

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

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Slouch

By Jim Earle



"Don't you think it's about time to get a haircut?"

Uncommon words, uncommon speaker

By DAVID S. BRODER

SAN FRANCISCO — "I'm recommending to black folks in this state," the speaker said, "that they abandon the defense of busing. That issue destroyed the career of Yvonne Burke (the black former U.S. representative who lost successive races for state attorney general and Los Angeles supervisor) and Jim Corman (the veteran white U.S. representative defeated for reelection last fall by an anti-busing Republican member of the Los Angeles school board).

"I've recommended to Tom Bradley (the black mayor of Los Angeles) that if he wants to be elected governor next year, he make it clear right now that busing is not his issue."

The speaker in this case is the Speaker of California Assembly, the second most important job in the No. 1 state. The speaker is Willie L. Brown, Jr., the 46-year-old black firebrand whose views are as surprising as the title he now holds.

Brown, a San Francisco lawyer with a taste for fast cars and fancy suits, had a reputation in the legislature, where he has served since he was 30, as a political maverick and battler for liberal causes. He gained a bit of national renown in 1972 as the leader of the challenged California delegation supporting George McGovern at the Democratic convention, pleading emotionally and successfully with the delegates not to oust him and his colleagues in favor of the Hubert Humphrey slate.

But here at home, Brown was always on the fringes of power, at odds with the leadership of his party in the Assembly and thwarted in his own bids to gain a leadership post.

Until this year. When the Assembly Democratic caucus was bitterly split in 1980 by the effort of Assemblyman Howard Bernman of Los Angeles to replace Speaker Leo McCarthy of San Francisco, Brown organized a rump group of Democrats.

With the active help of the Assembly's Republican minority, he put together a coalition victory for the speakership. More than half his votes came from the GOP side, and in turn he guaranteed the Republicans more procedural rights, consultation on committee appointments, more staff and facilities than they had previously enjoyed.

Four months after the coup, Brown is still struggling to regain the unified support of his own fellow-Democrats and to assert the kind of authority exercised by his powerful predecessors in the job. But he has gained a national audience with his new title, and as he crisscrosses the country, he is freely offering advice, not just on the busing issue, but on a variety of other questions facing blacks and other Democrats across America.

Brown is a one-time McGovern supporter who backed Ted Kennedy's bid to dump Jimmy Carter in 1980. Now he says he finds people like Kennedy and former Vice President Fritz Mondale almost "irrelevant" to the Democratic Party's future. "They're still dealing with the racial minorities, the new rich and the labor leadership as the core of the party," he said, "and that combination has proven to be incapable of generating a majority of voters.

As for the "McGovern reforms" that made it possible for mavericks like himself to play dramatic roles in the nominating conventions, Willie Brown now says, "We've probably reformed too much The process of all these primaries is very destructive."

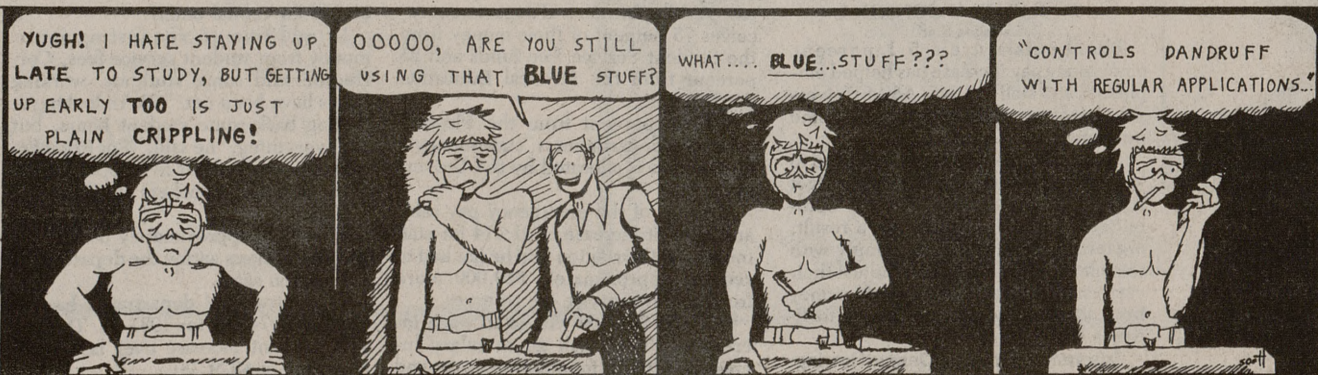
Brown says his advice to the racial minorities and feminists in the Democratic Party — who have gained seats and influence at the nominating conventions — is to give back some of those seats to the Democratic officeholders and traditional power brokers who, he says, "can help elect a Democratic President."

"Winning is absolutely everything in politics," the speaker says. "You have no impact on policies, you can deliver nothing, unless you can produce a win."

That philosophy — or, as his critics would have it, lack of philosophy — brought Willie Brown from the outsider role in the California Assembly to a position with real power. He is still groping for the levers of leadership in the job he has won, while assuring those he calls "the idealists" that "you don't have to sell to gain power."

What Willie Brown is selling is a down-to-earth and maybe even cynical view of the realities of political influence. The view is not new to our politics. But the speaker, in this case, is not the man from whose lips you would expect to be hearing this.

Warped



Ineptness behind closed doors

"I guess it was just a big mistake This is probably going to make the committee look bad."

— Tracy Cox

Bingo. It was a mistake too big for the Student Government Finance Committee to be making with student money. With anybody's money, for that matter.

Not only was there a big \$500,000 misunderstanding, but it occurred in closed session, without benefit of comment by those who might have understood the student service fee allocation process much better than Tracy Cox.

If committee members deemed themselves too good for other students to join them in the allocation hearing, they could at least have done their job correctly.

Maybe we gave the vice president for finance too much credit in hoping he could cope with seven-digit numbers with just his committee for help.

Students didn't seem overly upset by the closed session. But the result of that closed session and prior ineptness was a recommended 21 percent increase in next semester's student service fees.

Surprised? So was the finance committee.

Glass houses

By Venita McCellon and Dillard Stone

The two errors said to have caused the misunderstanding are easily forgivable. Why should the finance committee know that student service fees are assessed by the credit hour? Of course, summer students are also forgettable. They come, they go. No big deal.

These trivialities sometimes slip away from the busy mind. Nine months of planning for this allocation process is not really sufficient time for committee members to collect their thoughts.

The student body shouldn't have had to be upset over the closed session. We should be able to assume that Finance Committee members had retained the fundamentals of arithmetic from the third grade.

Au contraire. Grade school textbooks

never explained how to generate the needed \$500,000 increase from a recommended fee increase of a little over \$300 (\$1 for each student). Yes, even the committee was confused.

Who would have known that we needed to turn out in mass numbers to hold their hands while they punched their calculator buttons?

Now we know the real reason for the closed-door hearing. Instead of covering up deliberate misconduct, the session was a ploy to hide the committee's incompetence and lack of preparation. If you were inept, wouldn't you hide behind closed doors too?

Yes, the committee does look bad. Almost bad enough to warrant a review who is minding the bank.

Maybe next time students will be given say in the self-righteous process of fee allocation which the committee holds so dear. If this major embarrassment does not reduce the committee's ego, its members may have it reduced for them.

It's boners like this that provide the most convincing reasons to give their job to someone who can do it better.



Now back to you, Tass

Founding Fathers as terrorists?

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Because of the synthetic holiday Feb. 16, there wasn't much left to celebrate on the real Washington's Birthday Feb. 22.

In the absence of another opportunity to hear a ceremonial reading of the "Farewell Address," I spent most of the day brooding over a recent commentary by the Soviet news agency Tass.

If, said Tass, George Washington and his American Revolution cohorts were judged by the standards U.S. officials now apply to the world's "freedom fighters," they would be called "terrorists."

To this I cry both "pish!" and "tosh!" Nobody pays that much attention to what U.S. officials say about revolutionary groups. Present-day attitudes are to a large extent influenced by what is shown on television.

And since there was no television in Washington's time, the Tass commentary adds up to mere spitballing.

Nevertheless, if you close your eyes real tight, you can visualize how such events as the Boston Tea Party might have been reported on the nightly news with Walter Anchorman.

Anchorman: Good evening. A band of Colonial militants believed to be associated with the American independence move-

ment boarded three British ships in Boston harbor today and dumped overboard 340 chests of tea.

Here with an on-the-scene report is Betsy Roving in Boston.

(Camera picks up Roving standing in snow outside Old South Church. Her breath vaporizes as she speaks.)

Roving: Yes, Walter. My sources tell me the 40 to 50 demonstrators involved in the raid were disguised as Indians.

Anchorman: Why Indians, Betsy?

Roving: It's a matter of economics, Walter. It's cheaper to rent an Indian costume than it is to rent a pirate outfit or a gorilla suit.

Anchorman: Do we know who was behind the raid, Betsy?

Roving: According to signal lanterns seen in the church belfry, responsibility was claimed by a revolutionary group headed by Samuel Adams.

(Thirty seconds of film showing a crowd

of disgruntled colonists shaking fists and shouting "Fie! Fie!")

Anchorman: Thanks, Betsy. The raid is almost certain to put more strain on Britain's relations with the colonies. Here I analyze the explosive situation in Mellowtone at the international desk.

Mellowtone: Walter, the outlook is that the British government may now send troops to Boston to keep order. If that happens, it appears that armed conflict will be inevitable.

(Film clip of British battles being won on the playing fields of Eton.)

Anchorman: Thanks, Marvin. There may be an attempt by the colonies to grow their own tea, but unless they achieve immediate self-sufficiency, war could break out at any moment. And that's the way it was, Dec. 16, 1773.

So there you have it, Tass. If this terrorism, make the most of it.

THE BATTALION

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