

Slouch By Jim Earle



"No wonder that physical education course was so hard last spring! I just learned that it was not physical education but physics!"

Reasoning behind negative campaigns

by Arnold Sawislak

WASHINGTON — There is a story, unsupported by anything but its persistence as political folklore, that Lyndon Johnson, then a senator, once instructed an aide to issue a press release accusing Johnson's opponent of a perverted sex practice.

According to the story, the horrified aide said: "But Senator, we haven't got any evidence that he does those kinds of things."

And, according to the story, LBJ grinned as wide as Texas and replied: "I know it. I just want to hear him deny it."

That story stays alive in part because it illustrates an extreme of "attack" or "negative" campaigning. The tactic is familiar and simple — attack your opponent and his record early and often. Keep him on the defensive throughout the campaign.

Those who use negative campaigning, and at some time nearly every politician has, always say it is necessary to inform the voters how bad a person or public official their opponent is. Those who are at the receiving end call it mudslinging, character assassination and distortion.

Negative campaigning certainly is not new to American politics. It probably began during the second term of George Washington, when the once-revered father of his country was suddenly being called by his critics a "tyrant and dictator" and accused of having "debauched" the nation.

Historian Stefan Lorant suggests it might have been that kind of rhetoric, rather than loftier motives of desiring to limit presidential tenure, that persuaded Washington to return to Mount Vernon after eight years.

In any case, negative campaigning almost

always has been with us. In 1980, with the so-called "independent" political action committees in full flower, it was credited with replacing a number of liberal Democratic senators, including George McGovern, Birch Bayh, Frank Church and John Culver, by New Right conservatives.

Now comes V. Lance Tarrance, a political consultant and pollster of good reputation, with the word that negative campaigning is "most likely on the upswing in the United States" and offering some suggestions to candidates who intend to employ it.

First, says Tarrance in a study for the conservative Free Congress Research and Education Foundation, negative campaigning need not be based on personal attacks.

"It can be rational and information-oriented," Tarrance said. "Voters today tend to be repulsed by anti-intellectual negatives, but attracted toward information-gathering types of television advertisements or those which tend to point out sharp differences between the candidates."

Other tips: Negative appeals work best early in the campaign period; negative campaigning works best against incumbents; last-minute attacks should be used only as a last resort to save a losing candidate; and it may be best for challengers to avoid negative campaigning themselves, letting "third party" or independent partisans do the heavy work.

Tarrance thus provides a clear blueprint for any candidate who wants to go out and beat the stuffing out of an opponent with negative campaigning. What may be interesting to watch is whether some of the people who lost in 1980 to candidates using the Tarrance formula will in turn adopt the same tactics in 1982.

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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 and 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) 845-2611.

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My dear friend, thank you

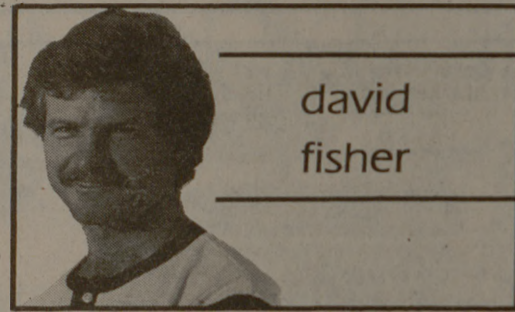
I finally stopped to pay attention to somebody last night — after they almost had to physically jerk my head around to make me listen. But that little event probably will make me feel extremely good for a long time.

I was talking to a friend and listening with my ears but not my head. Only after she was beginning to get mad at me did I finally hear what she was saying. She basically was saying she was my friend and she cared.

Now it may seem self-centered to want everybody on campus to know somebody cares about me — you may not give a damn, but I do. Because I remember a few times when I haven't listened — resulting in someone being pushed away from me. All because I didn't pay attention.

This made me stop and think of all the people I have had the good fortune to know. It made me realize friends are the single, most valuable asset a person can have.

Friends can come in any shape or fashion. Now I don't mean your casual everyday drinking buddy or passing ac-



david fisher

quaintance. I mean people who honestly care about you and what happens to you. These are the kind of people who straighten you out when they think you're wrong about something. God forbid anyone should ever say: "Shut up and listen for a change." But these friends do that.

And they turn around and say to call them when you need someone to talk to. And it doesn't come out as a statement

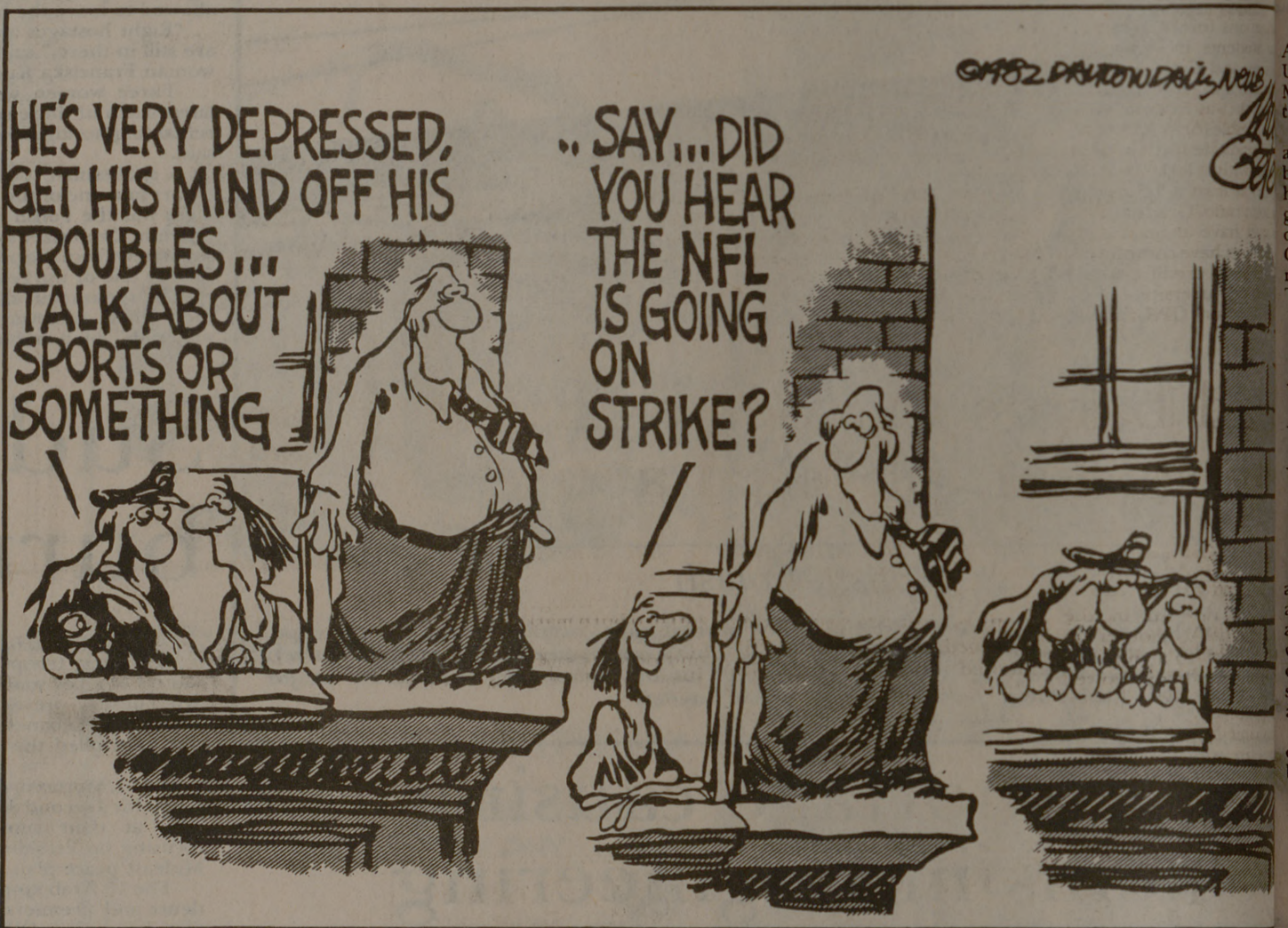
made in passing, but as an option that makes you realize the

But maybe something friends is be there when you need them to bend their ear about some small as a romantic problem, thing as serious as the death of one. Frequently, all they do is that all-important common talked about — listening.

Who knows, maybe it ought requirement — "Must have That's obviously stretching the what, but most people probably if they have bonifide friends, necessarily make me a better pe because I have a friend, but it me feel good about me. As enough.

So if you have anyone telling listen, then you know to want think the people I'm referring who they are, but just in case, said it lately — thanks.

So take a little bit of hard advice. Learn who your friends hold on tight. They could be important discovery you ever



Letters: Student questions tradition

Editor:

I was deeply disturbed by the letter appearing in the Sept. 7 issue that criticized students who didn't follow traditions in last weekend's game. The letter closed "if you don't like the way things are then leave."

I came to Texas A&M to pursue a graduate degree. I came largely because one professor recruited me. I came because I was convinced Texas A&M was a quality university where I could get the kind of education I desired.

I did not come here just to follow some asinine childish traditions. To expect people to stand up in the hot sun without a hat to protect themselves is an invitation to heatstroke or something worse. In the third quarter, I saw paramedics helping a student who had collapsed.

There is nothing wrong with tradition in itself. But when it flies in the face of reason (and good health), it ought to be changed. An insistence upon these kind of traditions will turn people away from coming to Texas A&M, not bring them here. As a student at this University, I want it to continue to be a quality university. To do this, some things are going to have to change. In contrast to the "love it or leave it" philosophy, I would suggest "Texas A&M: Help it change or watch it die."

I have been a football fan for a long time. I have spent a lot of time and money going to games because I enjoy watching football. However it is apparent it is impossible to peacefully enjoy watching a game on a student ticket because that would interfere with keeping up with all the foolish traditions.

William Jordan Graduate student

Bootline rules

Editor:

In response to the article on bootline rules at the football games, we feel that

this ring check is unfair. Our point is, some seniors cannot afford their senior ring right away and yet they are very spirited in the Aggie traditions.

We understand the problem of seeking out only the seniors to participate in this long-awaited privilege because we look forward to the privileges which our senior year will hold for each of us.

In essence, what this ring check is

doing is holding back more of the "Ags" rather than letting a few "B" get by. Surely, there must be a system of making sure bootline

seniors.

Carolyn Harv Debbie De Dynise McDan

Berry's World



"Young man, smoking IN MY OFFICE will be PARTICULARLY hazardous to your health."