

VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY
APRIL 14, 1981

Slouch

By Jim Earle



"Would you believe this tile fell out of the sky and almost hit me in the head? It was early Sunday morning right after they launched the space shuttle."

Collision coming between TV, public

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The people in television news are on a collision course with public opinion on an issue of some importance to our politics, and it would be well for all of us in the press if the collision can be avoided.

The issue is the broadcast of presidential election returns into states where the polls are still open — especially, the early projection of an election decision while voters are still weighing how, or whether, to vote.

There was an uproar in the West last November, when NBC News led its two rivals in calling the election for Ronald Reagan at 8:15 p.m. Eastern time, almost three hours before the voting ended in California and other Pacific Coast states. There were reports of people leaving the lines outside polling places, of drivers on their way to the polls going home instead. There were accusations from losers of close local races that the broadcasts had cost them the election.

My suspicion at the time was that the accusations were exaggerated and that the uproar would soon subside. But on the latter point, at least, I was wrong.

When I spoke recently to civic audiences in Spokane, Wash., and Grants Pass, Ore., the first question each evening was whether the networks would "inflict" their projections again in the 1984 election.

A late January poll of California voters by Mervin D. Field found 74 percent of those interviewed would prohibit such projections before the polls have closed. Bills to ban such broadcasts, introduced in the heat of last fall's anger, have been reintroduced by such senators as James McClure (R-Idaho) and S.I. Hayakawa (R-Calif.). Hearings are planned in the House. The problem is not going away and the closer we come to 1984 without a resolution, the more anger and controversy there will be.

As a journalist, I have a lot of sympathy for the networks' position on this issue. As Bill Small, the president of NBC News, says: "To me, the thought of suppressing something is awful." And despite the anecdotal evidence, it is very hard to show

through statistics that TV projections discourage voting turnout significantly — let alone to the disadvantage of one party or candidate.

The most careful sifting of the statistical evidence, by Raymond Wofinger and Peter Linquiti in the February-March issue of Public Opinion magazine, suggests that the impact may be in the range of a 2.7 percent falloff. That's not huge, but it's not insignificant either.

What is clear is that the belief that "my individual vote counts" is important to many, many people, and they are offended by being told that their act is without significance to the outcome. Yet, it is also a fact that an Electoral College majority may be collected in this country before the West has cast or counted its votes for President.

So what is to be done? Some bills would ban the broadcast of any presidential election returns anywhere until the polls have closed everywhere. That is not only offensive to the First Amendment, it is nonsensical. Why should Maine voters wait to learn what they have done until the polls close in Alaska?

Other bills would restrict journalists' access to areas around voting places and thus impede the interviews that are sometimes used for voting projections. Again, the First Amendment would surely be damaged by that precedent, and, in some areas, the absence of press scrutiny would also invite voting frauds.

Other bills provide a uniform polling-closing time across the nation. That is achievable, but only at extra expense and inconvenience for voting officials in some regions, or the deprivation of some voters of the convenience of voting before or after work.

The simplest solution, it seems to me, is for the American networks to do voluntarily what their Canadian counterparts are already required to do by law when a federal election is held there: activate the broadcast networks by time zone, from east to west, as the polls close.

Ousted prof says goodbye

By LEE WHITT

My name is Dr. Lee Whitt. I used to teach mathematics at Texas A&M University. I've read the articles about me, especially the letter by Dr. McIntyre, and I feel compelled to make some comments. We have a student population of over 30,000. If there were no students here, I would agree completely with Dr. McIntyre's arguments. Using his analogy with football, if there were no spectators in the stands and nobody cared about the game, then it wouldn't matter how the football team was selected and organized. But the stands are there, and they are full of students who do care. If the team organizers are doing a poor job, then the students should respond accordingly now (and will respond accordingly when they become alumni).

Dr. McIntyre seems to feel that all I want

Guest

Column

to do is teach. My research record shows that this is false. I have written six papers, four are in highly respected journals, one is being considered for publication as a book or pamphlet, and one will be submitted for publication soon. I am currently streamlining my classification of 8-dimensional quaternionic Kaehler manifolds, and I expect to finish one more paper before I

leave. I would be happy to let anyone view my research. I would also be happy to give a talk on any topic covered in my papers.

I want to use this opportunity to say good-bye to my students. I will miss you, especially those I have come to know as friends. Without exception, you treated me with great respect and I, in turn, fully, have returned the compliment. Last year I won the "Excellence in Teaching" award. I consider it a high point of my career at A&M and I shall always value it. I wish you all success and happiness in the future.

Dr. Lee Whitt, an assistant professor of mathematics, was denied tenure because what his superiors felt was a lack of research.

It's your turn

Iranian protests irresponsible acts

Editor:

With regards to the presentation given on April 7 by Richard Queen which was conducted mostly in a tense atmosphere, (I wish to make the following comments:

1. The Political Forum's decision on inviting Queen as an expert on Iran (in the broad sense) is questionable. Due to his short length of stay in Iran, Queen, by no means, should be regarded as a qualified person for educating students on that matter. Hence, it can be said that the audience was not given a fair and honest chance of listening to a true expert on the Iranian affairs.

2. The fact that the speaker was not qualified on the topic, plus his bias and hostility toward the Islamic Republic of Iran, led him into giving a lot of wrong and distorted information to the audience. The Iranian students among the audience felt strongly responsible to correct the speaker but while doing so they were confronted with a hostile and childish reaction on the part of some individuals among the audience who disrupted the order time and again. The atmosphere created by these people who belong to the "Highway 6 school of thought" was so ugly and intimidating that it drew sharp reactions.

On the irresponsible behavior of these people, on April 8, The Battalion wrote "... the crowd was not as polite greeting (these) questions with hisses," and The Eagle on the same day wrote "... Hisses and comments from the crowd grew louder until a Political Forum representative finally called an end to the questioning."

3. It is very unfortunate and alarming to witness such a well orchestrated and childish act on the part of a rather sizeable group at a major institute of higher education like Texas A&M. These people went so far as even writing to the Batt's editor in an effort to conceal their cadaverous act by holding the Iranian students guilty while painting themselves as the nice guys. The Society of Iranian Students does not intend to respond to any of these letters because of the fact that it is absolutely impossible for the responsible people to stoop to as low a level as these individuals.

Mustafa Mostafavi

Stop tuition hike

Editor:

It's impossible for me to understand the callous attitude of the administration here at Texas A&M concerning their stance on the issue of tuition increases. Their expectation of an increase in enrollment next year may come true — But, A&M's entering classes have been growing increasingly for

years. What this projection really means is that overall there will probably be an increase in enrollment, despite the Senate 101 Committee's projection of a 5 percent decrease in enrollment of this year's freshmen to junior classes who will be forced to discontinue school due to financial overloads. Their attitude, "if you don't want it, someone else will" should be translated as — "if you can't afford it, someone else can!" I believe that if one student has to drop out of A&M because he can't afford to enroll, then that's one student too many!

I've always been under the impression that the duty of our administration was to promote higher education. In the advent of this tuition increase bill, the Junior College Association of Boards and Presidents immediately condemned its purposes. These people understand the importance of a college education as one last chance to improve themselves. It's too bad that the Four Year College Presidents and Administration don't understand that there is some need to make an education available to everyone — on an equal basis, whether they're rich, poor or middle class.

The people that are going to be counted out are the very ones we need to help the most. It's their hopes and ambitions that will be denied on a financial basis — the cruelest punishment of all. To deny one the opportunity to attend college based on their mental ability or intelligence is one thing — but to be denied an education in the richest state in the union because the Texas legislature decides to make it too expensive to afford is a real tragedy.

The real question is why raise taxes on students (which is exactly what a tuition increase is — a raise in taxes.) When in fact, no other taxes are proposed for anyone else in the state of Texas? With all the taxable luxuries we enjoy and are willing to pay for everyday, why make such a valuable necessity unobtainable to everyone?

The reason is obvious — the Texas legislature is picking on the students because they are the weakest, most unorganized interest group of the state. The student lobbies are no match for professional lobbyist's financial and persuasive powers. But, it's still our obligation as Aggies to let Senator Caperton and Rep. Presnal know how we feel about this type of insensitivity.

Senator Caperton, as a member of the Senate Education Committee, is one of the two votes left out of six necessary to kill this Bill in Committee. He has hesitated to give a definite commitment as to how he plans to vote on the tuition situation. Remember,

Senator Caperton represents Texas — we are his constituency as much as a handful of administrators! Write to Caperton in Austin — in care of the State Capitol — and make the right decision and let's help our friends in school!

Tommy Schwartz

Canadian hometown

Editor:

Attention Canadian Aggies. You may be surprised that we are a group of approximately 75 students. In the past, this group has had no organization to represent it. We plan to rectify that situation by starting a Canadian Hometown Club. The objectives of this club will be to help Canadian students find their way in our social life. We hope to give Canadians here some identification. In order to become an active campus organization, we invite all Canadians and friends of Canadians to join in our first organizational meeting on Thursday, April 16, 1981, in room 109 of the Military Science Building at 7 p.m.

Please come out in full force to help this organization started. If you have any questions or problems please call us. Mike Hoche 845-5777 Theresa Craig 693-3434

Why did you leave?

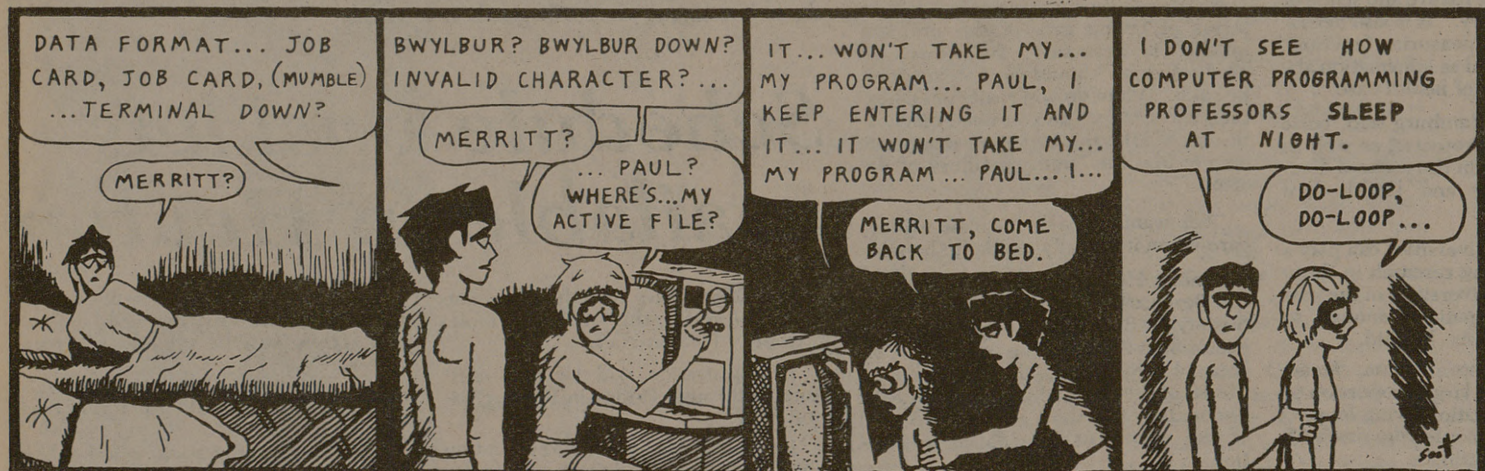
Editor:

Dear Lisa: Do not worry — the dog you saw abandoned last Thursday on College Avenue found a good home. You see, I was in the area of the triangle that day. When I saw that poor dog running down the street, I picked it up and took it to a friend of mine at the Ice House. Thanks to your letter, I have given up trying to find his owner and have instead found him a good home.

What we would like to ask you, Miss Lisa, is why you were more concerned about getting the license number of the car than the well-being of the dog? Are you more concerned with finding fault in a fellow student than in helping an animal in need? We don't think your heart is really in the place in this matter and wanted you to know.

Walter Doyle

Warped



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION

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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.

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