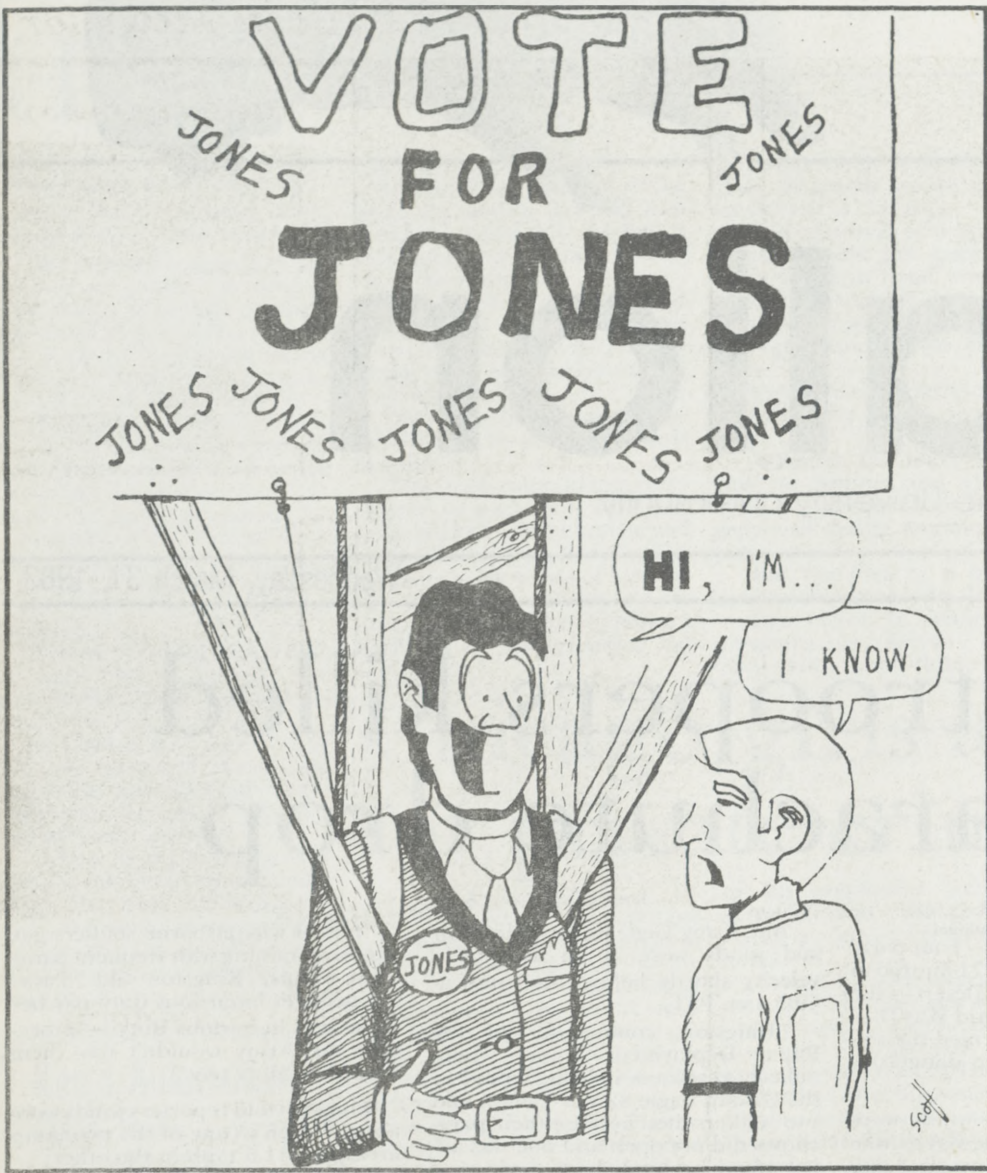


# President taking serious risks



## Senate leaders held in squeeze

by Robert Mackay  
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Senate Republican leaders trying to put together a budget compromise find themselves in a rather difficult position this year — caught between their president, Ronald Reagan, and their Democratic colleagues.

The result has been a virtual stalemate, with the GOP leaders warning the Democrats and the White House they better start seriously negotiating a compromise or the Senate will start moving ahead on its own.

"There is a triad, and two parts of that triad aren't talking," a GOP leadership aide complained.

Budget talks began this week between White House chief of staff James Baker and House Budget Committee Chairman James Jones, D-Okla., and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski, D-Ill.

But Senate Republican leader Howard Baker of Tennessee — in a warning directed at the White House — said if he did not get an indication of progress soon, he would order the Senate Budget Committee to start writing its own budget resolution.

Reagan is partly to blame for the impasse, because of the fiscal 1983 spending plan he sent Congress with a projected deficit of \$91.5 billion — a figure Treasury Secretary Donald Regan has since conceded will probably be a lot higher — and because of his refusal to compromise to slash the deficit, despite the fact there is virtually no support in Congress for his budget.

Also, Democrats are uneasy about compromising with him because of the tactics he used last year to secure his budget and tax-cut victories.

Republicans can't support the staggering deficits in the Reagan budget, because most of them campaigned on the traditional GOP stance that high deficits cause inflation and keep interest rates high. Neither can the conservative Democrats, who formed the coalition in the House last year that provided Reagan his crucial victories and who are up for re-election this year.

"The coalition of last year is not here this year," a Senate GOP leadership aide said, when asked why Senate Republicans were giving such importance to House Speaker Thomas O'Neill's participation in the budget process.

Baker said he feels a new budget coalition could be formed this year and O'Neill would "probably be a part of this one."

While Baker contends the Republican Senate could pass a budget resolution now, he would prefer to wait to see what kind of budget is acceptable to the Democratic leadership in the House and to Reagan. The president's budget cannot be forced through the Democratic House with conservative "Boll Weevils" this year.

The two main sticking points are the three-year income tax cut program enacted last year and the cost-of-living adjustments for entitlements programs such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare and food stamps.

Reagan is willing to "look at" some reduction in his proposed level of military spending, but he is refusing Democratic calls for deferring the 1983 individual income tax cut to help lower the deficit.

The House Democratic leadership, meanwhile, is skittish about agreeing to reduce the growth of entitlement COLAs, especially for Social Security, that is being suggested by the Senate Republican leadership.

The Democrats feel their only budget victory last year was in getting the administration to reverse itself and restore the \$122-a-month minimum Social Security benefit.

The Democratic leadership contends it was led to believe by Reagan they could work out budget and tax legislation compromises with the White House last year, but the president then ran roughshod over them.

"Jones and Rosty (Rostenkowski) came back wounded," said O'Neill's press secretary, Chris Matthews. "It's an apprehension that what happened last year can happen again."

Still stinging from last year's budget fight, Jones said, "I don't intend to endorse anything the president doesn't support publicly."

And a Rostenkowski aide said the Illinois Democrat will not sign any compromise agreement this year that does not have Reagan's signature on it as well.

Meanwhile, Senate Republican leaders anxiously wait for some action as the deadline of April 15 approaches for passage of a budget resolution in the Senate.

"It's like everybody is sitting, waiting for everybody else," a Baker aide said.

By David S. Broder  
WASHINGTON — The situation now unfolding in Washington has no parallel in the recent history of this government. Senior associates of the President — Cabinet members and top-rank White House aides — are conspiring with leading members of Congress of both parties to force the President to abandon his opposition to any significant change in his own defense, economic and budget plans.

The plot is well understood by all concerned, even though the President's adamancy has forced their discussion into underground and sometimes cryptic exchanges. Whether they can succeed in their effort, under these circumstances, is very doubtful.

Even before budget director David A. Stockman made his doubts public late last year in the interview with William Greider, two salient and interrelated facts were becoming clear to almost everyone except Ronald Reagan.

The persistence of high interest rates — which the administration was powerless to attack directly — was distorting the economy, driving it into a severe recession, and almost certainly blocking any strong and sustained recovery. That fact undercut the hopes that a series of deep tax-rate cuts at the heart of Reaganomics would trigger an economic boom.

The rates were frozen at historically high levels — despite the welcome de-

cline in inflation — because of the widespread recognition in the financial community that the federal government could not finance its activities in the foreseeable future on the revenue base that was left after last year's presidentially encouraged orgy of tax cutting. For deficits to diminish in coming years, planned growth of all government spending, including defense and individual entitlements, must be restrained. And some of the squandered revenue base must be recaptured.

Those facts were grasped by Reagan's economic and budget officials and by the members of his senior staff. But in the final stages of preparing the fiscal 1983 budget, they were unable to persuade him to abandon his doctrinal views about defense and tax cuts and recommend appropriate policies.

The Cabinet members and White House aides have not forgotten what they learned then about the realities. The conclusions they reached are now shared by most senior Republicans and Democrats on the House and Senate budget, tax-writing and appropriations committees, and the leadership of both parties in Congress.

But the official administration position is that the President cannot — and should not — move off his own budget unless and until Congress presents an alternative. That has a surface plausibility but, as a practical matter, it is a

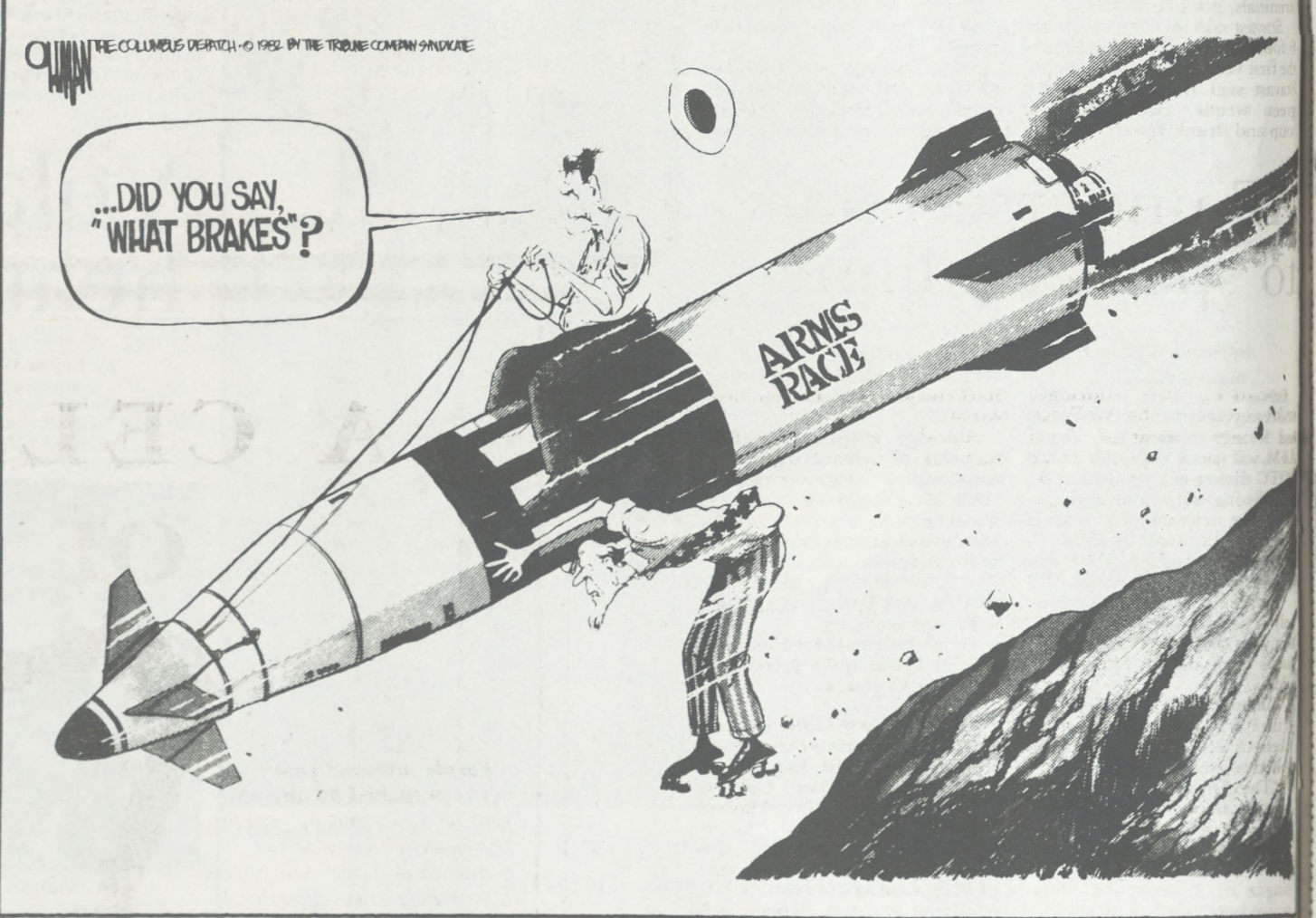
ruinously rigid stance. The President's immobility is not benign. In public rhetoric, he is taking potshots at those who have recognized the need for politically unpopular steps like higher taxes and lowered benefits.

The result is that the process of negotiations between the parties and the houses in Congress and between the Congress and the administration has been forced into backdoor channels where the many substantive problems are far harder to resolve. Realistically, the chances of the government assembling a counter-budget against the vocal disapproval of the President are exceedingly slim.

The effort continues for one very simple reason: Time is running out. If the budget cannot be rewritten this spring, in time to encourage an economic turnaround, then the advent of the autumn election campaign will destroy any hopes of bipartisan cooperation on that project.

I have never seen a time when more thoughtful men and women in both parties were more concerned about the country's future — or more frustrated by their inability to enlist the President in what they see as an urgent task.

His aloofness from the process and his hostility toward those who are struggling to work without him put the heaviest burden of responsibility for future events on Ronald Reagan's shoulders. He is risking more than he seems to understand.



## Letters: Junk food is not enough

Editor:

Did you know that only one item in the snack machines within walking distance from Halbouty is not a cigarette, a carbonated beverage, or full of caffeine or sugar? That one item is dry-roasted peanuts and they contain MSG (monosodium glutamate) and lots of salt. How much trouble would it be to offer a few items that are not cancer-causing or full of sugar, caffeine or salt? We are not asking for fresh carrot juice or sprouts on stone-ground whole-wheat bread. A few fruit juices, milk, and maybe even fresh fruit, trail mix (gorp), or cheese and crackers would be nice. Many high schools in Texas have been forced to remove carbonated beverages and sugary snacks from their vending machines. We don't think that things should be taken that far here. I am sure that we are all mature enough to be able to decide what snacks to consume. We just think that healthier snacks should be available on campus at all hours just like the junk food. Or, Wow! We want to have a V-8.

Richard Theiss  
Katrina Withers

### Understanding needed

Editor:

I am tired of having to remain quiet about what I am! What is it about people that they can't understand someone who is gay?

Yesterday, I was talking to a "friend" in class and in the conversation just happened to mention that I was a member of

the GSSO. He immediately stood up and created a scene by informing everyone around us of what I had just said. C'mon Ags, we are normal people! We go to football games, go to church, and go out on Friday nights. The GSSO is an organization just like any fraternity, or for that matter, even the Corps.

I love this University and my fellow

Aggies, but sometimes I wonder if I might not be better to attend t.u. when we are accepted as normal people.

Please Ags, try to show a little more understanding.

Wayne Curtis  
Bucknell Street, C

### The Battalion

USPS 045 360

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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 are 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, or phone (713) 843-2611.

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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### the small society

by Brickman

