

Could there really be a Mr. Untd Press Intl?

By DICK WEST
United Press International

WASHINGTON — I recently read a lengthy article on efforts by scientists to program computers to exercise "artificial intelligence."

Although great strides in the field were reported, I got the impression that so-called electronic brains still lack the type of reasoning power that so-called human brains are credited with possessing.

But that was before the postman delivered a piece of personalized junk mail addressed to "Mrs Untd Press Intl."

"Dear Mrs Intl," it began, "You and some of your neighbors in Washington have been selected to receive eight chances to win in our new, Biggest Ever YOU-CAN-WIN SWEEPSTAKES!"

After informing Mrs Intl that "you may be the TOP WINNER right now," the computer went on to assure her that "no one in the world has a better chance, or more chances to win this 'dream' prize than Mrs Untd Press Intl of National Press Bldg."

Isn't that amazing? The punctuation might not be anything to write home about, but the technological expertise displayed in this letter is truly impressive.

One of the surest signs of intelligence on our planet is the ability to jump to conclusions. I would never have believed that computers were advanced enough to form their own suppositions. Yet there is no brushing aside the evidence provided

in this letter.

Somehow, from the data that were fed into its system, the computer was able to conclude that Untd Press Intl not only was of the female gender but also was married.

OK. So it was wrong on both counts. I happen to know for a fact that Untd Press Intl is a unisex wire service that hangs out in singles bars. Even so, that does not diminish the significance of the breakthrough.

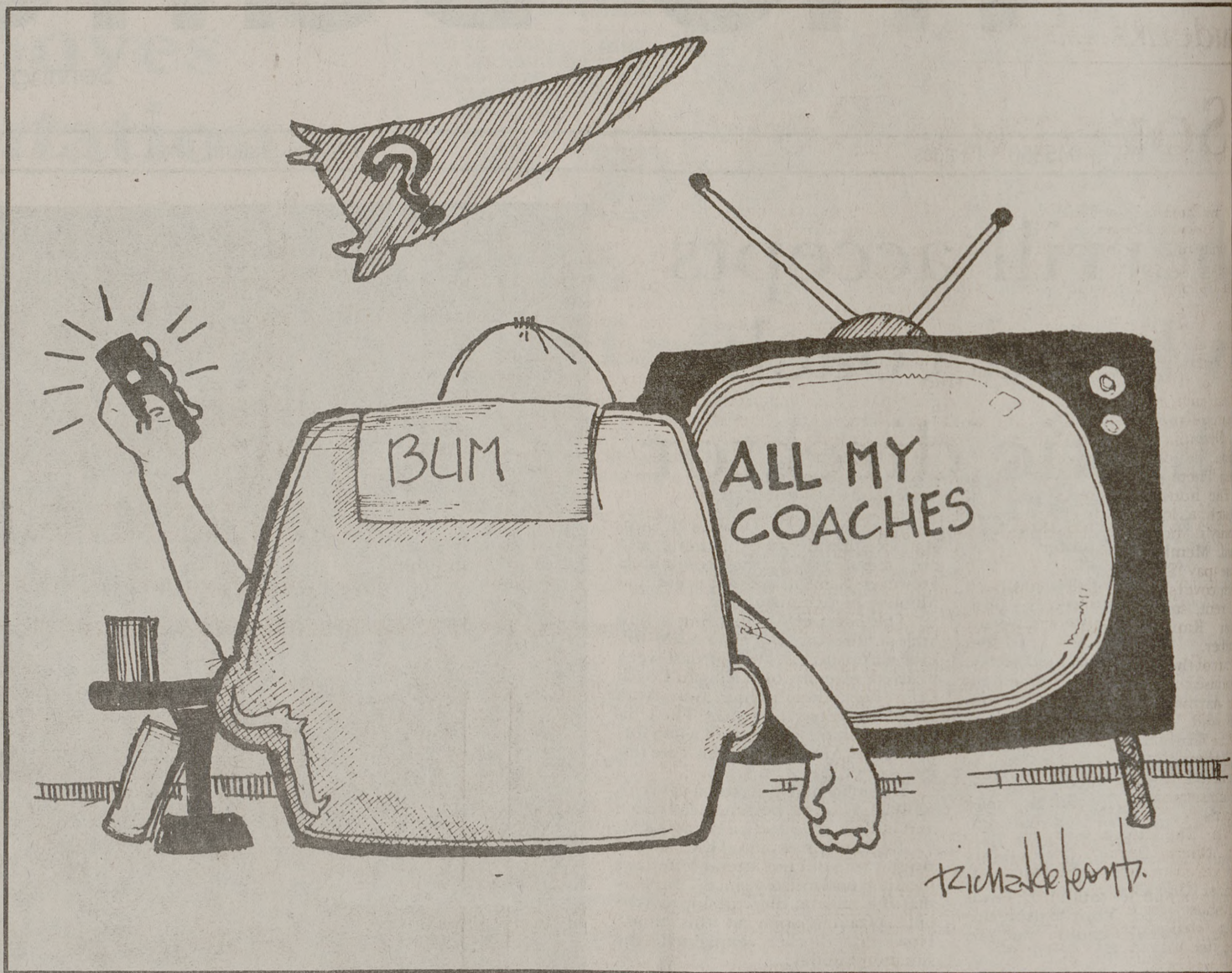
Many of the conclusions that human brains leap to also are erroneous. The important thing is that computers now are capable of simulating one of the most complex aspects of the human thought process.

Now that "artificial intelligence" has been achieved, the next question is: What practical application does it have?

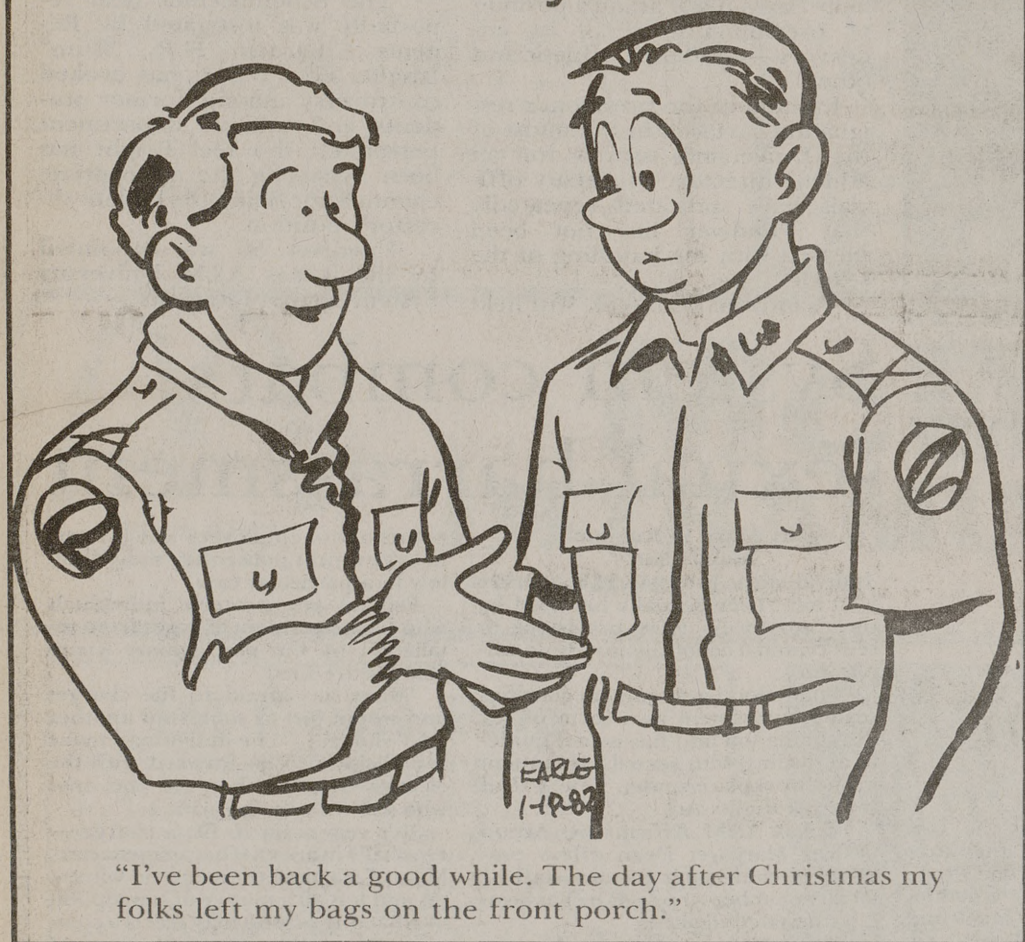
Well, sir, the conclusion I jump to is that it won't be long before computers relieve us human beings of the burden of forming everyday assumptions.

Oh, there undoubtedly will be a few highly cerebral surmises we will have to make ourselves. But the great bulk of the common, garden variety of assuming will be done by computers.

Suppose, you example, receive a computerized letter inviting you to enter a you-can-win sweepstakes. You feed that data into another computer and it relieves you of the burden of jumping to the conclusion that the whole thing is a gimmick to sell magazines.



Slouch By Jim Earle



"I've been back a good while. The day after Christmas my folks left my bags on the front porch."

Washington Window:

The game of switch on capitol hill

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Ed Rollins, the new White House political director, is telling anyone who asks that the Republicans are in contact with about six more Democratic House members who are interested in switching to the GOP.

Rollins isn't saying who the six possible defectors are, except that four of them are Southerners. But inasmuch as the Republicans did bring two House Democrats — Bob Stump of Arizona and Gene Atkinson of Pennsylvania — across the party line last year, Democratic leaders probably aren't discounting Rollins' statements as mere poker table bluffing.

The Democrats, in fact, are taking part in the game of switch by entertaining the possibility of converting a House Republican, Charles Dougherty of Pennsylvania. It is almost sure that the Democrats are trolling the troubled political waters of the Northeast and Midwest for other moderate or liberal Republicans who are concerned about the effect of the Reagan revolution on their own careers.

And that seems to be what many recent party switches are all about: personal political survival. A lot of these people are changing parties because they would have trouble winning re-election under their present party labels.

Back in the 1960s, Rep. Charles Weltner of Georgia gave up a safe Democratic seat rather than agree to support all state party nominees, including the black-baiting Lester Maddox for governor, and earlier, South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond, who probably could have remained a Democrat without any personal risk to his career, assumed the GOP label as well as ideology. But there are precious few examples of such profiles in courage to be found on Capitol Hill these days.

Even so, there are some who think this shuffling of party labels is a good thing. One of the great mysteries of American politics is how the two major parties can claim to have coherent philosophies and still embrace officeholders whose positions are far to the left or right of their platforms and traditions.

Many who observe the political scene think it will never make sense until the parties realign themselves into liberal and conservative groupings and these changes are seen as one way to accomplish that end.

But there is one caveat that politicians who are about to switch parties should consider: Most political defectors don't advance beyond their present position after making the change. Two good examples: John Lindsay, who was a Republican congressman who changed parties when he became mayor of New York and flopped resoundingly as a Democrat; presidential aspirant, John Connally, Democratic governor of Texas and the proud possessor of one delegate as a 1980 candidate for the Republican presidential nomination.

Party switches before entering the electoral arena, however, seem immune from this jinx. One well-known Democrat who became a Republican and then plunged into elective politics made it all the way to the White House.

Reader's Forum: New AD costing more than money

The question of "what price glory" has often been asked. After the events surrounding the Texas A&M Athletic Department the past few months the question "what price victory" may be more appropriate.

It was reported that Bo Schembechler turned down an estimated \$2.25 million 10-year contract as athletic director and head coach for Texas A&M.

The offer, made by none other than the omniscient Bum Bright, certainly caught the attention of Bo. However, I think the real target of the offer was the media.

Last semester as sports editor for The Battalion I had the opportunity to see how political the Athletic Department had become. I witnessed the removal of an athletic director (Marvin Tate), not through the regular channels, but by the strength of four men, three of whom are members of the Board of Regents.

Of course Bright was the instigator of what I call a plot to revamp the entire Texas A&M Athletic Department.

Judging from what I learned last semester of Bright I believe the man is determined to make winners of the Aggies in every sport, particularly football. That's great, but he doesn't know how or what he is doing. His intentions are good but the way he's gone about achieving this goal and the results so far have been and will be disastrous for the A&M program.

As I said before, the media seems to be the real target of Schembechler's offer. I believe the offer was legitimate. But I also

believe that Bright leaked the information concerning the offer to the media. Once the media learned of the offer there would be more pressure on Schembechler to decide whether to come here or not. It probably worked better than they had hoped because of the extra time spent by Schembechler in making his decision.

The leak also let the word out, officially, that the A&M position was open. Of course, the only qualifications were a big name, a big contract and quick long-lasting success. After Tate was ousted last semester I learned that money would be no object in finding his replacement.

I'm sure Bright thought the media attention was great as long as too much information was not released. After all, they had one of the most prestigious coaches seriously considering taking the job and the attention surrounding his decision was enormous. But the fact remains that Schembechler didn't take the job. That was probably the best decision he's ever made.

Information that was not released, or leaked, however, was the fact that whoever takes the job would, in all likelihood, have to report directly to Bright and respect his wishes, whatever they may be.

One thing Bright has forgotten about time and again is the fact that we already have a coach. Another thing he seemingly forgot was the fact that when you spread information of that nature someone is bound to be caught in the middle, namely Tom Wilson and Frank Vandiver.

Wilson wasn't consulted or warned about Bright's move, which is par for the course. He had no idea of Tate's removal either. The timing of such moves has convinced me that Bright knows absolutely nothing about running an athletic department.

As University president Vandiver is supposed to be consulted about personnel. He, along with the Athletic Council, is supposed to be in charge of a search committee to find Tate's replacement.

To my knowledge a search committee has not been formed. The Athletic Council knows nothing about Bright's motives or his next move.

Unless something positive happens, which I seriously doubt, the mess Bright has caused in the athletic department will continue. The problems must be resolved and quick or else the results could make Texas A&M unacceptable to many prestigious coaches who might have a chance to "turn" the program around. Either way, the athletic department should not be a plaything for some ignorant person or group to run.

Ritchie Priddy '81

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Columns and guest editorials are also

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The Battalion

USPS 045 360

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The Battalion is published daily during Texas A&M's fall and spring semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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