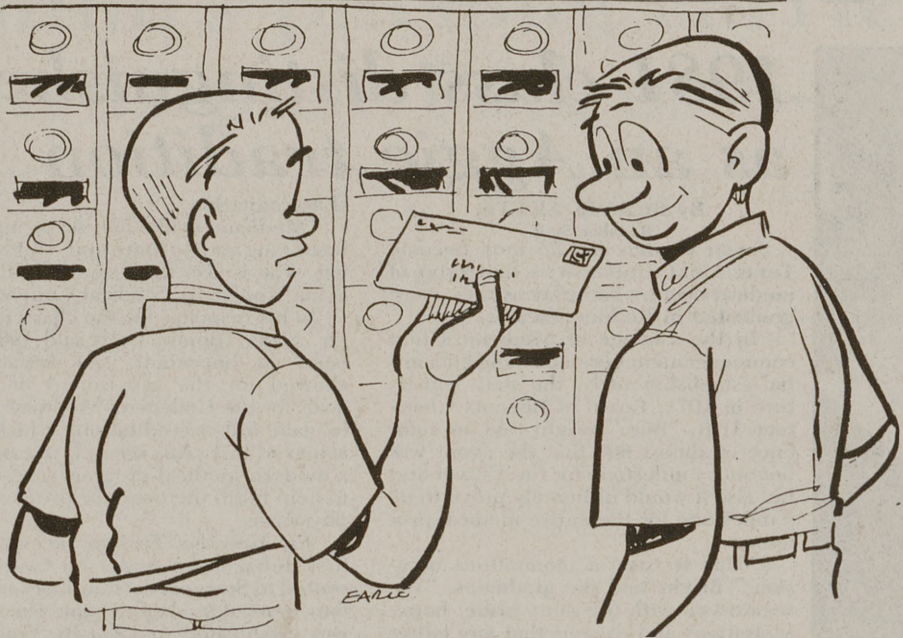


VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY
JUNE 9, 1981

Slouch By Jim Earle



"My letter home came back saying it was undeliverable, and no forwarding address. Probably just a post office mistake, but then maybe..."

Debate sponsors begin looking ahead

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — The last things on most people's minds these days are the presidential debates of 1984. But the League of Women Voters is not like most people. Having sponsored the Carter-Ford debates in 1976 and the Reagan-Anderson and Reagan-Carter debates in 1980, the women of the League are already turning their minds to keeping this fledgling tradition alive in 1984.

As one who has publicly questioned the appropriateness of the League's sponsorship of these debates, I was a bit disarmed by the invitation to join League officers and some interested politicians, lawyers and academics in a discussion at League headquarters last week about the future of the debates.

Two things became clear during the session. The League is awfully anxious to continue as prime sponsor of presidential debates. And its leaders are probably more aware of the risks in the debate game than any of us who have criticized them from the sidelines. Naive they are not.

The League regards the debates as an exercise in civic education, which they are. But they are also prime pieces of political theater — which guarantees that the fight over the timing, location and casting of the debates becomes a matter of major importance to the campaign strategies of rival candidates. The 1980 Carter-Reagan debate had the largest audience in television history and played a big part in the Reagan landslide.

What first bothered me about the League's sponsorship of these debates was the fact that an avowedly nonpartisan organization — which, in fact, has constituency pressures of its own — was playing a critical role in an affair on which a whole election could turn. To whom was the League accountable, when it excluded independent candidate Eugene McCarthy from the 1976 debates, included independent John Anderson in the first 1980 debate (boycotted by Jimmy Carter) and excluded him from the last debate?

The answer is no one — any more than the *Nashua Telegraph* was accountable to anyone for its now-famous decision to invite only Ronald Reagan and George Bush to its debate before the 1980 New Hampshire primary.

If the League is going to continue as sponsor of the debates, the discussion made

clear, it would be better for its own sake — and for the credibility of the debates — if the ground rules could be laid down publicly in advance, rather than negotiated under heavy pressure and in deep secrecy with the candidates' representative who are reading pre-election polls.

The League officers would like such standards to be worked out in advance, if only to avoid the charges of arbitrariness such as those that followed their decision to set a 15-percent poll standing as the cutoff for Anderson and other independents seeking admission to the 1980 debates.

Based upon the defeats of Ford in 1976 and Carter in 1980, there is beginning to be a suspicion among campaign managers that the debates work against incumbents. That may not be true, but it will make incumbents even more assertive than they have been in the past in setting down conditions for their own participation. They have not been shy about arm-twisting the League officials. Looming always in such negotiations is the threat that if the League balks, some other organization can be found that will give the President what he wants — and thereby grab the glory of sponsorship.

Is there any escape from this dilemma? Two suggestions were made. Many of the League officers and many of the kibitzers were attracted by the proposal of television producer Jim Karayn, who staged the 1976 debates, that a blue-ribbon, bipartisan commission be formed to lay down in advance "fair" ground rules for the next round of debates.

I see nothing wrong with that as a way to try to constrain the arbitrariness of an incumbent in manipulating the eventual negotiations. But first I would like to see the Republican and Democratic parties challenged to join in proposing their own permanent rules for presidential debates. They are the organizations that choose presidential candidates, and it would be appropriate for them — through a negotiating committee named by their national chairmen — to set forth the terms of future debates, and then commit their respective candidates, through a party bylaw or convention resolution, to participate.

It is a challenge the parties ought to confront, before we resign ourselves to more frantic, closed-door negotiations in the League's offices, with campaign managers using boycott threats to impose conditions on the debates that no one — including the League — finds easy to defend.

Proposal warrants scrutiny

Editor:

There is a proposal floating around which should be closely scrutinized, and I believe reflected as not being beneficial to the student body. As it is rumored a decision will be made in June on this proposal, those opposed to it need be informed and move quickly — such is my aim.

The current proposal is to create a new intramurals complex, without lights, equipment shed, irrigation system, or infields constructed. In essence services will be asked to clear an isolated piece of land west of the current Penberthy facility, fence it, and that is all! Included in this plan is the turning over of Field 14 of the Penberthy facility to the exclusive use of the Women's Softball Program. This field would therefore be fully fence enclosed, have a mix sand-humus infield re-installed, be worked daily, and be restricted to the use of the 20 some odd women's fast pitch players, and coaches. This plan will take a field away from the Intramural Program.

In essence the student body will lose the services of one conveniently located, well constructed (if ill kept) field, dedicated formally to intramurals less than two years ago, for a vacant lot (you remember them from when you were 6 or 7 and played in them). This will be a long trek away from campus (most people will use transportation of some sort), and will cost the Intramural Department the ability to offer: 12 football games per week in the early fall; 12 soccer/flickerball playing hours in the late fall; and 8 softball hours per week in the spring. If these figures alone were all we are dealing with, then the case for injury to the whole student body would already be made. However, the Women Softballer's will certainly not want Intramural games going on while they are playing. I certainly would not. The fans which they are moving here to get (a subject we will touch upon later), sitting in a well built facility, should not be subject to distracting noises, flying softballs from other fields, and from players warming up. Nor does the congestion give the Women's Fast Pitch game the prestige which it deserves.

If we estimate only 1 hour of interface per

week during the spring (surely a conservative figure knowing their large schedule — and nothing we are not figuring in any interface in their fall schedule), and thus cancellation of games on fields 11-13 for 1 hour (also a very conservative figure since the idea will be to minimize congestion all about the event. Since their games usually last 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours, a clearing of the complex for 2 hours would be more likely asked for. However, just the exclusion of 1 hour of fields service on 11-13 will make the point). This will eliminate another 3 participation hours per week in the spring, bringing that total to 11 hours per week being taken away from Intramurals.

The Intramural Department, as exemplified by their recent "open house" meeting with interested participants, is on the verge of limiting the amount of team entries. (This past year we operated at 98% capacity). This proposal's adoption would assure this occurring, and in fact would force a reduction in team entry numbers substantially from current levels. Further, those who are fortunate enough to participate (those who are in the block long line at 7 a.m., the first day of sign up for football, softball, and possibly soccer and flickerball) in the future would do so in a facility far inferior physically, and isolated from campus.

Why did this proposal come about? It surfaced because the Women's Softball Team has trouble generating attendance at Bee Creek Park (their present home). It is felt by them that a location within walking distance of the campus could facilitate their games ability to draw a crowd. There is some logic in this, and it might work!

However, there are two very large questions to be answered before this can be said to be a viable plan. First, how can we substantiate the use of a field, historically committed to the enjoyment of the whole student body, by only 20 plus members of the student body 365 days a year? In reference to the number of playing hours curtailed by this proposal, and extrapolating those figures to see how many teams and thus persons will be excluded suggests that 1672 participants will be excluded from Intramurals. This is not to mention the accompanying exclusion of fan participants, and re-

venue to student officials would be tailed due to fewer games being played. Thus, 1672 (a very conservative figure) not be able to participate so that it is posedly "equal" students can enjoy to themselves close to the University is not my definition of equality — does come close to godhood! Second, has it been proved that Women's Softball when their games have been moved "door" will draw substantially larger crowds? Yes, they may get a drop-in since they will now be so near to Bee Creek Park (their present home) as Bee Creek which will not be Penberthy, but such minimal impact begin to balance out for the 1672 participants displaced from Intramurals year. In fact the drop-in crowd there be painfully overstated. The Texas Women's Softball Team has had a national record and national ranking years now, and yet the crowds have been pathetic. This is true even though games are held less than 2 miles from campus! (Not over the mountains some of the softballers' make it sound!)

I am an umpire in the Bryan Station area, and have played and seen San Antonio. In College Station there are 64 men's and women's teams — many fast pitch teams. In Bryan there are approximately 100 slow pitch teams participating, and just 9 fast pitch teams. The participation pattern is very similar to San Antonio. In both locations, fast pitch wherever held are always well attended. This is because the spectators made up of a very narrow range in which the fast pitch game supports Pitch is not baseball, nor is it slow softball (the number one people's sport in America), but an extremely exciting game appreciated by only a close circle of loyalists. If this proposal goes through will not be supporting the advancement of the Women's Fast Pitch Team's supporters, but rather we will be neglecting needs of many for the selfish interests very few.

Beware of neutron mothballs

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — This is National Pest Control Month, folks. Let us celebrate accordingly.

In a commemorative statement distributed, not to say solicited, by the National Pest Control Association, President Reagan urges all Americans to "support and participate in responsible and effective pest management practices whenever we can."

The path is clear. It behooves us all to swat a fly, spray or squash a roach and take a termite exterminator to lunch.

Actually, however, the modern trend in pest control has been away from direct frontal assault. Thanks to the leadership of the Agricultural Research Service, the emphasis has been on developing subtle ways of doing in insects.

One of the landmark experiments involved the sterilization by radiation of male screwworm flies. This is one area where we may only have scratched the surface, or whatever is itching.

If large areas can be rid of screwworms by rendering males incapable of propagation, it stands to reason that radiation has a bright future in home pest control.

The outline for the next chapter may have been written on Three Mile Island where the management of that troubled nuclear power plant reported finding radioactive "mouse droppings" on the premises.

That discovery suggests the world's first atomic mousetrap may now be technically feasible.

I'm not talking now about nuking mice in

the conventional sense. But build a better mousetrap using the principles of nuclear engineering and the world surely will beat a leadlined path to your door.

And if a nuclear-powered mousetrap is just around the corner, there is no reason why the principle couldn't be applied as well to insect control.

The latter prospect seems further enhanced by the advent of the so-called "neutron warhead," a weapon that causes relatively little blast damage but greatly increases the spread of radiation.

Let's say Elrod J. hears a strange noise in the attic and, upon investigation, discov-

ers that moths have chewed holes in the bellows of his bagpipes. He immediately heads for his friendly, neighborhood control store and buys a neutron mousetrap.

Instead of repelling moths, it gets them with the smell of bagpipes. The bomb goes off. While the explosion does damage to the attic, it releases radioactive gas to render moths incapable of reproduction.

We may not see this in our lifetime, it's coming. Meanwhile, perhaps some inventor inspired by Reagan's Pest Control Week message will build a radioactive paper.

the small society

by Brickm



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Warped



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

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

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. Editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for length, but will make every effort to maintain the intent. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer.

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