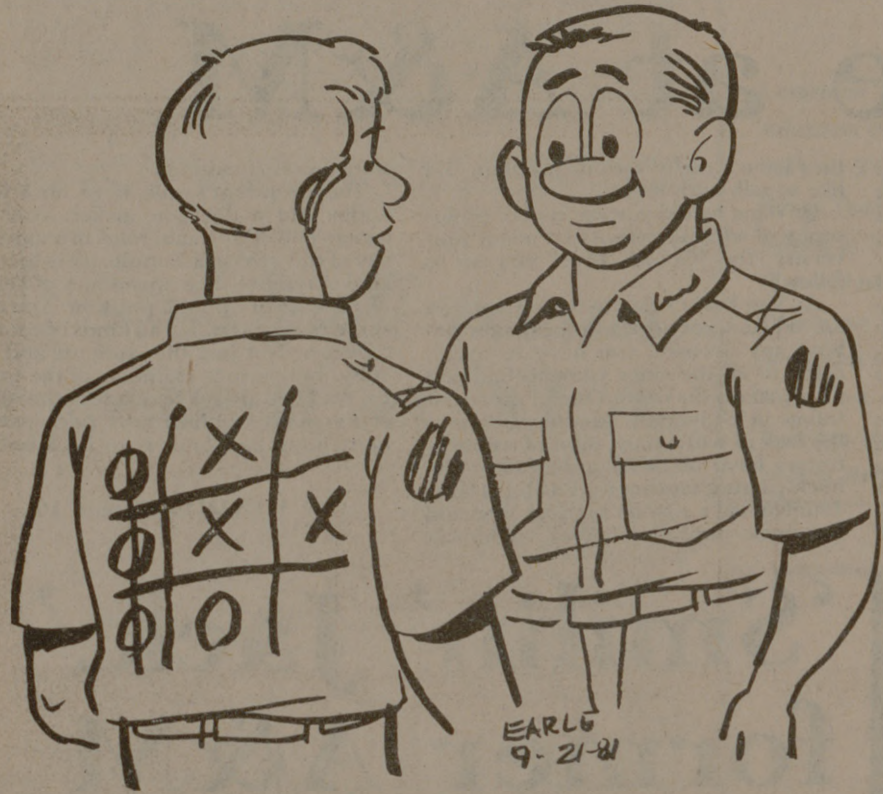


Slouch By Jim Earle



"I had this tingling sensation in my back during the last class period."

Budget cutting won't solve some problems

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK
United Press International

WASHINGTON — It has been said that the one thing liberals in Washington never got straight in their heads was that they could not solve every problem by throwing money at it.

It now may be the turn of conservatives to learn a parallel lesson — that they can't solve every problem by taking money away from it.

Sixty years ago, most Americans believed that it was up to each person to provide for his own needs. If someone was helpless, neighbors or charities were expected to help. But government, especially national government, had no responsibility to alleviate individual poverty, ill health or bad luck.

The Depression of the 1930s shocked laissez faire out of the American mind set. There was a demand for a system to provide what now is called "a social safety net."

Social Security was an early response. The government taxed workers and employers and promised to provide subsistence income to those who became disabled and too old to earn their own living. This was called "insurance," which lifted the curse of "charity" from the system.

But whatever Social Security was called, the government was committed from that time on to contribute to the economic support of a large class of its citizens. There was an understanding that the government would make good on its commitment no matter how much money was in the special fund that was set up to finance it.

In the nearly half century that followed,

the government expanded its commitment to solve problems of individuals and special groups. The insurance concept was used less often, but the people for whom the programs were begun nonetheless often came to regard the benefits as a right and the government's commitment to provide them as absolute.

Now the reaction has set in. The people now in charge are attempting to reduce or eliminate the the government's involvement in social problem solving.

That effort, especially in the case of high-visibility programs that appear to provide benefits without ending dependency, probably has majority public support. Upon the showing (or claim) that a number of programs were too costly or being abused, the administration was able to begin cutting back with astonishing ease and success.

As a result, some in the administration seem to think there are few if any government benefits the public would insist on continuing. For example, the statement that Social Security is in deep financial trouble apparently was expected to pave the way for public acceptance of cutbacks.

It did not. Both the public opinion polls and the feedback members of Congress got from home indicated any such conclusion was in error. However they may feel about food stamps or legal services for the poor or aid to dependent children, Americans do not seem to be mad at Social Security.

The system obviously has real problems, but those who have the responsibility for it clearly are on warning that they better use some instrument other than the budget-cutting knife to deal with them.

New hope for the president's office

When Frank E. Vandiver emerged from the flurry of controversy surrounding the naming of the new University president, I admit I had doubts about any man who would accept a job that had proved so disastrous for its most recent occupants.

But after hearing him address several groups and then interviewing him myself, I am comforted by several recurring themes. One topic he has repeatedly addressed is the preservation of academic freedom. A lofty goal, but Vandiver himself stated that one of the most precious aspects of that freedom is the right to be wrong. Even sometimes "at the top of (your) voice," he said. Freedom is something that can't be taken for granted and still be expected to remain. It's good to know that the head of this University knows that, and more important, believes that.

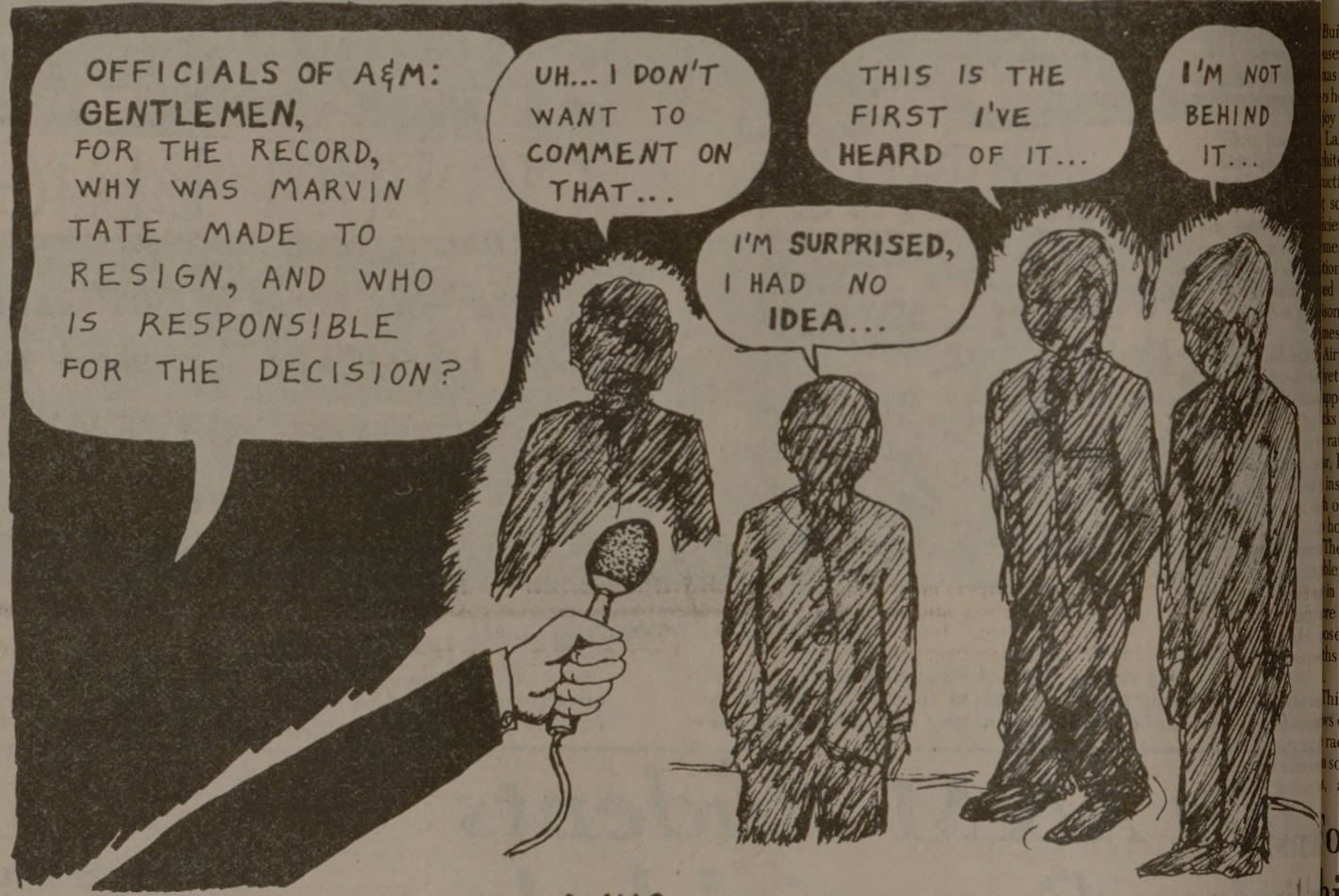
Vandiver also has said that as president he will be a symbol for the University, someone that the public can identify as representing Texas A&M. Don't mistake his claim to mean a figurehead. This is a strong man, with strong opinions. During his acceptance speech at Dallas in August, he said he would serve "at the discretion of the Board of Regents." That does not mean at the whim of the Board. It is an attitude that may not ingratiate him with some of the more forceful regents.



Angelique Copeland

But Vandiver should prove to be an able link between the Board and the students and faculty. He has charisma, a genuine interest in the problems of students and faculty. Perhaps the most important, he is willing to admit he doesn't have the answer to a question, instead of trying to cover himself with studes and generalities. That's a rare attitude to find in University administration.

Texas A&M has had three presidents in the past three years. The two highest in the University, the president and the chancellor, along with the Board of Regents, have been in a three-way tug-of-war during most of that time. Vandiver is stepping into the office when its most memories are of controversy and conflict. But I can't help but believe that he will be able to shake off the problems of the past and help the University administration settle back into a less embattled position.



WHO LACKS DIRECTION??

It's your turn

Dining hall rule costly for students

Editor:

I would like to voice my concern over something which is a very real problem to students who eat in the Commons. The Commons Dining Center has a rule that students must leave their belongings in the hall while they eat, but Food Services will take no responsibility for the thefts which result.

According to the Campus police, there are several reports every day of books and backpacks being stolen from the Commons. When you consider that one backpack can contain items worth \$200 or more, you can see the size of problem this really is.

My brother's backpack was stolen this week. It contained his books and notebooks, my calculator, his contact lenses, and his glasses. Total value: \$225. Since he is financially unable to replace his glasses or contacts, he now has the problem of not

being able to see to do his schoolwork.

When I talked to Mr. Joseph Biermann in the Commons, he acknowledged that there is a "small" problem with thievery, but students can't be allowed to take their books into the dining hall for fear that they might try to steal food. Mr. Lloyd Smith, assistant director of Food Services, cited a case in which someone tried to walk away from Sbis with fifteen pounds of fried chicken in their backpack. I realize that there are students who do these things, but how can you compare one isolated case like

this to stolen books and calculators

ing to thousands of dollars per week. I think it's time for something to be done. And, if a system for protecting our belongings can't be put into operation soon, feel that it's only fair for the students allowed to protect their own belongings the meantime.

Randy Gore

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 156 other signatures.

the small society

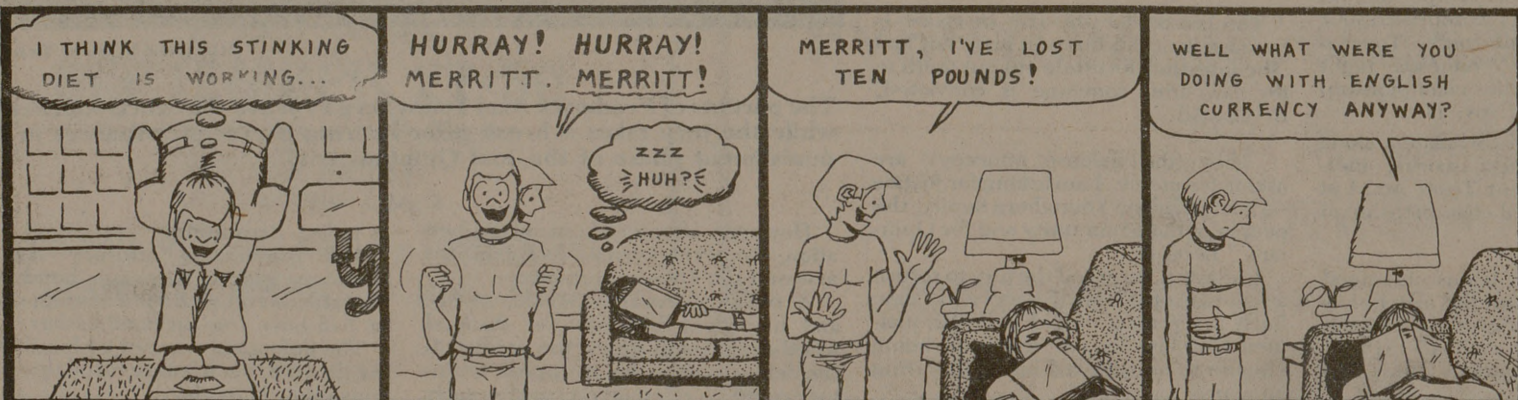
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Warped

By Scott McCullar



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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory workshop in reporting, editing and photography within the Department of Communications. Questions or comments concerning any editorial should be directed to the editor.

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

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