

# VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION  
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY  
JUNE 2, 1981

## Slouch

By Jim Earle



"This is a typical case of a severe withdrawal from the registration process."

## Spare the rod and spoil the machine

By DICK WEST  
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Physically attacking an inanimate object is widely considered an irrational act, and maybe it is. Certainly such antics rarely stand up in court as evidence of sanity.

Yet it was more than a perception of flaky behavior that aroused public interest in the case of a California man accused of shooting a lawnmower that wouldn't start.

There also was a vicarious thread running through our reaction to the incident. Who among us has never been tempted to wreak mayhem on some malfunctioning appliance? Let anyone totally innocent of this base impulse cast the first golf club.

The Californian who confessed to gunning down his lawnmower was fined \$65 for discharging a firearm in a populated area. Had he been booked on the more serious charge of armed assault, the jury probably would have ruled it a case of justifiable mowicide.

The desire to inflict retribution on mechanical tormentors seems to be part of the universal experience. The unfortunate part is not that we harbor such primitive emotions but that we tend to stifle them as not in harmony with reason.

I regularly play tennis with a man who has one of the sweetest dispositions you are even likely to run across. Tolerant, kind, gentle, amiable — he is all of these things, and more.

But let his tennis racket commit some act of treachery and he flings it viciously across

the court. Or into the net. Or again the backstop. Or, as happened one memorable evening, into the overhead lighting fixtures of an indoor tennis facility.

As a result of this harsh discipline, he has one of the most dependable tennis rackets I know of.

I, by contrast, belong to the permissive school of racketowning. I indulge my racket scandalously. At times, I have let it get away with murder, so to speak.

In consequence, I have a tennis racket that is perfidious, unpredictable and a total ingrate.

But there is more to machine retaliation than keeping implements in line. I am convinced my friend's good-natured attitude toward his associates is possible in large part because he vents his hostility on his racket.

There is a lesson in this for all of us. It is said the tremendous amount of violence in American life is a sign of a "sick" society. Might it not also be a sign that we have become too docile in dealing with machines?

We let ourselves be mechanically humiliated and frustrated without striking back. Then, when finally we reach the breaking point, we exercise our resentments on our fellows rather than the source.

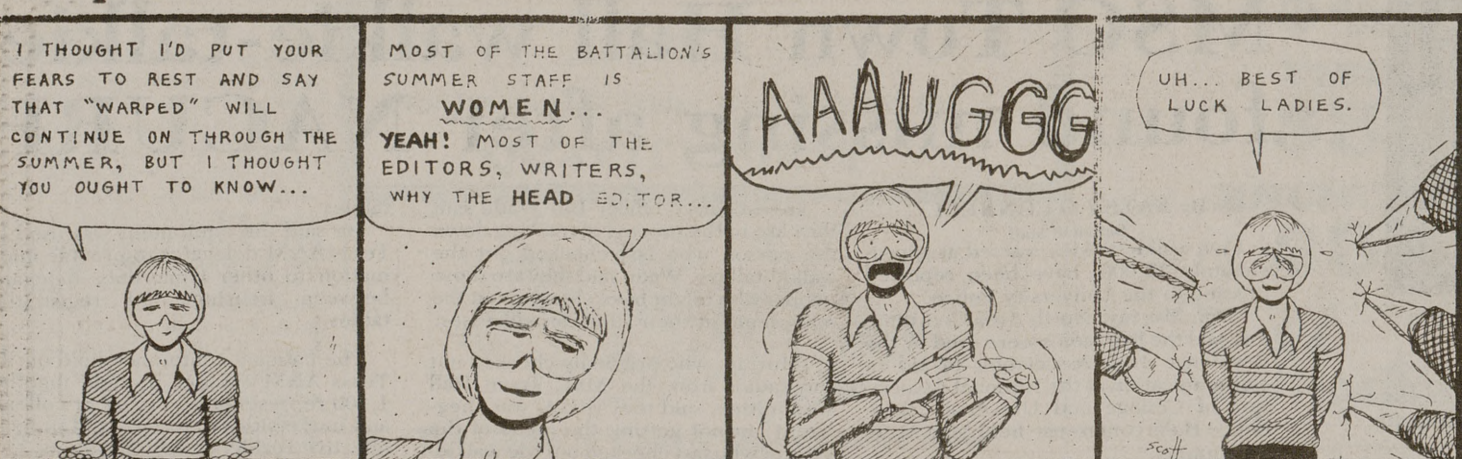
Shooting, rather than kicking or smiting the offending machine, may be a bit extreme. But no man who pumps six revolver bullets into a balky lawnmower can be all bad.

### the small society

by Brickman



### Warped



## Democrats should take lessons

By DAVID S. BRODER

EASTON, MD. — If the Democrats are not too proud to borrow from the opposition — and with all their other problems, they can hardly afford excessive pride as well — there is an idea here eminently worth copying. It is called the Tidewater Conference.

Tidewater is a weekend house-party and unofficial issues seminar for Republican members of the House and Senate and elected statewide officials. It was started in 1978 at the urging of Sen. Bob Packwood, who in the 1960s had launched a similar venture for grassroots Republicans in his home state of Oregon. The fourth of these annual spring events was held here last weekend at the Tidewater Inn, an Eastern Shore resort-hotel that gives the meeting its name.

It was, like its predecessors, a lively session. Quoting oneself is bad form, but the judgment expressed here after Tidewater I in 1978 has been amply confirmed: "Packwood may have invented the best solution yet found to a perennial and debilitating problem for our political parties: Their inability and reluctance to discuss policy questions."

The problem is particularly acute for the party out of power — which the Republicans were when Tidewater started and the Democrats are today. "The real business of a party out of power," the 1978 column said, "is to prepare itself and its leaders for the moment when they are, once again, the government. Packwood has found a humane, relaxed format for addressing those inescapable issues of government, in an atmosphere that breeds collegiality and consensus, not rivalry and diatribe."

The format works so well that Democrats

barely need to tinker with it. The participants are elected officials and their spouses. They gather in a sports-shirt-and-slacks atmosphere, unchaperoned by staff and uninhibited by the workday distinctions of seniority and rank. They meet over drinks, dinner and a piano sing-along on Friday night before they sit down at roundtables of a dozen to start talking issues on Saturday morning. The debates are lively and funny — and, somehow, more agreements than expected emerge.

Part of the secret is simply that a lot of these folks are meeting dealing with each other for the first time at Tidewater. The House and Senate are separate worlds, and Washington is far removed from the state-house in Jefferson City, Des Moines or Salem. Caricatures of right-winger or left-winger begin to disappear when an Orrin Hatch and a Pete McCloskey, a John Rousset and a Dick Snelling talk substantively around the tables.

The conviviality and consensus at the first three Tidewaters were so striking — especially after the civil war that had wracked the Republican Party at its 1976 convention — that most of us covering them tended to minimize the import of the policy statements.

Looking back now, you can see that Tidewater foreshadowed not only the new unity of the GOP but its philosophical direction. The first conference in 1978 adopted resolutions anticipating the major themes of the Reagan administration. It said that "government alone cannot solve our social problems without an unacceptable burden upon the taxpayer and an unacceptable loss of personal freedom." It called for "substantial permanent reductions in federal in-

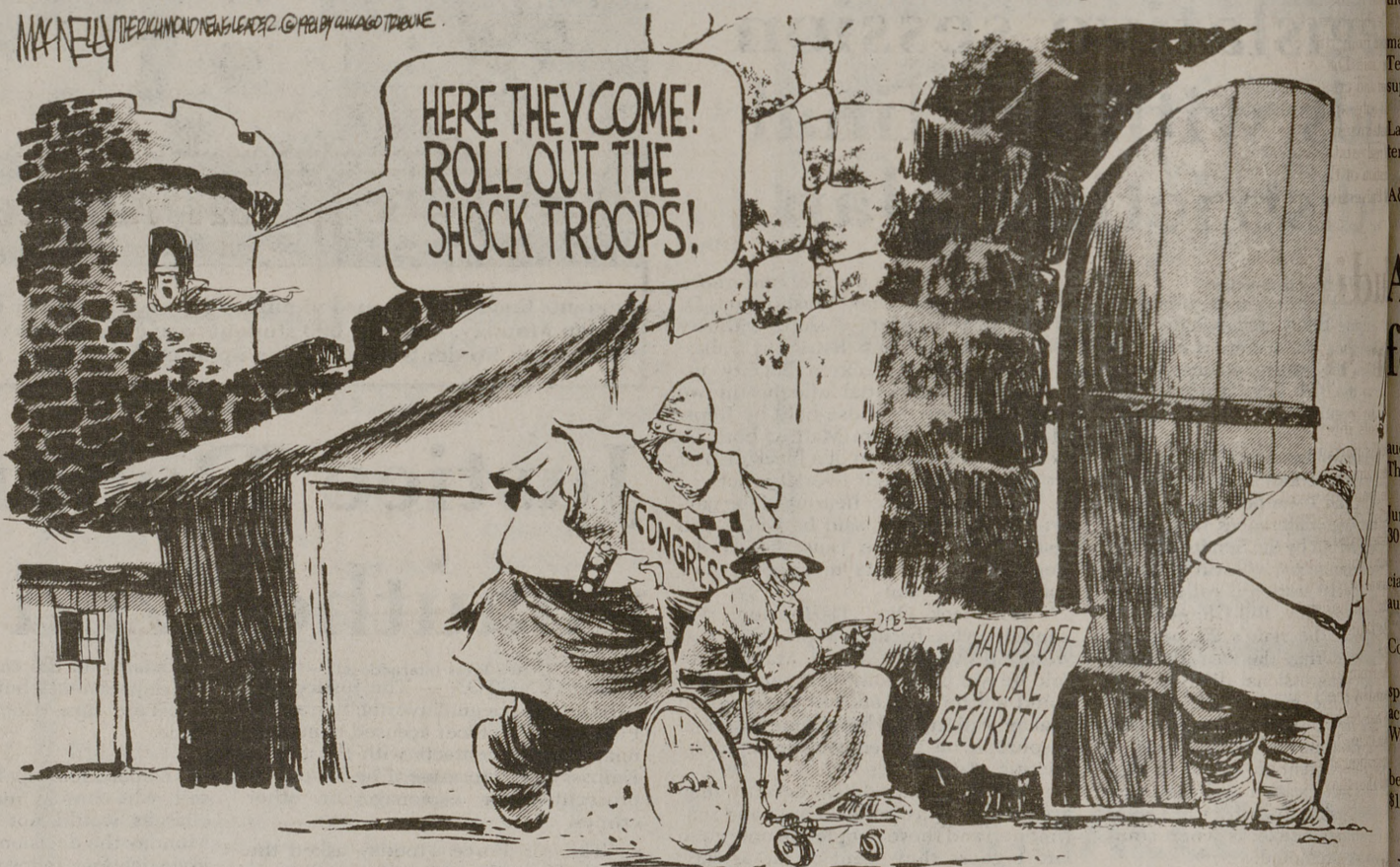
come and capital gains tax rates." It called for consolidation of narrow federal categorical grants into broad block grants. It advocated an increase in defense spending "in the face of mounting Soviet military aggression."

Do the Democrats need such a format where their quarrelsome officeholders can socialize and converse? The question answers itself. On the day the latest Tidewater ended, Haynes Johnson of the Washington Post reported — after interviewing many leading Democrats — an agreement with the observation of the McPherson, the former Lyndon Johnson aide, that "the Democratic Party is a perennial happening... a label without substance." "Wouldn't it be better if we had each other?" Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) asked plaintively.

Of course, there are risks in assembling officeholders who share a common label but differ on almost everything else. Back in 1978, Rep. John J. Rhodes of Ohio, then the House GOP leader, said his first reaction (to the Tidewater idea) was "Why do we want to stir up that mess?" But Rhodes came to Eastern Shore the first 50 pioneers — and saw it worked.

The Tidewater Conferences have been underwritten by the Republican and congressional campaign committees an annual cost of less than \$3,000. Over millions of dollars Republicans have in the last four years, as they have ever closer to becoming the majority in our government, no money has better spent.

Democrats are free to profit from example.



### It's your turn

## Government control is problem

**Editor:**  
The main thrust of 'liberalism' is that our capitalist society has been a failure, and that government should take control in order to protect the 'poor' and 'needy.' This theory, called Keynesian economics, is responsible for our current economic troubles.

Every president since Roosevelt has embraced Keynesian economics. The result has been high inflation, high taxes, and lowered productivity and growth. Burdensome regulation has made making a profit unprofitable. Businesses are being driven into bankruptcy by unfair tax systems.

Yet every time there is an effort to repair the damage by returning to a capitalist

system, 'liberals' cry out about the 'poor' and 'needy,' and manage to scuttle the attempt.

We do not have a capitalist system now. We have a quasi-socialist/collectivist system that drifts and stalls and shudders from every shortage or surplus that comes along. Such a system is far worse for the 'poor' and 'needy' than capitalism could ever be.

No 'liberal' is a sworn enemy of capitalism. They claim to be improving the system

when they pass legislation that damages these people live in a world where opportunity have the same means and opportunity have the same means.

President Reagan and his economic policy is the only one that reflects the Keynesian economics in favor of capitalism and freedom. I urge people to support his efforts to turn the country around.

### THE BATTALION

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