

opinion

Rating a televised Senate

by Ira R. Allen

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Last week's hearing on the perennial issue of televising the Senate brought out some of the most articulate spokesmen imaginable on both sides of the issue.

Yet for all the glibness of Sens. Howard Baker, Charles Mathias and Daniel Moynihan, allied with Walter Cronkite in favor of television, and Sens. Russell Long, Wendell Ford and John Stennis, allied with George Will against television, the wise decision was elusive.

The question boils down to one of open government vs. show business.

Will the day's great issues be magnified into greater public understanding in a forum where cameras will draw most of the usually absent 100 members who would then actually listen to debate and vote, afraid of being seen as windbags?

Or will senators use the presence of cameras on the floor to make longer speeches, to run for re-election, to simplify issues into the 30-second "sound bite" that evening newscasts parcel out for colorful oratory?

Will television inspire uplifting oratory and courage as exhibited during the Webster-Clay debates of a century and a half ago? Or will courage dissipate under the glare of lights with senators more often taking the popular position, instead of the right position?

Who will run the cameras? The Senate? which would focus only on the person speaking. Or the journalists? who would show empty chairs, members

reading newspapers and the frantic arm-twisting that prevails in the aisle on every close vote.

The answers are not clear until television is tried, at least on an experimental basis.

The most serious argument against television is that unlike the House, where cameras were installed four years ago, the Senate has unlimited debate and long periods of inactivity that are built into the schedule. Showing an empty chamber, or a printed statement that a "quorum call" is in progress, would not put the Senate in a good light, opponents argue. Neither would showing the interminable debate.

But the questions surrounding television are larger than just ones of informing the public. They go to the very nature of the Senate itself, a purposely slow-moving body whose members believe themselves to be more statesmanlike, and less overtly political, than House members.

Perhaps both sides will find satisfaction in a report issued by former Sens. James Pearson of Kansas and Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut calling for wide-ranging reforms of Senate procedures and rules.

They would have television coverage only on significant issues, which would have been scheduled well in advance. And in a revolutionary recommendation, which senators seem to be embracing, they would prohibit any speech from being read and require every speech to be relevant to the issue at hand.

That would both shorten debate and

enforce eloquence. Those who cannot think on their feet would not grandstand before the cameras. Those who can could not monopolize the lens.

The irony of the latest hearing is that Mathias, the chief sponsor of television, scheduled the hearings not for his tiny committee room but for an auditorium that serves as the Senate's largest room. The audience was of average size, but the big room was chosen to accommodate the eight television camera crews that showed up to cover it.

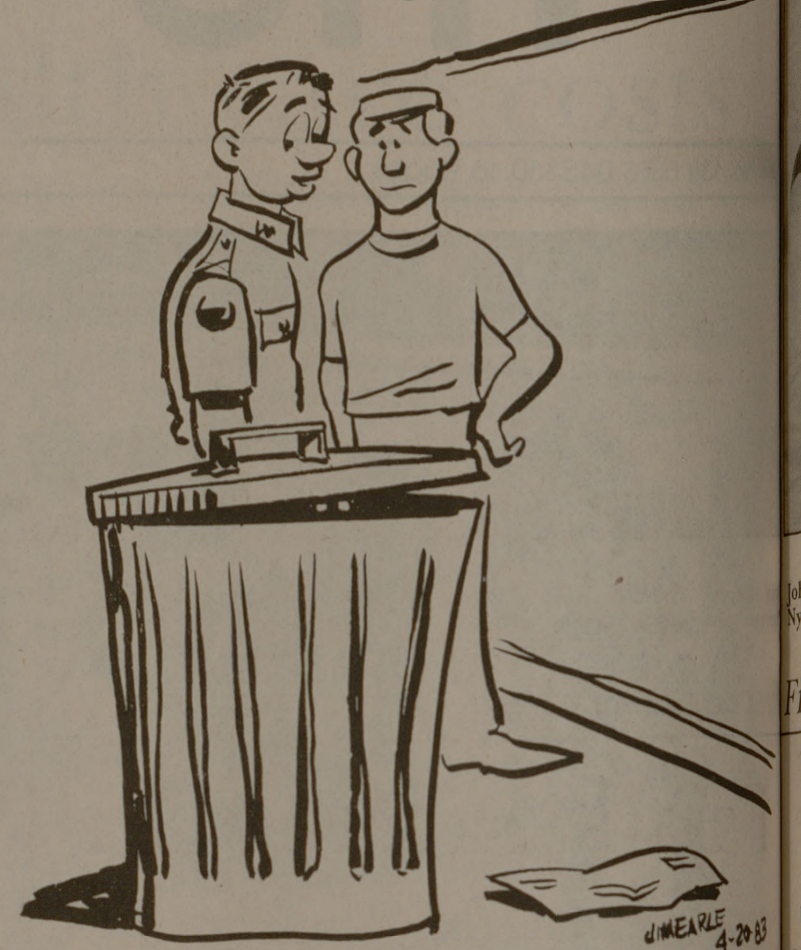
And opponents of television made their best case in terms most likely to be shown on television.

Sen. John Danforth, R-Mo., took up about 30 seconds cogently complaining that television will rule the Senate, that members will learn to say only those things that can be neatly summarized in half a minute. He took about 30 seconds to make his point.

And Stennis, the dean of the Senate at 81 years old, a man who exercises his power out of the spotlight, opposed television, conceding, "They've been nice enough to me. But television, by its nature, is partly show business," he said, raising his voice, pounding the table and enhancing the television value of his performance.

Open government or show business? Statesmanship or politics? Deliberation or colorful oratory? There's nothing in the Constitution, the political science books or the journalistic credo that says you can't have them all.

Slouch By Jim Earle



"Wouldn't you like to know what kind of mail he gets that's that private?"

IRS squealers paid to tell on cheaters

by Art Buchwald

I know it is going to come as a surprise to some people, but the Internal Revenue Service has a "squeal" rule. If someone is cheating on his or her taxes, and you tell the IRS where to look, and they manage to collect the hidden money, you can get a reward of up to \$50,000.

You would think that the tipster money is what attracts income tax whistle blowers to the IRS, but this is not always the case.

"I would like to see the man in charge of tax cheaters."

"I am that person. May I help you?"

"I want to tell you about a man who bilked you out of two million dollars over five years."

"Before you do, may I ask you why you are telling me this?"

"Because I'm a patriotic American, and I feel everyone should pay his fair share of taxes, so we can protect our way of life."

"That's good to hear."

"The person also happens to be my third husband, and you'll never meet a more devious rat in your life."

"Then you have a personal motive in turning him in?"

"There's nothing personal about it. I'd turn him in if he were a stranger. Anyone who runs off with his secretary when he's married to a wonderful woman who gave him the best years of his life deserves to feel the full weight of IRS on him."

"You say he's been cheating on his taxes for five years. Why did you come to us now?"

"I found these love letters in his closet last week. Smell them. Have you ever sniffed such cheap perfume? Now most women would have immediately gone to a lawyer like Marvin Mitchelson. But I'm not the vengeful type. I decided to come here instead. I said to myself, 'Rose, it isn't what he did to you that matters, it's what he did to his country. The money he has cheated from the United States could be the difference between war and peace,

freedom and slavery, and prosper recession."

"Did you say anything else to self?"

"Come to think of it, I did. Rose, I'd like to see that blonde face when she sees Milton behind. But that was just a second thought. It's not why I'm here today."

"I understand that. You say you cheated us out of two million dollars. You know where the money is?"

"He spent a lot of it. He had a BMW. He bought me fur coats, jewelry, and BMW. Believe me if I knew it was Sam's money I wouldn't have any of it."

"How did you find out he was luring his full income?"

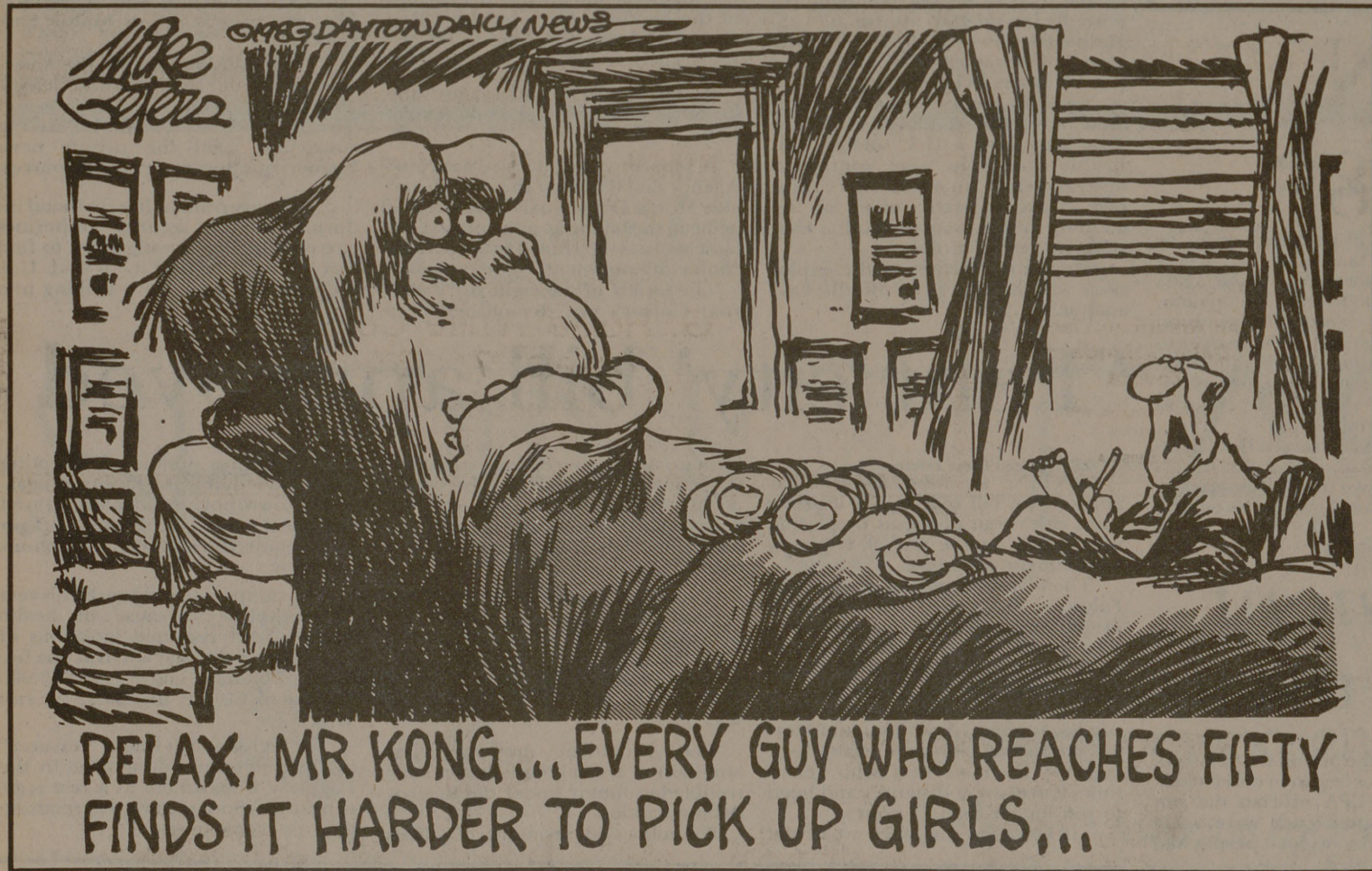
"I discovered he was also paying for his tootsie, and it suddenly dawned on me it must be coming out of his pocket. So I immediately came here to let you know. I can't live with a man who lies on his income tax returns."

"Are you aware that the IRS pays rewards to people for turning in tax returners?"

"I'm not here for the money. I want to help my country and President Reagan and our fine boys in the military forces, and the senior citizens who are poor and the homeless, and everyone else who depends on our tax dollar support. If Milton has to suffer for his cheating ways, I can live with that too."

"Well, Rose, I'll turn you over to criminal investigators, and you can provide them with the leads for a full investigation. We can't tell you how much we appreciate your visit."

"I was only doing my duty as a citizen. We know that, and as a small token of our appreciation we'd like to present you with this American Flag. If it weren't for selfless patriots like yourself, our country would be so much harder."



Letters: Fear of black Chicago mayor

Editor:

Who's Afraid of Harold Washington? Certainly not those who elected Chicago's first black mayor. Harold Washington won the nation's most watched and bitter mayoral race.

Rarely has one city's political contest churned out such emotion — and keen interest — across the USA.

Recently, on Palm Sunday, the Rev. Frank Ciezadlo, the pastor at Chicago's St. Pascal Church invited the two candidates for mayor to visit his church. Ciezadlo figured that he was doing a service to his parishioners by giving them the opportunity to meet the candidates. Harold Washington accepted the invitation.

But when you are invited to a church — especially on a day that has special religious significance — you would probably expect a big smile from good churchgoers — the way hospitable churchgoers might be expected to greet a visitor.

They greeted him, all right — with loud jeers, ugly insults, shrill shrieks, waving of arms, eyes bulging and faces distorted by hatred. It was not exactly your typical Palm Sunday behavior.

Some argue that the racial appeals of the two sides were equally deplorable. A more subtle reading of American history would distinguish between the positive votes of ethnic minorities striving for influence and the negative votes of majorities trying to keep minorities in their place. For blacks, that place has for too long been outside government.

Who's afraid of Harold Washington? Those who oppose major changes in the operation of city government, particularly in the patronage system that has prevailed for decades in Chicago.

Now the new mayor of Chicago and

the City Council must face the very real problems: a school budget deficit of nearly \$1 billion and serious unemployment. And they should face up to the prejudice that is tearing Chicago apart, by addressing it openly before audiences of the opposite color and demonstrating how they intend, after all this, to govern in the American way.

Julio A. Aguirre
Graduate student

International Week

Editor:

This letter is a response to Margaret Lasater's letter on April 15 concerning human right abuses.

We understand the point that she was trying to make and completely agree with it. However she has chosen the wrong approach by linking it to the International Week. International Week is an event sponsored by the International Student Association (ISA) of Texas A&M. It is an attempt to familiarize the Americans of the University and the Bryan/College Station community with the rest of the world's countries, and not one that tries to cover up human right abuses as her letter implies.

The International Student Association has sponsored other activities besides International Week, such as organizing forums and conferences, with the sole aim of making people aware of human rights all over the world.

Petro Yuanidis
Selcuk Dikmen
Muzaffer Uysal
Graduate students

Column insulting

Editor:

Reading your article "No bargain vacations for traveling Parisians" (The Battalion, April 14) prompted many of us to question the quality of a publication which deliberately insults the President of a foreign country ("idiot Mitterrand" -line 89-, the "crazy French President" -line 21-, who achieves "stupid things" -line 48).

Writing articles on International matters may not be easy for you to do; however, utilizing misleading, "pseudo-informed", and now insulting international news articles may not be an appropriate solution. Ironically, your "funny" article appeared adjacent to a letter to the editor sent to refute false statements published in The Battalion concerning the memorial to General James Earl Rudder located in France. Your common policy of publishing biased, relatively undocumented, and/or poorly written articles on foreign matters lowers the quality of your paper, and probably the number of your readers. On the other hand, carefully selected articles (ie. on their form as well as their content) would certainly upgrade your publication in the eyes of all the community you wish to serve, and, if called upon, the International Student Association would be willing to assist you in this task.

Prakash S. Radia
ISA president
Anne M. Alegre
vice president, Europe Club

Editor's note: The column was written by nationally syndicated columnist Art Buchwald.

The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory for students in reporting, editing and photographing within the Department of Communications.

Questions or comments concerning any matter should be directed to the editor.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 100 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they exceed this length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for style and length, but will make every effort to preserve the author's intent. Each letter must also be accompanied by the address and phone number of the author.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, but are 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, or phone 261.1.

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