

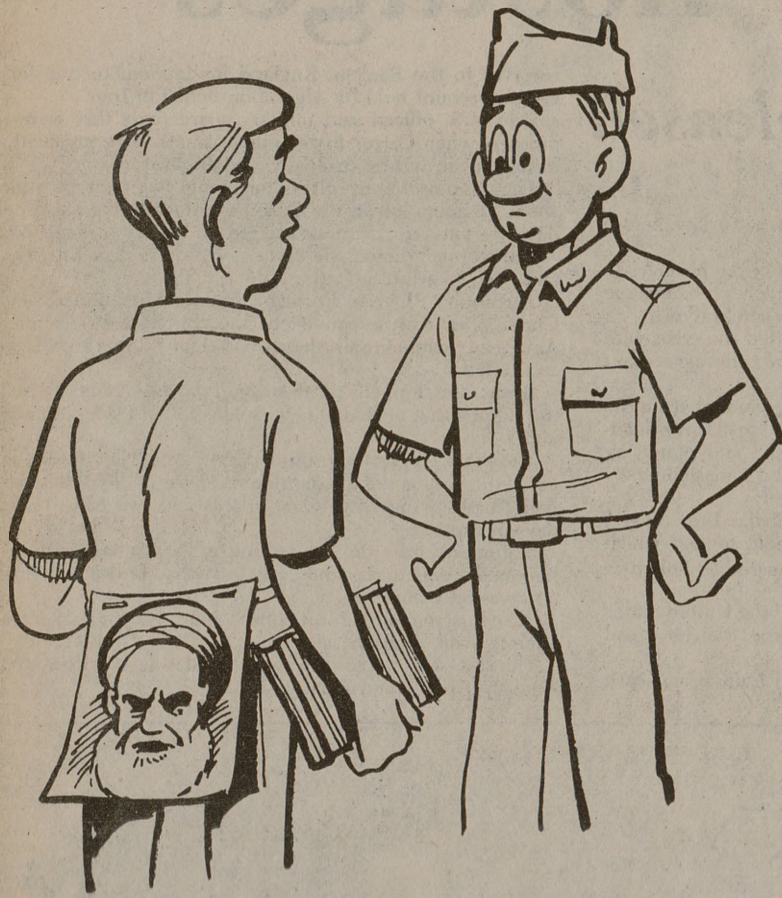
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

MONDAY
JANUARY 19, 1980

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"I can't understand it! I've been kicked in the pants four times by perfect strangers!"

The hostages are harbingers

As we begin the new classes of the New Year, it is appropriate to pause for a moment and reflect on the names of several people to whom we all owe a great debt. Their names:

Thomas Ahern, 48.
William Belk, 43.
Robert Blucker, 52.
Donald Cooke, 25.
William Daugherty
Robert Englemann, 33.
William Gallegos, 21.
Bruce German, 43.
Duane Gillette, 23.
Allan Golacinski, 29.
John Graves, 52.
Joseph Hall, 30.
Kevin Hermening, 20.
Donald Hohman, 38.
Leland Holland, 52.
Michael Howland
Charles Jones, 39.
Malcolm Kalp
Moorehead C. Kennedy Jr.
William Keough Jr., 49.
Steve Kirtley, 21.
Kathryn Koob, 41.
Frederick Lee Kupke, 32.
Bruce Laingen, 57.
Steve Lauterbach, 28.
Gary Lee, 37.
Paul Lewis, 22.
John W. Limbert
James M. Lopez, 21.
Johnny McKeel Jr., 26.
Michael Metrinko, 33.
Jerry Miele, 41.
Michael Moeller, 28.

Sidebars

By Dillard Stone

Bert Moore, 44.
Richard M. Morefield, 50.
Capt. Paul M. Needham, 29.
Robert C. Ode, 64.
John O'Keefe
Richard Owen
Gregory A. Persinger, 22.
Jerry Plotkin, 45.
Regis Ragan, 38.
David Roeder, 40.
Barry Rosen, 36.
William B. Royer Jr., 48.
Thomas Scafeher, 52.
Charles Scott, 47.
Rodney V. Sickman, 22.
Joseph Subic Jr., 22.
Elizabeth Ann Swift, 39.
Victor Tomseth, 39.
Phillip R. Ward

I don't know any of these people. You probably don't either. But to us — you and me and millions of Americans as one great collective entity — these names are those of a group of American martyrs.

They're not martyrs in the literal sense. But they're martyrs just the same, for each has given 442 days of his life for — for what? What

have they done that was so heinous? Nothing more than a simple fate which falls on all at one time or another — they were in the wrong place at the right time.

The numbers beside the names have all grown by at least one. The investment that represents is incalculable; it cannot be expressed in monetary terms, in time, in editorial indignation, not even in national outrage. Nothing we can do can make up to these Americans what they have lost for the crime of merely being an American.

As I write this, Algerian sources are saying the hostages' release is only a "matter of hours away. I can only pray that this is true.

That's exactly the root of frustration I and countless others feel: All we can do is wait and pray. Nothing we do can make any difference.

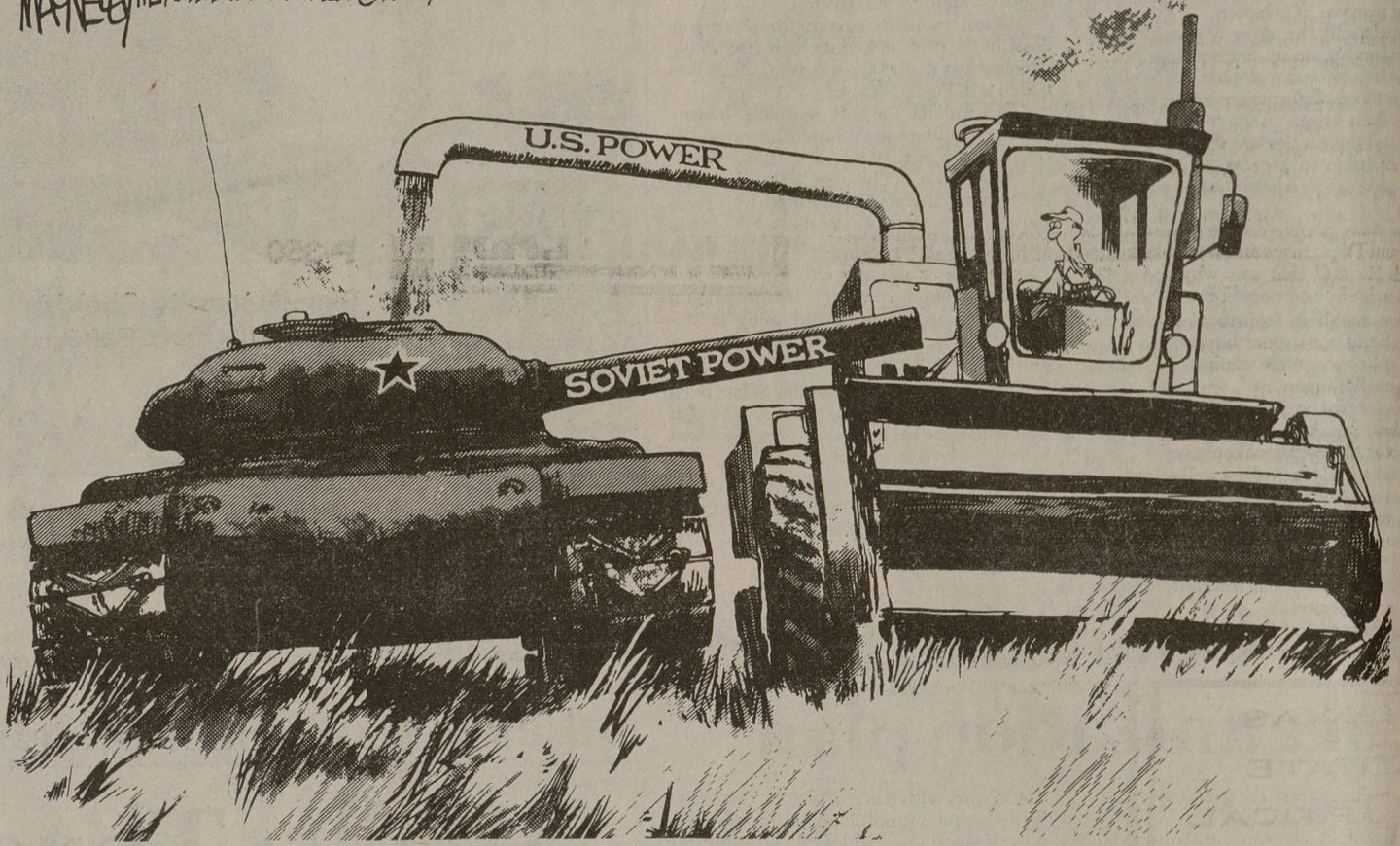
Such a feeling of national impotence hasn't been matched in my lifetime, and I would be hard-pressed to find one in history. Such emasculation of national pride, the humiliation of it all, should be satisfaction enough for the Iranians. The abstract costs to the hostages themselves are incalculable, and the material costs to the United States won't be known until negotiations are concluded.

The entire episode is a horrible harbinger of what may be the future of international diplomacy: In many countries, foreigners cannot and will not be protected by the host government. The protector instead becomes the tormentor.

In a country where a nation's terror against its own citizens, and those of foreign countries, is tolerated, is anyone safe?

In a world where governments are the sponsors of the terror, can total chaos be far behind?

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Guidelines for letters to the editor

By DILLARD STONE

Battalion Editor

The open expression of vibrant opinions is the standard against which the true freedom of a society can be measured.

The Battalion welcomes the written opinions of students and faculty of Texas A&M University, as well as those of other area residents. Whether as a letter to the editor for the "It's your turn" column, or as a guest column on an issue worthy of attention, we have no qualms about printing your opinion.

To make our jobs a bit easier, and to maintain the integrity of the Viewpoint page, however, we have a few rules which letter-writers should follow.

— Letters to the editor should not exceed 350 words in length.

— Guest columns or any other unsolicited opinion material should not exceed 850 words in length.

— All letters and columns should be signed with the name, address and telephone number

of the author.

— All material should be typed, double-spaced.

— All material should be free of libel or personal controversy.

We also reserve several rights to protect ourselves:

— Any papers over the specified maximum lengths may be edited for length. In such cases, the editing may be done without the author's consent; however, every effort will be made to preserve the original intent of the piece.

— The Battalion reserves the right not to print any letter or guest column.

— Letters signed with the name of a group or organization will not be printed; we believe that individuals, not organizations, have opinions. Therefore, individuals should assume responsibility for the expression of their opinions.

— We try to print all of the letters we receive. Response on certain topics may, however, dictate that many letters remain unpublished. In such instances, we extend our regrets that the letters could not be published.

In no way will we try to stop the expression of opinion. By following these simple guidelines, you'll be making it easier for us to serve as a voice for your thoughts.

Electoral decimation of Dems premature

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — Politics is power. Politics is people. Politics is also numbers. Votes counted in an election, people win or lose and power shifts. In all of politics, no set of numbers is more sweeping in its import than those the Census Bureau reports every 10 years.

They provide the basis for the reapportionment of seats in the House of Representatives and votes in the Electoral College. Within each state, the population numbers are the raw material from which crafty political architects build their intricate redistricting plans to increase their party's number of state legislative and House seats and to create vulnerable districts for the opposition.

So it was hardly surprising that headlines greeted the news that the 1980 census figures — certified on New Year's Eve despite continuing court challenges to their accuracy — mandated a 17-seat shift, largely from the northeast and Great Lakes states to the South and the West. Eleven states gained seats, 10 states lost seats, and in some cases drastically. New York loses five House seats and electoral votes; Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois, two each. Florida is up four; Texas, three; California, two.

That is a real power shift and a continuation of a trend that has been gaining force for decades. In just 20 years, Florida has eliminated all the 29-vote edge New York had on it in the House and the Electoral College. Similarly drastic shifts have occurred within the borders of individual states, as old cities have declined, suburbs spread and new population centers merged in rural areas. Tracing the impact of these population changes through the bloody districting battles ahead in the legislatures will be one of the most fascinating political stories of the year.

But as that process begins, one word of caution is in order. Some commentaries suggest that the population trends reflected in the census report spell doom for urban programs, liberalism, the Democratic Party or all of the above.

That is almost certainly an overstatement, as a couple of simple experiments show. My colleague Christopher Colford and I recalculated

the recent presidential elections on the basis of the new Electoral College strengths and were surprised by the modesty of the resulting changes.

There have been three very close presidential elections in the last 20 years — those of 1960, 1968 and 1976. In popular vote terms, the winning candidates' margins over the runners-up were respectively, 0.2 percent, 0.7 percent and 2.1 percent. You can hardly imagine closer races.

When Colford and I recalculated the Electoral College results of those three elections as they would have been under the post-1980 census reapportionment, the surprise was that there was no surprise: The same candidates won by roughly the same margins.

In the "adjusted re-run" of 1960, John Kennedy beat Richard Nixon by 32 electoral votes — not the actual 80. In the re-run of 1968, Nixon beat Hubert Humphrey by 131 electoral votes, not 111. And in the re-run of 1976, Jimmy Carter's margin over Jerry Ford was 50 votes, not 56.

In other words, the shift of electoral votes mandated by the last three censuses consistently helps the Republicans — but not by enough even to reverse the two extremely close Democratic victories of the past two decades.

The other finding casts doubt on the theory that a reapportioned House would necessarily doom liberal programs. Colford and I looked back to some of the closest votes of the Great Society period to see how reapportionment might have affected their outcome.

Whether it was food stamps in 1964, rent supplements or the creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1965, support was comparable in the states that have gained seats to the states that are losing votes.

Obviously, it is impossible to "prove" what would have happened to such programs — or to more recent controversial liberal bills — in a reapportioned House. The impact of the population shifts will be filtered through the districting battles only now beginning in legislatures across the land.

But the most sweeping judgments about the decimation of Democratic presidential prospects and of liberal programs are at least premature and possibly precarious.

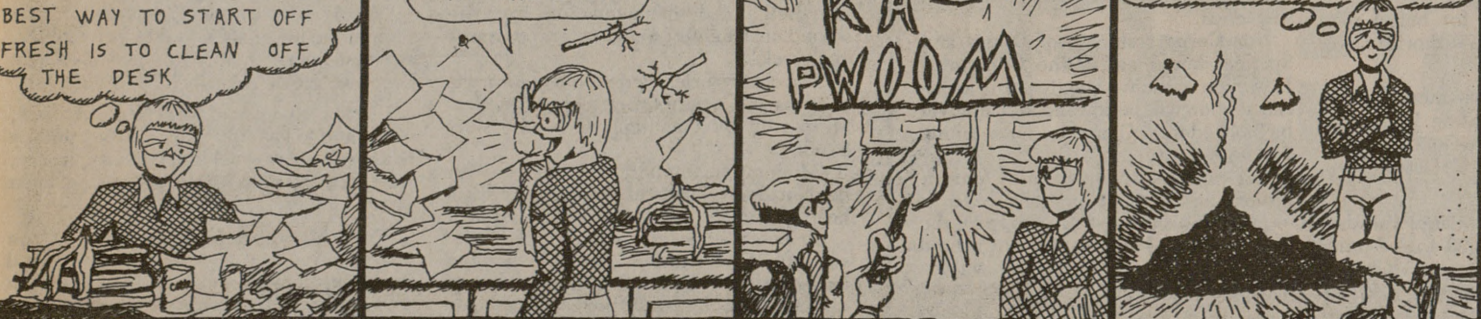
Narped

WELL, I'M BACK FOR ANOTHER SEMESTER OF A&M, AND THE BEST WAY TO START OFF FRESH IS TO CLEAN OFF THE DESK

O.K. PAUL, I'M READY IN HERE...

KA-PWOOM

NOTHING LEFT TO DO NOW BUT SHOP FOR A NEW DESK



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION
U S P S 045 360

MEMBER
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Congress

Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

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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, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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