

Slouch By Jim Earle



"Why isn't it discriminatory? If I make a D just because I'm not a hard worker, it's discriminatory!"

Actions hurt University's image

Texas A&M University has come to be known nationwide as a first-rate university. But that fine reputation, which has taken more than 100 years to establish, has been seriously injured in only a few short weeks.

This University, the fastest growing institution of higher learning in the United States, is being governed by a group of people who are attempting to place themselves above the law.

University officials have been directed on two separate occasions to release the names of those persons being considered to fill the vacant University presidency. And the officials have on both occasions neglected to carry out their legal obligation.

The dispute began in February when the Bryan-College Station Eagle requested the list of candidates from University officials. The officials refused to release the information, claiming the list was covered by an exception to the Texas Open Records Act. Attorney General Mark White was asked to make a ruling.

Up to that point, everything seemed to be in order.

In June, White deemed the list a public record. At that point, the University ceased to play by the rules.

It would seem to follow that if a governmental body such as Texas A&M requested a ruling from the state attorney general, they would follow the ruling made by that official.

The University didn't. Instead, University officials requested a "clarification" because, they say, they "didn't understand what it meant." The ruling stated that the list of some 500

Staff Notebook

By Bernie Fette

initial considerations and nominations for the post was a public record. The list of 34 finalists forwarded to the Board of Regents was to be included in the entire list but did not have to be placed in a separate category.

The attorney general's opinion committee didn't bite and directed the University to release the names again. Again, the University refused.

White's ruling seems to be clear. The University's clarification request appears to be nothing more than a tactic for stalling. And so far, it is working.

Reinforcing the guess that the University is stalling are the reasons being given for not releasing the information.

Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs James B. Bond said that there are no legal precedents to draw from in cases such as this one. But the fact remains that the University requested the attorney general to make a ruling through his interpretation of the law.

Now University officials are refusing to follow the ruling that they themselves requested.

Secondly, the officials said they feared the possibility that some of those on the list

might file suit against the University invasion of privacy if the information released.

The possibility of such legal action is very slim, if it exists at all, because a court found in favor of the University names would never be released in an invasion of privacy.

If the court found in favor of the University, Bond himself said he felt the University would be "fairly well insulated" from a privacy action if the University is ordered by the courts to release the information. Again, no invasion of privacy.

There must be another reason why the Board of Regents and other University officials doing everything possible to be as confidential as possible.

If the list is never released, the University will have never had the chance to present its own judgement on how well the Board of Regents did its job in choosing a new president.

The public has a right to make its judgement on the efficiency of its officials and the same should follow for persons appointed to influential positions by elected officials.

The Eagle has the legal upper hand in this dispute, but the University should appeal the decision if the court finds in favor of the Eagle.

It may be some time before the names of the candidates are known, but it will be only a matter of time until the winner of this part of the dispute is known.

The Board of Regents and other University officials should realize they are not only making themselves look bad but they are making the University's whole look bad.

Britain may serve as warning for US

By DAVID S. BRODER
United Press International

WASHINGTON — When I left London ten days ago, the wave of riots that swept across the cities of Great Britain was just beginning. But a junior member of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party majority in Parliament made the observation, "This is what happens when you separate economic theory from social policy and pursue the one at the expense of the other."

An American journalist, returning to his own country at the beginning of the long, hot summer, cannot help but wonder what warnings there may be for us in the calamities visiting Britain.

The Reagan administration says there are none. Secretary of Treasury Donald T. Regan told questioners on CBS "Face the Nation" not to "push the parallel," adding that, "You can have civil disturbances in any kind of economy."

He is right. The last round of serious urban riots in the United States occurred just as the Great Society, that last full flowering of welfare-state liberalism, was coming into bloom. Obviously, there is no direct relationship between the growth rate in the federal budget and the tranquility or hostility of the city streets.

But it would be naive to think that in times of social and economic stress, such as ours, perceptions about the attitudes of the rulers do not influence the behavior of the most miserable of the ruled.

Ronald Reagan is a far more affable personality than Thatcher; his economic theories are not as one-dimensional; the American economy is far healthier than Britain's; and our unemployment is one-third lower.

Yet the public opinion polls measure a growing belief that Reagan's economic policies are harmful to the elderly, harmful to the poor, harmful to minorities. And that suspicion is sharpest among those who are living on the margins of the economy, out of work or working for subsistence wages.

Look back at the report of the Kerner Commission, which conducted a massive study of the causes of our 1963-67 urban unrest. In the chapter on the "basic causes," the commission described the factors of migration, discrimination and segregation which led to the existence of the black ghettos — conditions which have not changed that markedly in the 13 years since the report appeared.

And then it said that "recently, three powerful ingredients have begun to catalyze the mixture." Those ingredients were "frustrated hopes, the legitimization of violence and a sense of political powerlessness."

Can we honestly say that those factors have diminished today?

In the intervening years, blacks have come to power in many major cities, from Atlanta to Los Angeles. Millions of black youths have achieved the dream of higher education and are making their way into the middle class. The "violence" of which the Kerner Commission spoke — white police attacks of black civil-rights demonstrators — has been ended.

But the violence of crime is an ever-present factor in the ghetto. Hopelessness still dogs the 10 to 30 percent of big-city minority youths who cannot find their first jobs. And throughout the black community, at all levels, there is a sense of exclusion from the decision-making of this government greater than I have known in 20 years — a real sense of being the impotent outsiders.

A reader in Minnesota recently sent me an editorial from the Princeton, Minn., Union-Eagle, a weekly newspaper published by Elmer L. Andersen, the former Republican governor of that state.

"Can we say there is an even-handed application of a new fiscal policy to reduce government spending?" it asked, appraising the Reagan record so far. "No, there is not. What is clear is an enormous shift in government spending from social services to military spending, and no indication that the result will be a balanced budget for many years to come. Furthermore, there is a harshness about actions and attitudes in the social-services area that is not evident toward excesses in military spending. We are going after school-lunch programs, food-stamp distribution, aid to families with dependent children, grants-in-aid for the arts and humanities, with crusading vigor."

If that is the way it looks to Elmer Andersen, a good Republican, in Princeton, Minn., how can it possibly look to Joe Jones on the South Side of Chicago?

Britain is offering us a grim reminder that people are not laboratory animals, available for economic experimentation. When they reach the breaking point of frustration, they rebel. I pray we do not have to re-learn the lesson here.

The Answer Man answers back

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Washington Answer Man, dressed in jodhpurs and carrying a riding crop, is here today to bring us up to speed on doings at the White House.

Question: Sir, the president appears to be coming under a lot of criticism from special interest groups these days. Is he weathering the storm with his usual good humor?

Answer Man: Absolutely. The president is secure in his knowledge that the people are behind him. As he has said, those who claim to represent groups that are supposedly suffering as a result of his policies actually are more concerned about losing their own livelihoods.

Question: But sir, I believe he was speaking there about people who are protesting his cutbacks of welfare programs. I was referring to the people who are protesting his Supreme Court appointment.

Answer Man: Oh. Those people just don't understand the situation. After all, there are things that the president knows that we don't. You didn't believe that when Mr. Nixon was in office, but as became abundantly clear, it was perfectly true.

Question: Well sir, that will may be true in national security matters, but how does it apply to an appointment to the Supreme Court?

Answer Man: As the attorney general so eloquently said in another context, "It's a simple question but I don't think it is appropriate to respond." Let's move on.

Question: All right. Perhaps you could tell us how the president feels about the secretary of state's reported criticism of the United Nations ambassador's conduct of her assignment.

Answer Man: Oh, yes. The president thinks the ambassador is doing a fine job. He also thinks the secretary of state is doing a fine job. He has, in fact, sent both bags of jelly beans.

Question: Social Security?

Answer Man: Got a lot of zingers today, haven't you sonny? The president is in favor of Social Security. As for the proposals of the secretary of health and human services to reduce benefits, well, that was his own dumb idea.

Question: How about the MX missile? If Nevada and Utah don't want it, where will the administration put it?

Answer Man: Would you believe Massachusetts?

Question: Speaking of Massachusetts, how are the president and the speaker getting on now? We understood the president was quite upset about the speaker's suggestion that Mr. Reagan didn't know what it was like to be poor.

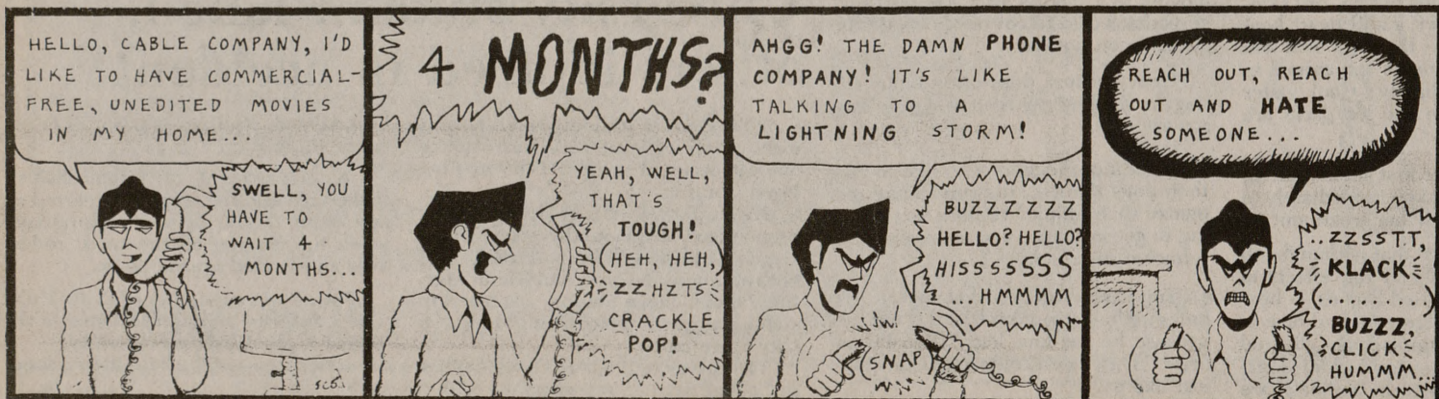
Answer: Swimmingly. The president is well aware that the speaker's demagogic smear attack, filled as it was with base canards, sneaky innuendoes and outright falsifications, was simply politics as usual. Didn't faze him in the least. He is sending

the speaker a bag of jelly beans.

Question: A somewhat personal question, sir. Does the plan to move the out of the White House while the room is being renovated constitute a change in the president's feelings toward the media?

Answer Man: Glad you asked that has been no change in the president's feelings about the media. Why would fixing up a nice new press room if he like the media? And contrary to what you may have heard, the press will definitely be back in the White House before the dent leaves office. In fact, that is even possible if he doesn't seek a second term.

Warped



By Scott McCullar

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Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, but 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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