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The Weather

Yesterday	Today
High 78	High 78
Low 59	Low 55
Rain 0.00 inches	Chance of rain 0%

Lame duck session begins in Congress

WASHINGTON — The lame duck congressional session — a curtain call on the political stage for the defeated and the retiring — is beginning with little expectation that anything significant can be accomplished.

A fiscal 1981 budget, trimmed to reflect Ronald Reagan's promise to cut waste, and a catch-all appropriations bill to keep departments and agencies operating until the 97th Congress convenes, may be the only major pieces of legislation to emerge from the session that opens today.

"It's my view we should do as little as possible in the lame duck session," said Senate Republican Leader Howard Baker.

Although no length has been set for the session, Baker and House Democratic Leader Jim Wright of Texas both expressed hope Tuesday that Congress could adjourn by Thanksgiving.

The 97th Congress that convenes in January will have a 53-47 Republican majority — the first time the GOP has had control of the Senate since 1954. Democrats still hold control of the House.

The drama in this month's session comes in the return, for the first time, of 13 senators and 38 congressmen who were defeated in the primaries or in last week's election — swept aside in the conservative wave.

Among the Senate luminaries bowing out involuntarily are Warren Magnuson of Washington, chairman of the Appropriations Committee; Frank Church of Idaho, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee; Herman Talmadge of Georgia, chairman of the Agriculture Committee; and Jacob Javits of New York, ranking Republican on Foreign Relations.

An immediate tax cut, backed by Reagan and Senate leaders, appears doomed in the House.

Baker said a tax cut was "entirely in the realm of possibility," but added he saw "almost no likelihood" President Carter would sign a tax cut bill if it passes Congress.

And Wright said the House would reject tax legislation even if it passes the Senate.

Revenue sharing, enforcement of fair housing laws, a revision of the criminal code, a fund to clean up oil spills and the Alaska lands bill plus numerous other bills also are still waiting action.

Meeting a day in advance of the session, the House Budget Committee voted a 2 percent cut in fiscal 1981 spending — the amount Reagan proposed.

Hostage question may return to Iran's parliament

ALGIERS, Algeria — An authoritative source said today no immediate answer is expected from Iran to the U.S. response on Tehran's conditions for releasing the American hostages and some sources said the question might have to go back to Iran's parliament.

The source spoke one day after deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher abruptly ended his diplomatic courier role in Algeria and flew home, leaving go-between Algeria to relay the U.S. response on Iran's conditions for freeing the 52 American hostages from 374 days in captivity.

"We don't anticipate an early response from Tehran," the source said, explaining the reason for the expected delay was that the U.S. reply fails to meet unconditionally the four points Iran set for release of the hostages.

The conditions are a pledge of non-interference in Iranian affairs, freeing Iranian assets frozen in the United States, a move to return the wealth of the late shah and dropping financial claims against Tehran.

U.S. officials have explained to Algeria that they can guarantee a non-interference pledge but the other conditions involve legal and financial complexities.

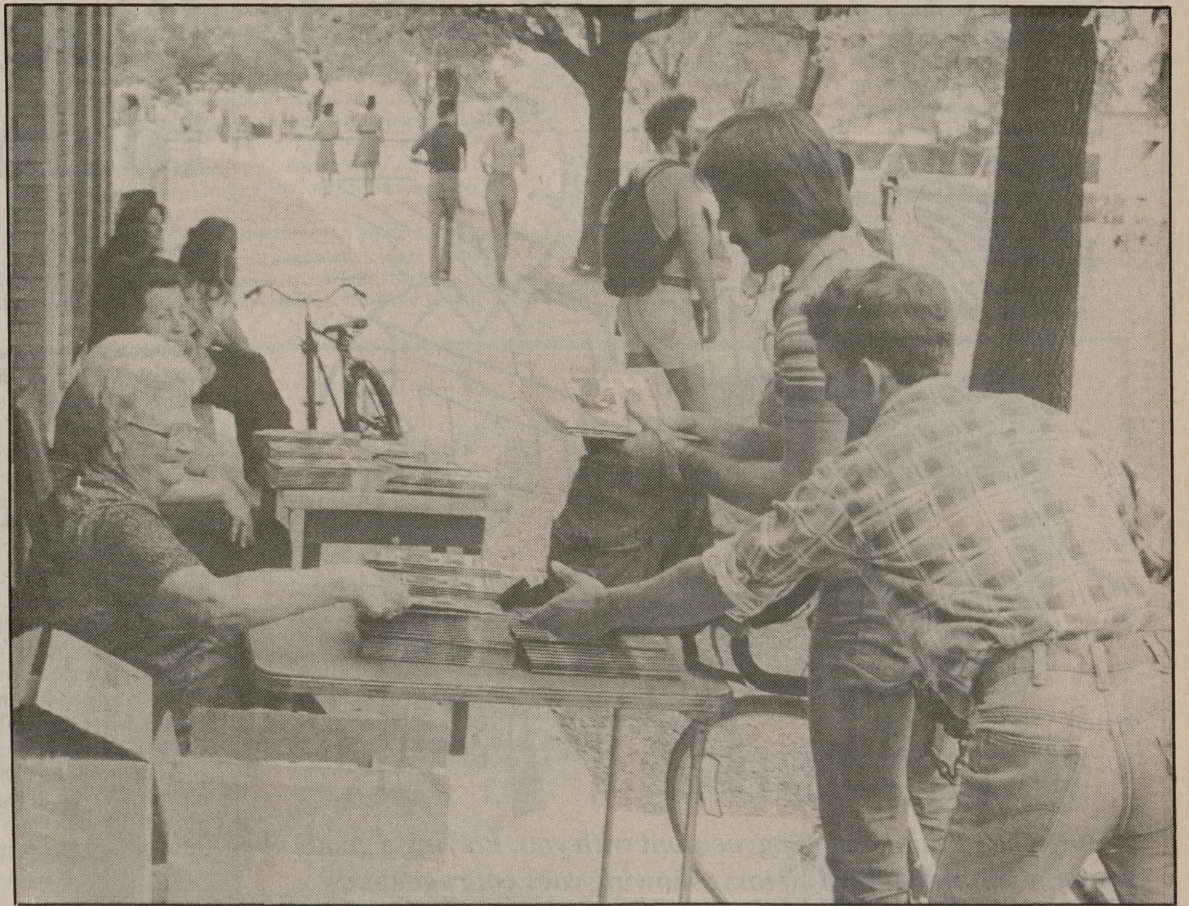
In Tehran a spokesman in the office of Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Rajai said, "We expect to receive the U.S. reply on the hostage release terms today."

Government officials in Algiers said they had no intention of playing an active role in negotiations. "Our role is limited to transmitting the two sides' positions, in other words acting as a mailbox," a senior official said.

Christopher ended two days of meetings with Algerian Foreign Minister Mohammed Benyahia in which he handed over the U.S. response to Iran's four demands.

Christopher departed on a U.S. Air Force plane for what was expected to be a nine-hour flight to Washington. Technical problems with the plane forced an overnight stopover in Shannon, Ireland, the State Department said, adding that there was no danger or emergency.

"There's no more action here," a U.S. official said in Algiers Tuesday as Christopher departed. Another official in Washington, who declined to be identified, said it would probably be several days before Iran responded and Christopher saw no need to wait in the North African nation.



It's that time again

Photo by Carolyn Tiller

The 1981 spring class schedules will still be given out in front of Heaton Hall today. Each student may pick up two copies and begin the ritual of filling out trial schedules. Pre-registration is Nov. 17-21.

Election statistics interpreted

By LIZ NEWLIN
Battalion Staff

The room was dark, and heavy smoke from cigars and cigarettes filled the air.

The quiet conversation about political fortune and failure sometimes erupted into heated shouts about one candidate or another.

The participants, however, were not bosses in Chicago plotting the machine's future.

They were academicians from Texas A&M University's political science department discussing the election. Meeting in the faculty lounge with brown-bag lunches Monday (just as the lights went out), the group offered several interpretations of last Tuesday's vote.

The evidence about who voted and why is still skimpy, of course, but that doesn't stop political scientists from analyzing, especially when journalists demand they tell what it means on the night of the vote.

One theory that's receiving the most play in the media — an American shift to more conservative values — did not meet overwhelming support in the seminar. Dr. Robert Bernstein, however, suggested that something besides the evidence might guide their judgement about a possible conservative surge.

"Political scientists are liberals," he said with a "let's face it" attitude. "They'd just as soon not believe there's a shift."

One who believes there is a shift, however, is Dr. Bonnie Browne.

Conservative shift real

"There is a conservative shift in the sense that people are more alienated," she said. "They don't trust institutions anymore to solve problems."

"People want to choose a risk-free alternative. They don't trust institutions, but they want somebody to do it. They demand more government responsibility."

She said voters can trust individuals like Ronald Reagan, who offers a simple solution to complex problems. He pushed the idea that everything would be all right if government would "get off people's backs." Jimmy Carter provided a strong contrast to that

view throughout his presidency when he demanded sacrifice from Americans and only offered more of the same during his re-election campaign.

Browne said people want a risk-free environment, and Carter did not offer that. Reagan was the simple choice, and people took it.

First step in disalignment?

Softening that view somewhat was Dr. Roby Robertson, who suggested the election was a disalignment instead of a realignment. If this is a major ideological change, he said, it must begin gradually. Traditional Democratic voters were not compelled to vote for Carter, so many didn't bother.

Bernstein agreed. "There's less and less reason for minorities to vote Democratic," he said. "They see no return on the investment." That may be part of the larger break-up of the "New Deal coalition" that has kept Democrats generally in power since 1932, they said.

But it's still too early to tell. Nation-wide the results were mixed. Many of the Democratic senators who lost were vulnerable anyway.

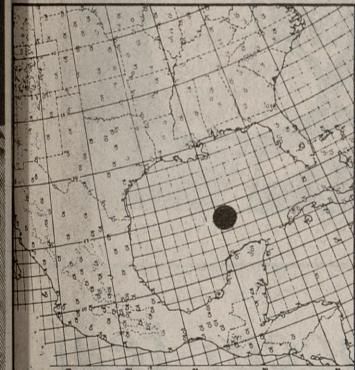
Voter turnout significant

Dr. Bruce Robeck offered another theory, one that allows for a Republican win without a permanent shift in the number of Republican voters. Democratic voters simply didn't vote.

Only 52 percent of the electorate voted, which continues the downward trend of voter turnout that began in 1964. When turnout is that low, the drop-off is not evenly split between the two parties. Republicans tend to vote more, so they often win the election.

Robeck said that would also explain why the opinion polls were off: pollsters assumed a higher voter turnout and, in turn overestimated the Democratic vote.

Not all the political scientists agreed with the turnout theory, but then none of them agreed on any single thing — except that they will be discussing election '80 for some years to come. Occasionally in dark, smoke-filled rooms.



Jeanne moves west

NEW ORLEANS — Late-coming Hurricane Jeanne brought almost 2 feet of rain to the Florida Keys and stirred seas to 15 feet but then slowed and weakened in the Gulf of Mexico today.

The storm, at latitude 24.0 north and longitude 89.4 west about 400 miles south of New Orleans at 9 a.m., was being held between a powerful high pressure system to the north and cooler, dry air to the west.

Weather Service forecaster Ken Crawford said the storm was expected to continue moving west at 5 mph in the Gulf at

least 48 more hours, with its 75 mph winds expected to decline.

Winds decreased slightly from earlier reports, with gales extending 150 miles north and 100 miles south of the storm's center. The weather bureau urged small craft to remain in port from Brownsville, Texas, eastward to Tarpon Springs, Fla.

More than 3,000 offshore oilfield workers from dozens of rigs and production platforms jammed into helicopters and crew boats Tuesday in the first wave of evacuations from the Gulf.

Survey says hot checks are problem for some

By JANA L. SIMS
Battalion Reporter

Responses to a questionnaire show that hot checks are a bad problem for Brazos County. Maybe.

In the face of a flood of hot checks, one merchant wrote that he no longer accepts checks "because I don't intend to chase Nobody Never Again. ... I take checks from my mother and my brothers and sisters."

He said he definitely has no plans to change his policy. But the talk about hot checks has become the "pet peeve" of Julian McMurrey, distributor for the Houston Chronicle. Writes McMurrey: "I receive thousands of checks from students. Maybe 15 are bad per semester; of this I might lose one or two I never collect."

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were mailed to a sample group of businesses chosen from the yellow pages of the Bryan-College Station telephone directory. Fifty-one merchants responded.

Of the 51, 37 estimated the percent of profits lost annually in hot checks. In estimates ranging from "nil" to "10% and rising," the average percentage lost was 1.25 percent.

The most frequent loss percentage was 1 percent. For a large business this could be minimal, but for a small business it could represent a substantial loss.

One merchant said he takes only from family. In addition to him, three other respondents said they do not accept checks at all. One said it is simply company policy. Shiraz Lakhani, owner of the Cattlemen's Inn, wrote that he receives "too many hot checks" and has just stopped accepting them.

Owner of the B & W Company said that he stopped taking checks June 1 for two reasons: 1) he was getting too many back, and 2) he received so many checks that sometimes one-half of the store's income was in checks. He added, however, that he still takes checks from established customers.

Eighteen of the businesses that responded said they have changed check policies to attempt to decrease the amount of check losses. Of these, five said they experienced a loss decrease, ranging from 0.012 to 50 percent.

Chanello's Pizza, who estimated a 2 percent profit loss annually, slightly decreased losses by two adjustments in check policy. Originally the management required a driver's license, student I.D. and local address for accepting a check, but now management approval on each check is required. The management also made a list of people that checks will not be accepted from. This list is given to drivers who deliver pizzas.

Another merchant wrote that previously he required a driver's license, student I.D. and local address for accepting a check. When he changed his policy and required more identification and management approval, he estimated that his 1-percent annual bad check loss decreased by 50 percent.

Nine of the responders said they require nothing for accepting a check. All wrote that they have little or no problem with bad checks.

One merchant wrote: "We are a heavy cash basis business. Our losses are minimal. We operate on a no questions asked basis and it works."

Other responses included:

— "We collect on 100 percent (of checks) normally."
— "In the last five years we have only received two bad checks."
— "I have been very fortunate in that I have very few return checks — less than one-half of one percent of sales."

Yet another wrote: "(I) know our situation is unusual compared to most retailers, but we really don't have a problem with hot checks." In answer to what percent of the bad checks received were written by Texas A&M students, the merchant wrote "Hate

to answer this, but the three to six per year we get are from Aggies — but they always make good."

This opens another door in the problem — what effect do Texas A&M students, many of whom leave in the summer, have on businesses in relation to worthless checks?

The percent of bad checks received that are written by University students ranged from zero to 100 percent, depending on the type of business and how much of their business is Texas A&M students.

Ben Bailey, owner of Ben Bailey's liquor store, wrote that he receives the most bad checks in April and May.

"This is where the students leave town after writing checks," he wrote, "most knowing there is no money to cover them."

Bailey said he would like to see the University work with merchants on the issue of bad checks. He suggested that Texas A&M could keep students from re-enrolling if merchants reported them to have left hot checks.

"You can't withdraw from school tomorrow until your traffic violations are paid," he said, wondering if bad checks could be used in the same manner.

He said that maybe Texas A&M could benefit by charging a fee.

•• NOTICE OF INSUFFICIENT FUNDS ••

G Y P BANK

PRESENTED FOR PAYMENT TODAY WERE THE ABOVE 1 CHECKS TOTALING 55.00 A BALANCE OF 20.00 IS SHOWN FOR YOUR ACCOUNT.

ITEMS CIRCLED ABOVE WERE RETURNED UNPAID.

NONE WERE RETURNED.

TO COVER COST OF HANDLING, YOUR ACCOUNT WAS CHARGED

ACCOUNT NO. 00 000 00 DATE 11-12-80

John Doe
100 Maple Lane
Anyplace, USA 9999999

10.00
PLEASE ADJUST YOUR RECORDS ACCORDINGLY.

"I'd pay a \$5 fee or something. It's be worth it."

"If the University would consider something like this, do you realize how many merchants would be behind them?" he asked.

O'Dell W. Finney, owner of Royal Television, wrote that "more capability at balancing a check book could prevent many A&M student's hotchecks."

Finney wrote that he loses 1 percent of his annual profits in bad checks, and 90 percent of these are written by Texas A&M students.

Reba Harbert, owner of Photo-Tech, also questioned the ability of some students to use a checking account. She said that many of the students that come to Texas A&M are not accustomed to using a checking account. Nevertheless, she said she is proud of her Aggie patrons.

"I have very few bad checks," she wrote, "and a lot of good student customers."

All of the 47 business respondents that accept checks said they contact the offender when they receive a worthless check. Twenty also charge the offender a fee. Seven merchants said they cancel the offender's credit. And 20 merchants said they file criminal charges.

When a merchant receives a bad check, he can notify the offender by registered or certified mail. If he gets no response in 10 days, he can file a complaint with the county attorney. The crime is considered a misdemeanor with a maximum \$200 fine if the check amount is under \$200. If the amount of the check is more than \$200, the crime is a felony and is referred to the county attorney.

For misdemeanors, the county attorney then reviews the case, decides if it meets the requirements for prosecution and turns it over to the justice of the peace. The office of the justice of the peace then issues a summons to the offender which includes a fine of \$27.50. From here, a number of things can happen.

The check writer may appear and, if found guilty, "may be fined and additionally, ordered to make restitution." If the check writer does not appear within 10 days, a warrant for his arrest is issued. The check writer can then be arrested and jailed. If the offender is unable to pay the fine and make the check good, he is put on probation until he pays off the amount in weekly or monthly payments.

How bad is the problem of hot checks in Brazos County? Those that it affects may wave fistfuls of papers stamped "NSF" and hope that help is on the way. Other merchants may stare at you blankly and ask "What hot check problem?"