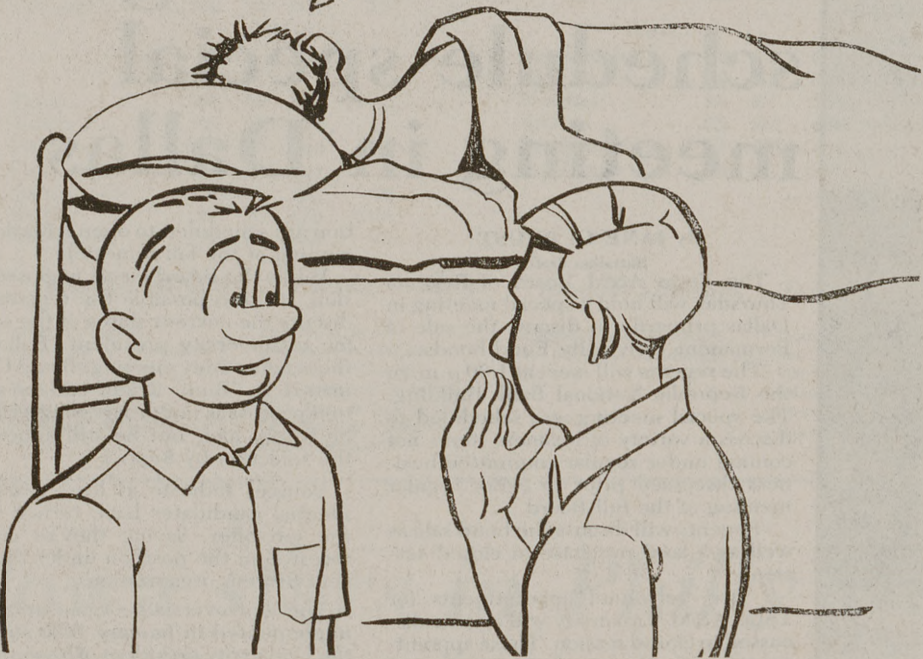


VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

WEDNESDAY
JUNE 10, 1981

Slouch *zzzz* By Jim Earle



"He was here a week ago when I moved into this room, and I'm beginning to worry about him. He hasn't moved since."

Congress viewed as stumbling, divided

By DAVID S. BRODER

DENVER — The meeting of Democratic state chairman was not half an hour old when Sylvia Hagen of North Dakota put the perplexity of the party in stark terms no one could ignore. There had been polite discussion about the plans for the mid-term party conference the Democrats will hold sometime next year. Then Hagen, a Bismarck political activist and state party vice-chairman, cut through the fog.

"I hope," she said, "we are not going to spend the next three days (of state chairmen's and national committee meetings) talking about the mid-term conference. The real issues are that we have got a very popular Republican President and a Democratic congressional leadership that looks stumbling and divided. I don't know about your states, but in our state things can get a lot worse in 1982... if we don't do something about it."

North Dakota went for Ronald Reagan, of course, and Republicans recaptured the governorship in 1980. But it was also the only state where a Democrat took over a vacant Republican House seat. In 1982, freshman Rep. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) and veteran Sen. Quentin Burdick (D-N.D.) will both face re-election challenges, so Hagen was talking about a very real threat.

She was also talking about a problem a great many Democrats see, when she complained that the impression the country is getting is of a "stumbling and divided" congressional leadership.

As she spoke, Democratic members of the House Ways and Means Committee were hammering out what they hoped would be a consensus alternative to the Reagan tax bill and another group of Democrats was at the White House listening to Reagan pitch his plan. That night, both sets of Democrats were on television, expressing their divergent views. Two days earlier, there was a similar TV spectacle when the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate met with Reagan and then aired their disagreements with each other for the cameras.

Except for the issue of Social Security cutbacks, where the Democrats saw Reagan's mistake and pounced, almost every issue that has come up so far has found the opposition party's most visible spokesmen — its congressional leaders — sending a signal of confusion to their fellow-partisans around the country.

Their "titular leader," Jimmy Carter, is licking his wounds and writing his memoirs, and there is no great demand for

him to go public as the spokesman for the party he led to defeat. Their two most prominent survivors of 1980, Walter Mondale and Ted Kennedy, are too deeply and obviously committed to their personal ambitions for 1984 to serve as spokesmen for anybody but themselves.

So that leaves the job to Sen. Bob Byrd and Speaker Tip O'Neill and their lieutenants — and that is where the problem lies. Byrd and O'Neill, it is worth remembering, have no previous experience in this role. They came to the leadership of the party in the Senate and House at the same time Carter came to the presidency. This is the first time the absence of a Democratic President has shifted the spotlight to them.

Byrd is struggling to adjust to being the Senate minority leader. O'Neill is working just as hard to find a way to knit together a coalition of House Democrats, no longer dominated by people of his own liberal tradition.

To ask these two men to devise and execute a national political and public relations strategy that will counter that of the White House and the showman-President is to ask the impossible.

But Hagen was not alone among the grassroots Democratic leaders in demanding just that. "We need something out of the Democratic leadership in Congress," said Nancy Pelosi, the head of the party in Reagan's home state of California. She reported that demands for "stronger" congressional opposition to the Reagan program dominated a recent survey of 55,000 California Democratic workers and contributors.

"The Democrats look weak — and that's putting it mildly," said Ed Campbell, the veteran Iowa Democratic chairman. "People want to know what the Democratic Party stands for. We've got to stand for something."

The official answer of party chairman Charles T. Manatt to the rumbles of dissatisfaction is that, sometime later this summer, he will set up the party "strategy council" he promised at the time of his election last February — a body that will supposedly include Byrd and O'Neill and their lieutenants. But the scuttlebutt around the Democratic meetings here was that, while O'Neill is being cooperative, Byrd is dragging his feet on Senate participation in the council, apparently out of fear that it would further complicate his leadership problems.

But it is clear that something will have to be done by the Democrats — and soon. Too many of them are looking to their spokesmen in Washington and hearing nothing.

Regents should air old trunks

A television talk show discussion earlier this week brought to mind some thoughts regarding the role of the press in society, thoughts with local application.

The general sentiment among members of the audience on this particular show was quite critical of the American media and the coverage they present to the American public.

One person said journalists opened a few closed trunks back in the days of the Watergate scandal and since then all trunks everywhere have been opened and examined.

"Can't we just leave a few of them closed?" she asked.

Much to my chagrin, the audience applauded.

All of this brought to mind the current process of selecting a president for Texas A&M University.

Something tells me that woman doesn't know much about the mass media or the people who work therein. Reporters have an obligation to the public, an obligation to report factual accounts of what's happening in the world, the nation, the local community.

It's unfortunate that some trunks contain skeletons. Nonetheless, those are the very

Coffee Breaks

Jane G. Brust

trunks the public should know about — particularly if the trunk owners are public officials.

I'd say an aggressive journalist — a trunk opener — is worth his weight in gold printer's ink because he's giving the public information that the public needs to know.

The Board of Regents refuses to release the names of those persons under consideration for the position. Understandably, it's a personnel matter they'd like to keep quiet, and it's a personal matter for those candidates involved.

At the same time, however, thousands of students, former students, staff and faculty have a vested interest in whom the regents will select to lead the University.

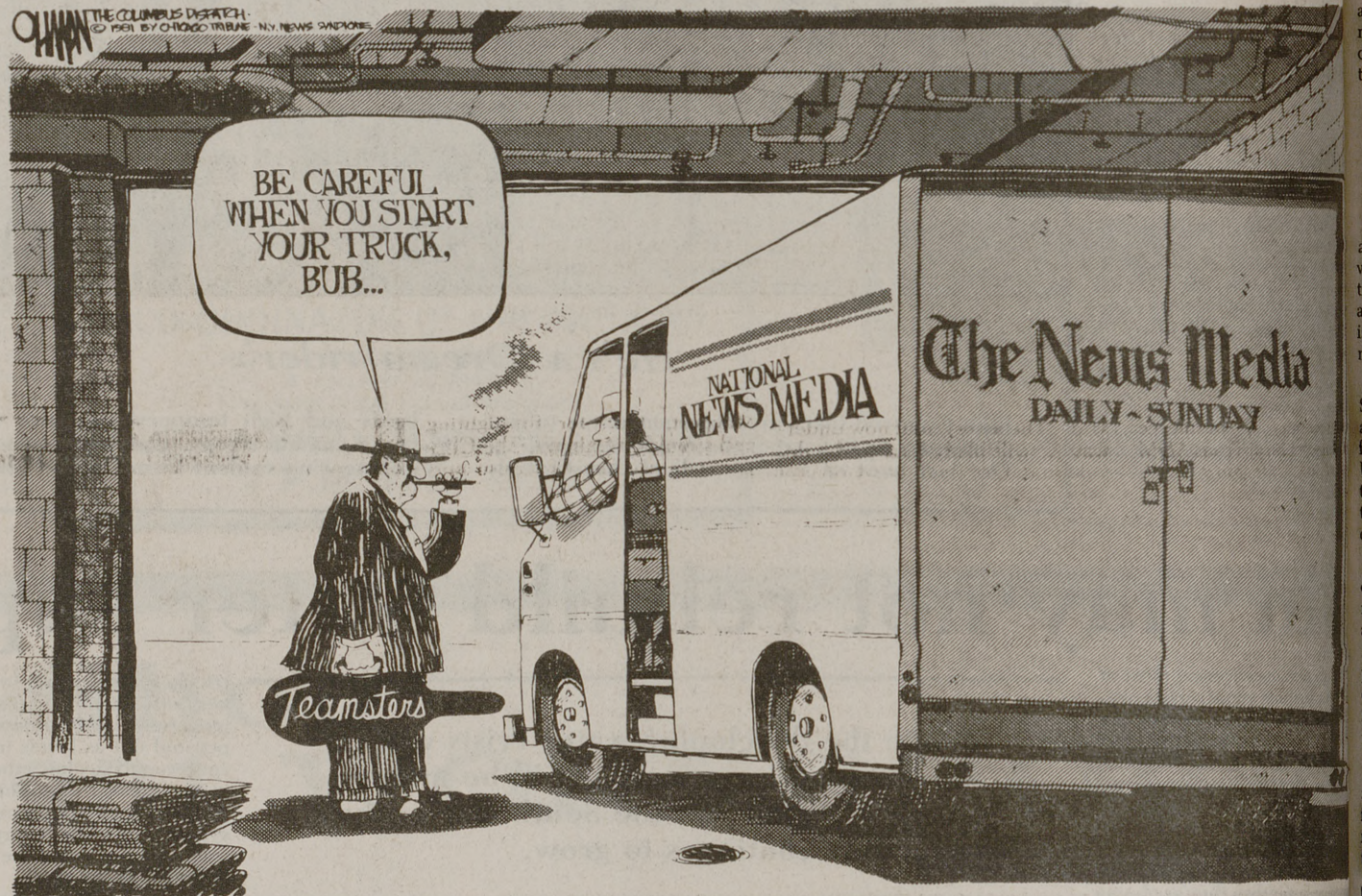
Thus, the Bryan-College Station Eagle in February requested the list of candidates from the University. That request was de-

nied of course, and so the Eagle requested the attorney general's opinion on the matter. If the list of 20 candidates commended by the search committee is deemed a public record, it will be suitable for publication. If not, the university gets to keep the list confidential.

The attorney general's opinion committee has reviewed the case and has its recommendation. That decision is presently lying on Mark White's desk for his rejection or approval.

If and when the list is released, it will be published. It's not necessary that the public — or the press — the regents aren't doing a good screening and interviewing candidate, not necessarily the case that anyone the regents will select an individual unsuitable for the position.

It is the case, however, that as long as regents are secretive, the public doesn't know if they're doing a good job of doing their jobs well.



Every lobbyist needs a hit list

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The new game in town is called "Hit List." If you are lobbying for any sort of cause — and who isn't these days? — the first thing you should do is get yourself one.

It is true that four prominent members of one "political action" committee resigned in protest last week when the group issued its 1982 hit list. But such negative reaction is rare.

The group was only doing what comes naturally when it vowed to spend \$400,000 trying to defeat four senators and five House members next year.

A pressure group without a hit list has virtually no influence at all. On a political impact scale of 1 to 10, it weighs in at minus 2.8. Lobbying without a hit list is something like peeping through a keyhole with a glass eye.

For awhile, ratings were all the rage. Pressure groups would take the voting records of members of Congress and compute their percentages according to "right" and "wrong" positions on certain issues.

But that tactic apparently was too subtle to be really effective.

Now the "in" thing among pressure groups is to draw up specific lists of lawmakers targeted for defeat in the next election and to announce precisely the sums that will be spent to help them lose.

With so many hit lists floating around, it's an innocuous congressman indeed who isn't marked for political extinction by at least two or more pressure groups.

The beauty of multiple listing is that in any given election virtually all of the incumbents will have been targeted. Statistically, that improves the odds of someone on your own list being rejected by the voters.

Under the rules of the game, when a senator or House member you have hit-listed fails to win re-election, you are entitled to claim credit for his defeat.

Needless to say, the more hits you can claim, the easier it is to raise funds to pour

into the campaigns against the next hit-listed candidates. Thus, a bit of profit may be in order.

When drawing up a hit list, examine elections slates all around the country and pick out two or three incumbents who are facing tough races and are highly vulnerable. Arbitrarily add the names of your list of targets.

If the results are as predicted, you boost the percentage of victims on your list and enhance your reputation as a lobbyist.

Partial credit may even be claimed if a hit-listed candidate retires from Congress before the campaign begins.

In any event, never take a chance that one of the candidates on your hit list will be reelected. Any risk of such a disaster is avoided by hitlisting at least one congressman who has died in office.

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.

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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.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome and not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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