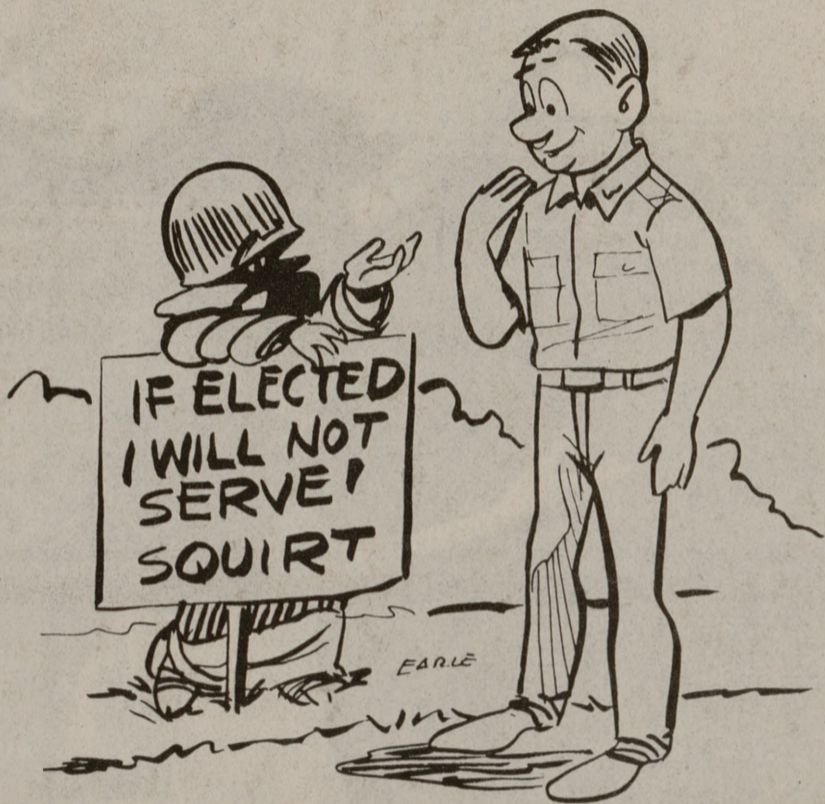


# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY  
MARCH 27, 1981

## Slouch By Jim Earle



"I consider it a positive campaign promise. Have you ever thought of how much better off we'd be if our elected politicians didn't serve?"

## Reagan overplays El Salvador

By CLAY F. RICHARDS  
United Press International  
WASHINGTON — Some of Ronald Reagan's closest advisers were caught off guard by the rapid developments in El Salvador and are now advising the president to play down the importance of the Central American nation.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig, seeking to establish an early beachhead in the battle for Reagan's heart and mind, scored a coup by bringing the relatively quiet crisis on to the nation's front page.

El Salvador dominated Reagan's second news conference as the president seemed anxious to make it clear the United States will no longer pursue a weak and vacillating policy when it comes to battling communism — especially in the Western Hemisphere.

Top Reagan domestic advisers were shocked and caught off guard by the rapidity that El Salvador moved to the front, and are now trying to convince Reagan that it is distracting from his economic program.

"I think the whole thing has been overplayed," said one of Reagan's closest advisers.

"I talk with people around the country all the time and I've not gotten a single letter or a single phone call about it — so it's not that big a thing outside Washington," he said.

"Secondly, I think it is unfortunate it has come up now because it diverts from the president's economic program," he said. "I think we've got to pay a little more attention to keeping focus on the economic package."

"It gives the boys on the Hill (Congress) a chance to run off in the other direction. It takes the pressure off them," he said. "I think we'd be better low keying it (El Salvador) right now."

So, with less than two months on the job, Reagan is falling into the trap any number of his predecessors have been caught in.

The American economy is in general terms a boring topic, and as recent history has proved it is difficult for any president to do anything that will dramatically reshape

inflation, unemployment and other economic woes.

But foreign policy is something else where America flexes its muscles, or saves governments, and is a legitimate part of the political makeup of the globe.

When Jimmy Carter found he couldn't do anything about the economy he diverted his attention to a Salt II, the Panama Canal, Middle East Peace human rights around the world.

And as a result the record of his first administration will be judged on those areas. His admission during the 1980 campaign that he had failed to realize the impact of rocketing OPEC oil prices would be inflation at home.

But the people who elected Reagan apparently were not impressed with Carter's record on Salt, Panama, the Middle East or human rights.

Poll after poll showed they wanted something done about the economy instead of it being a distraction from what they wanted them to do.

## Reporters' beliefs: vermouth in martini

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — Wherever a Washington reporter travels these days, there is invariably a discussion about the reaction of the Washington press corps to the Reagan administration and the new, more Republican Congress. Often, the operative question is: Are you guys (the press) going to give them (the Republicans) a chance?

The question reflects the public perception of a sizeable gap between the voters who choose a government and the reporters who cover it. The reality of that gap is confirmed by a new Brookings Institution book, "The Washington Reporters," by my old friend and sometimes colleague, Stephen Hess.

In 1978, Hess surveyed a cross-section of 476 Washington journalists comprising almost two-fifths of those covering the national government for American commercial news organizations. The results demonstrate convincingly that the press corps in this city is no reflection demographically of the country to which it is reporting.

We are younger, whiter, more male and far better educated than the people for whom we write and broadcast. The largest bloc of reporters, three of eight, are in their 30s; only one in six suffers, as I do, from the post-50 blahs. More than 96 percent are white; almost 80 percent are males.

We are vastly overeducated — 98.3 percent have some college training, almost half have some graduate training and one-third have graduate degrees, with most of the formal training outside the field of journalism in humanities or liberal arts.

The Northeast is overrepresented and Ronald Reagan's West greatly underrepresented, being the home of less than one in ten Washington reporters.

Hess was too polite to ask, but I'm sure we are skewed another way — being better paid than most of those in our audiences, even though a surprising lot of us drift out of reporting into other, presumably better-paying work after age 40.

What most concerns people about the Washington press corps — its possible political prejudice — is not a point on which Hess chooses to be definitive. He made no

independent effort to define or categorize the beliefs of his subjects, but he did ask the reporters themselves if they "feel there is a political bias in the Washington press corps."

Only a small fraction of his sample answered the question, and they split down the middle — 51 to 49 percent — in their yes-and-no answers. Of those who did think there was a bias, however, 96 percent said it was in the liberal direction.

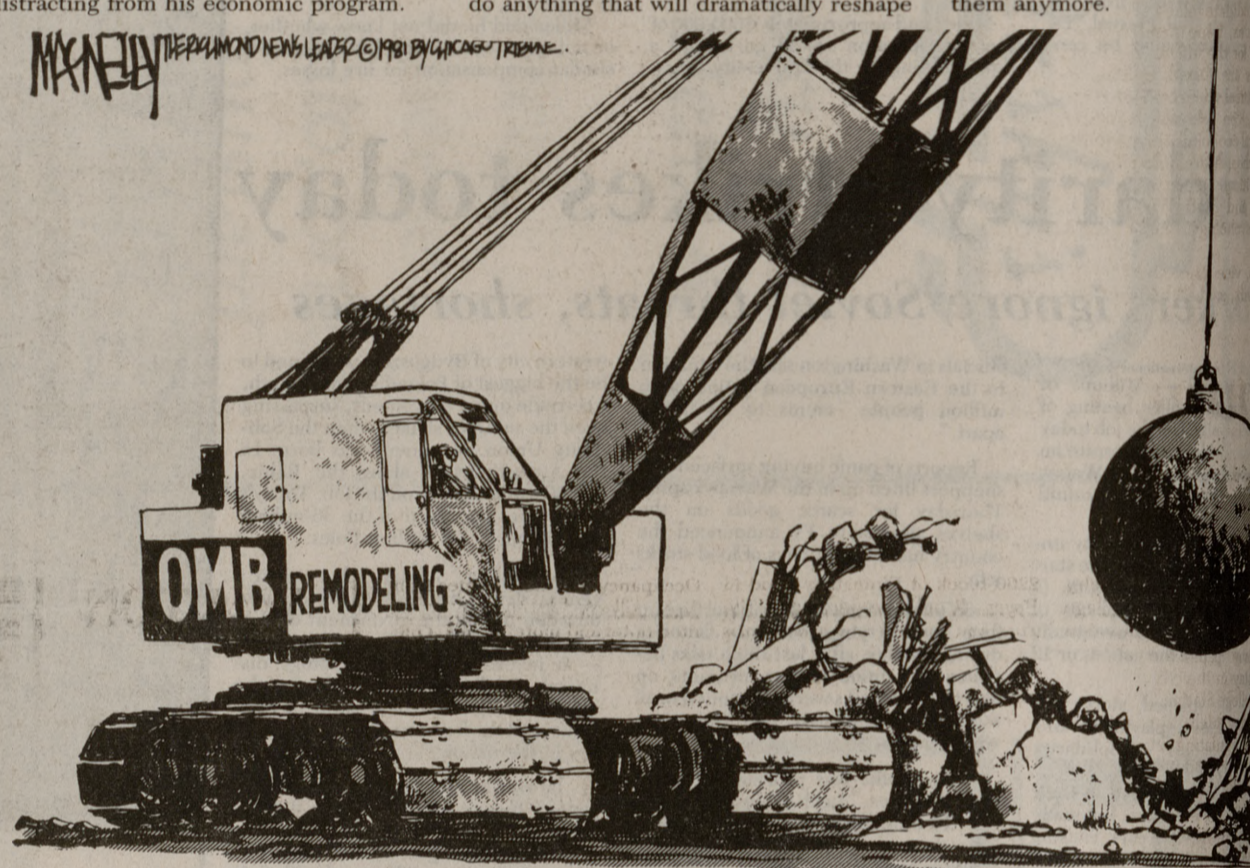
On the other hand, only 42 percent of the whole group classified their own views as liberal (compared to 39 percent middle-of-the-road and 19 percent conservative) and 47 percent claimed to be more conservative than their perception of the press corps as a whole.

My own view, for what it is worth, is that there is about as much ideology in the average Washington reporter as there is vermouth in a good martini. Not much. At this moment in history, most of us as citizens are hoping that Ronald Reagan and the Republicans can slay the dragon of inflation. It is wracking our budgets on everything from cars to college tuitions as much as it is yours.

But whatever we hope as citizens, our professional attitude as journalists toward any set of politicians — including the ones now governing here — has to be one of skepticism. It's our job, as Hess understands, to poke behind the rhetoric of presidential pronouncements and examine the evidence that supports the claims for the particular elixir this government is peddling.

Hess faults us — and rightly, I think — for relying too much on interviews and too little on documented evidence, for chasing too many spot stories and spending too little time examining long-term trends.

His book is a reminder to those of us in the business that with the increasing editorial freedom and journalistic autonomy we have gained in our reporting jobs, we have a commensurate burden of responsibility. And, whether or not it's a consolation to the readers, it suggests that there are shortcomings in the Washington press corps that are more serious than our widely assumed but dubious political bias.



It's your turn

## Regents are applying the squeeze

Editor:

I read the Battalion's front page article on the fee increases for the fall semester of 1981. I'm sure I'm just one of the many stunned readers hit with the disastrous news that our parents and ourselves will have to suffer another 20 percent of fee increases.

One of my biggest complaints is that this increase was not even attempted to be gradual. It seems the committee feels they want to jump in with both feet and we good Ags up for all they can squeeze from our dry pocketbooks.

It is obviously true that prices are going up everywhere and I'd be the first to admit that I don't want to stop the staff pay increases to deal with these rising costs. But I also feel that this sudden crunch not be so extreme.

The main problem is that the Board of Regents realizes that they've got us where they want us. If we choose not to pay these ridiculous increases in the dorm rate for a 13x12 room, they can find someone that will — since there's such a tremendous demand for on-campus housing at Texas A&M.

Another point. Why aren't there any modulars for men? Since we are supposed to be living in such a non-sexist society, it sure seems that our housing department wants to lean the other way and force the

men into living in the not-so-fantastic dorms.

I now live in Dunn Hall and had to fight like hell to get here. But I guarantee anybody it's not quite worth \$655 a semester and the starchy food is not anywhere close to being worth \$563 a semester.

Also I'd like to comment on the unfortunate residents of Hotard Hall. If the residents don't want certain modernizations, why give it to them? They should have some say in the matter; after all they're paying for services they don't want.

In general, the committee says they feel they're representing the residents appropriately, but did they ever ask our point of view on this subject? On anything for that matter?

Keith Sherman '84

### Editorial brings tears

Editor:

The editorial "Feeling education's pinchers" by Dillard Stone brought tears to my





eyes. There is truth to his observations.

school is to be made so expensive that a limited number can afford it. The message is his perspective. Without the mass of the statistics, his claim of limiting enrollment by cost is sophistry. The service to be free, but that is a bit unrealistic.

Such a small fraction of the cost of our education at this institution. Even private college students don't pay the entire cost of maintaining and attending their private colleges. We are heavily subsidized by wage earners and property owners of Texas and of the United States. Let Mr. Stone complain to them. I am at this institution because this is the best bargain in the country. The people of Texas should be thanked by us. The education supported by us should not be used to supply a forum for immature students' regurgitation of main line tales of woe. Let us go about our lives and lives without this lugubrious "Water shall seek its own level."

Tom K. Skiff

## Warped

<p>SCIENCE-FICTION + FANTASY: A MEDIUM FOR UNDERSTANDING, CHANGE AND SPECULATION — IN OTHER WORDS, THE FUTURE.</p> 	<p>A MEDIUM THAT TEACHES OF OTHER WORLDS, OTHER CULTURES, AND THEREBY TEACHES US ABOUT OURSELVES.</p> 	<p>A MEDIUM WHOSE PEOPLE DREAM BIGGER, AND HOPE WITH MORE OPEN MINDS.</p> 	<p>THE PEOPLE OF SCIENCE-FICTION AND FANTASY: THE BELIEVERS IN WONDER.</p>  <p>LIVE LONG AND PROSPER!</p>
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## By Scott McCullar

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