the hell out of there before they start throwing rolls at each other."

However, recently I was at a Democratic dinner here where you could hear a pin drop. Sen. John C. Culver (D-Ia.), who is locked in a tough, close re-election campaign against Rep. Charles Grassley (R.Ia.), was winding up his speech to the party faithful in a rather remarkable way.

Instead of the standard Humphrey-style pep-talk, he was talking about arms control and the importance of reviving — not discarding — the strategic arms limitation treaty with the Soviet Union. And he was doing it, not by reciting data on warheads and throw-weights, but by reading a Japanese woman's recollections of her experiences, as a young girl, on the day the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Listening to the terrifying description of the effect of fire, blast and radiation on human flesh, written 30 years ago by that Japanese woman, now filling a basketball arena in the amplified voice of the former Marine and Harvard fullback, brought the hundreds of Democratic revelers to sudden silence — and full attention.

It was a dramatic example of what could be sensed everywhere on the campaign trail last week: America is getting serious about this election. After all the demeaning distractions, the voters and candidates alike are finally beginning to sense what is at stake.

There was a similar experience earlier in the week, when Ronald Reagan toured the largely shut-down Jones and Laughlin steel complex in Youngstown, Ohio. Without impugning any motives, it's a safe bet that the visit was scheduled simply to provide a telegenic setting for another Reagan blast at the regulatory and economic policies of Jimmy Carter's administration.

But the reality overwhelmed the theatrics. Candidate and correspondents drove through acre after acre of rusting, abandoned buildings — looking a bit like war ruins themselves — that symbolized America's decaying technological and industrial strength.

And when Reagan met with some of the remaining workers in the plant, they turned out to be, not extras provided by a Hollywood rent-a-blue-collar-crowd agency, but worried men with probing questions about the candidate's readiness to commit government funds to the rehabilitation of this aging plant.

Like the diners in Des Moines and millions of others across the land, they are remembering, now that the moment of decision is approaching, that there are terribly consequential choices to be made by the next President, by the senators and by the others to be elected next month.

The press — which has gotten its share of criticism for the trivialization of the campaign — is also getting the message. James P. Gannon, the executive editor of the Des Moines Register, reprinted in his own paper a speech he'd made, criticizing the campaign coverage and suggesting that "instead of being content to serve up only the charge and countercharge of the campaign trail, we can pose the questions that the candidates should be answering, and explain to the readers why the answers aren't as simple as the candidates' TV ads suggest."

Putting his doctrine into practice, Gannon has been running a series of front-page articles on the issues. Similar pieces are beginning to appear in papers from coast to coast. The Associated Press, our largest news organization, did a Reagan interview recently that focused more sharply on the thrust of his policies than anything that has appeared since the conventions.

If Reagan and Carter are smart, they will sense this changing mood — and do the one thing that, more than any other, can still redeem this campaign from travesty. They will meet face-to-face for a serious discussion of these issues.

They can do it themselves, with or without the blessing of John Anderson or the League of Women Voters. Bob Strauss and Jim Baker could agree in one phone call on a date, a site and a neutral moderator. Without the distraction of a phony panel of press questioners, Carter and Reagan could sit down for two hours to talk seriously about where the country is and where it should be going.

Americans are ready to listen.

## Congress' leaders appear safe

By STEVE GERSTEL

WASHINGTON — Congressional leaders — Republicans and Democrats — seem to have nothing to fear from their colleagues. If there is to be a palace coup in January, the plans are a well-kept secret.

One or two may be in trouble with the voters. But once that hurdle is cleared, their leadership posts are there for the asking.

There will be one, maybe two, changes among House Republican leaders, but these are being dictated by retirements — not by an uprising among the serfs.

All that is not surprising. In both the Senate and House, the pattern of the past indicates that leaders, once in place, do not budge on their own — except to move up — and are not put to the test by their followers.

They — the leaders — may take this as a sign of loyalty and deep devotion. The chances, however, are that the reluctance to challenge an incumbent stems from a fear of the consequences.

Like an animal, a leader wounded can be dangerous. And he has a great many options of making a colleague's career less pleasant — a voice in committee assignments, scheduling of bills, perks and other favors.

As a result, there have been few efforts in recent years to depose leaders.

In 1959, Rep. Charles Halleck of Indiana ended the 20-year reign of Rep. Joseph Martin of Massachusetts as the House Republican leader.

Six years later, then Rep. Gerald Ford of Michigan turned out Halleck.

The House Democrats have been more traditional — brooking not even a few battles for the top spot.

The last three speakers all served as House Democratic leader under their predecessors. The lineage is Rayburn-McCormick-Albert-O'Neill.

The battles come at the lower level, such as the one when the post of House Democratic leader opened in 1976. Rep. Jim Wright of Texas won in a field of four.

The Senate also shows no eagerness for coups at the top but there has never been a reluctance to dispatch the No. 2 leaders — especially among Democrats.

During the 16-year reign of Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield, a number of senators were elected his "whips." In three successive elections, Russell Long of Louisiana was chosen; Long was beaten by Edward Kennedy and Kennedy, in turn, was ousted by Robert Byrd.

Byrd, now the Senate Democratic leader,

was in the right spot when Mansfield re-

On the Republican side, the major came when Senate GOP leader Everett

sen died in 1969 and when his successor, Scott, retired in 1976.

Scott, following a normal progression, up from "whip." But the current Repu-

leader, Howard Baker, came from outside leadership circles. There should be only one race in the House unless Wright loses the election.

House Republican leader John R. Arizona will seek the speakership if the Republicans win control — which is highly unlikely but will not return as leader if they do.

House and Senate Democratic appear secure, although there are rumors never confirmed by him — that Byrd would be averse to having a new deputy in place California's Alan Cranston.

Baker and his deputy, Ted Stevens of should be in good shape. They have a Senate Republicans.

But there persists the possibility that Senate's GOP conservatives may challenge Baker with a candidate from their own ranks possibly John Tower of Texas.

MANSFIELD THE CONGRESS LEADER. © 1980 BY CHICAGO TRIBUNE.



## Solons' drinking prompts look at labor

By DICK WEST

WASHINGTON — Demon rum, as we have learned from recent scandals, can cause congressmen to succumb to venal or homosexual tendencies they might have resisted had they stayed sober.

Does drinking also bring out collective bargaining tendencies in individuals?

Specifically, might non-union workers under the influence of alcohol vote for organized labor representation that they, if sober, would spurn?

Such a question is implicitly raised in a case now awaiting a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board. Let's look at the record:

In a secret-ballot election conducted last

Aug. 7, employees of the Browning-Ferris Industries plant in Grafton, Va., voted 14-10 to designate the Teamsters union as their bargaining agent.

The company then challenged the results, contending among other things that the voting was "affected by the consumption of alcoholic beverages in substantial quantities."

It seems that on the day of the election several employees attended the funeral of a co-worker and later gathered at the home of the deceased's mother.

According to the testimony of the plant manager, "Food and alcoholic beverages were served at this gathering, and, with one exception, everyone consumed the equivalent of at least four beers."

A few weeks ago, I might simply have gone along with the findings of Louis D'Amico, an NLRB acting regional director, who recommended that the objections be dismissed.

But that was before drunkenness figured in the defense of congressmen accused of taking bribes or making homosexual advances.

Now that we know a few too many can cause

otherwise upright lawgivers to stray from straight and narrow, the effect of alcohol branding on labor relations seems to warrant more study.

D'Amico, perhaps borrowing a page from the U.S. Supreme Court, reached his decision on narrow, legalistic grounds, rather than coming to grips with the central issue.

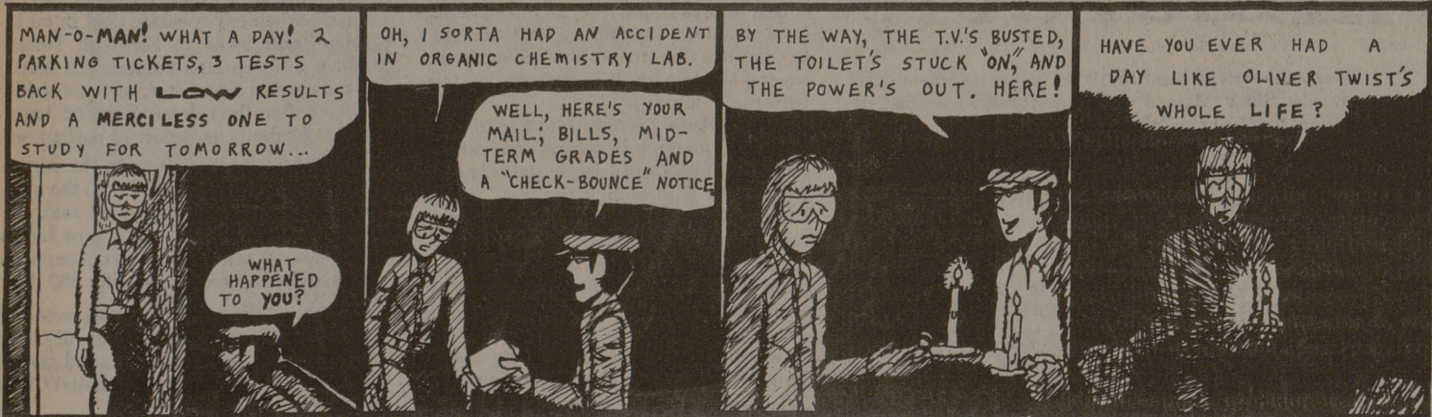
He dealt only with the technical question of whether the employees in this instance actually were intoxicated.

"... even assuming, arguendo, that each employee had consumed four beers, no evidence was either submitted or adduced to demonstrate that any employees were, in fact, intoxicated during the time they voted," he wrote.

Thus the broader question of whether inebriation would be grounds for invalidating union election was left twisting in the wind.

Perhaps the full NLRB will address that issue in its review of the case. Meanwhile, if you have a report that the House and Senate have voted to unionize Congress, you will know the reason why.

## Warped



By Scott McCullar

## THE BATTALION

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