

opinion

Democrats suffer unique political 'gap'

by Arnold Sawislak
United Press International

WASHINGTON — American politics appears to be reducing itself to a series of "gates," as in Water or Billy, or "gaps" as in gender or missile.

It will be left to others to pounce upon new prefixes for "gate" to describe the Carter briefing book imbroglio or the hurrah over altering House committee transcripts.

What follows here is about a "gap" that is has been around for some time but, like Legionnaire's Disease, never got a popular label. It has to do with the differing and sometimes conflicting requirements for winning a presidential nomination on the one hand, and a presidential election on the other.

This phenomenon is not new. The best example of it will be 20 years old in

1984 and the proof that it can afflict both political parties came in 1972.

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nomination without breaking a sweat. Goldwater had the campaign so well organized that he had the nomination all but locked up before any potential rival could get started.

Then he went out to campaign for the

presidency and took the worst popular vote drubbing in history to that date. Lyndon Johnson beat him so badly that some pundits were saying the Republican Party itself was in peril.

In 1972, Sen. George McGovern demonstrated how a Democrat could do it better. Using the newly reformed Democratic rules as a battering ram, he won the nomination with ease and then went on to an even worse shellacking in the fall than Goldwater had absorbed eight years earlier.

Political professionals explained what had happened in terms of ideology and pragmatism. Simply stated, in both cases the parties had become so focused on the ideological purity of their candidates that they forgot about political electability.

And therein is the gap. In seeking a candidate whose liberalism or conservat-

ism is beyond question, the parties also may be selecting a candidate who is perceived as being too far to the right or left to be elected in November, when the majority of those who vote identify themselves as middle of the road Republicans or Democrats or independents.

However, an ideological candidate for a nomination can be transformed into a pragmatic candidate for president. Ronald Reagan did it in 1980.

Although he was the hero of the Republican radical right, Reagan was careful in the fall campaign to avoid the rigid positions of the kind that destroyed Goldwater and McGovern.

The strong stands he did take represented Simple Simon, "good news" solutions to citizen concerns — lower taxes and less red ink and red tape in government.

He projected himself as the commonsense nice guy; Carter as the lightweight surrounded by speedo-gooders.

As 1984 approaches, the Democrats are beginning to wonder whether they have a potential nomination-election problem.

Democratic Party activists favor liberals of the Walter Mondale-Alan Cranston stripe for the nomination but it also seems, from polls of the at large, that a perceived moderate as John Glenn may be the most likely Democrat.

The question being asked is whether non-ideologue like Glenn can win Democratic nomination or whether candidate identified as a downbeat liberal like Mondale or Cranston can win a national election.



Will commissions replace Congress?

by Steve Gerstel
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The naming last week by President Reagan of the Kissinger commission to develop a policy for Central America has stirred some unease on Capitol Hill.

This nebulous feeling, festering for some time, has nothing to do with the commission nor with its chairman, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

In fact, two senators, Henry Jackson of Washington and Charles Mathias of Maryland, can claim paternity on the basis of their resolution that urged Reagan to appoint a panel.

Nor is the problem Kissinger, although he has many detractors among the very conservative Republicans and some liberal Democrats.

What causes the unease among some, although they may still be a minority, is the concept of creating commissions, peopled by experts outside government, to solve the nation's most major problems.

The concept is far from new, dating back at least to the Hoover commission. But in very recent years, this problem-solving option has come into more and

more use. Senate Democratic leader Byrd, who expressed his concerns in a free-flowing speech last week, cited several problems.

The first was that "the reports and commissions may pretty well lock whatever decisions are reached by the commission."

Another, Byrd said, is that the commissions' reports "are often so general that the argument can be made that a little piece of that little piece is taking the whole thing can unravel."

A third problem, he said, is that commissions "can be to a considerable extent established to reflect the philosophy of the administration in which a particular commission wants to go."

Senate Republican leader Howard Baker, long a believer in a shift from present to the concept of commissions, believes the commissions could be the coming approach to solving the problems.

And Sen. John Stennis, D-Mississippi, much a traditionalist, finds much in the concept of commissions, noting they are "in no way a substitute" for the duties and responsibilities of the president and Congress.

The Battalion

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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.

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Letters: Headline 'misleading'

Editor:

In response to an article by Karen Schrimsher and Robert McGlohon, "Researcher Convicted of Animal Cruelty," that appeared in *The Battalion*, Wednesday, July 20.

I must strongly object to this type of slanted, sensational journalism. The title of the article is grossly misleading, conjuring up outrageous visions of an A&M researcher performing horribly painful experiments on research animals.

When in reality, if one gets past the title and reads the context, we find that the animal cruelty charges and the fact that the man works for A&M in a research capacity, have absolutely nothing to do with each other.

Due to the misleading nature of the title of this article, A&M may suffer needless, unsubstantiated accusations about the cruel and unjust treatment that animals are receiving at A&M, not to mention the research community as a whole.

Many people don't take the time to read each article in the paper, but merely scan the headlines. Think of the number

of people who could have just read the title of the article, and then, outraged and incensed, wrote to their Congressmen to complain.

Is this the kind of journalism A&M can be proud of?

Linda J. Long '79

Letter defended

Editor:

In a recent letter I implied that Equal Opportunity Laws were acceptable. In that letter I condemned groups that preached absolute "truth vs. fallacy" judgements.

A response appearing on July 19 condemned me for this "dualism" in my argument, namely that I too was making judgements.

Law in the United States is not absolute. It is testable, changeable, and debatable. It is frequently made on a trial and error basis and is often usually amended so as to adjust to a changing environment.

If, as it has been suggested, Equal

Opportunity Laws are discriminatory, then the laws may be tested in a court and amended.

Absolutist groups base their views on absolute laws that are not regarded as debatable. If one questions these "laws" then one forfeits membership.

Furthermore, absolutist groups have no way of settling differences between themselves. Their views are based on "belief" and "faith" and are not subject to argument, only statement of opinion.

Because of this lack of flexibility in the face of changing factual evidence they are quite often breeding grounds for prejudice.

Social law cannot be argued on the basis of religion or belief since it applies to a diverse population. The groups I condemned are ones which try to impose their beliefs on a heterogeneous population.

I did not condemn them for their beliefs; rather, I condemned them for the way in which they use them: they undercut democratic discussion of the issues they address.

Stephen Weiss '84

Crime not up despite social program cuts

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

WASHINGTON — Detroit's mayor, Coleman Young, declared a summer-long curfew for his city's youth last week, but the nation hardly blinked.

Though the action might have once precipitated nervousness elsewhere about its possible implications for other cities, not even Young has linked its cause — a recent crime increase — to a national trend. Nor has he, a Reagan administration critic, blamed it on the president's success in slowing the growth of social programs.

Indeed, America's third summer under Reagan has begun virtually without the dire warnings about riots and crime increases that heralded the first two.

Some who predicted violent repercussions during the first wave of cuts in jobs and welfare subsidies — principally journalists and social program administrators — are noticeably quiet.

Among the possible explanations for this tonal change is the most obvious: Reagan's cutbacks have moved from potential horror to horrible, but unworsening, reality.

Even Princeton urbanologist Richard Nathan, hardly a Reagan apologist, says that most essential programs "are still in existence. (In the latest budget proposal) welfare and food stamps are basically unchanged."

Improving economic indicators also may have brightened the outlook for those middle-class Americans, including journalists, who often assess the world's status by looking in the mirror.

Thirdly, though inconclusively, the doomsayers may have discovered what many sociologists have long argued: that cuts in government assistance aren't necessarily a prescription for urban disaster.

Yet, as director Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out, it's "equally fallacious: to argue that an absence of riots must re-

fect a painlessness in the cutbacks. Most likely, the relative quiet may only underscore how cuts have primarily victimized disadvantaged women, who aren't riot-prone.

Last year, the United States conducted 17 underground tests of nuclear devices, its highest number in 13 years. Meanwhile, the Soviets exploded 31 devices, a 20-year high for them.

Only one of the six declared Democratic presidential contenders, Sen. Alan Cranston of California, used the entire Independence Day weekend to campaign.

Sen. Ernest Hollings of South Carolina spent a day at the National Education Association convention in Philadelphia. All the others — Askew, Glenn, Hart and Mondale — were reported to be on trips or at home with their families.

The Chronicle of Higher Education recently reported that two-thirds of the

Slouch By Jim Eads



You bet I can give you the time can give it to you to the second with zero error! First, I press button, and hold it; and no you will slide this lever to the right with your left hand, with your right hand rotate ring, and . . .

116 college players drafted in month's National Basketball Association draft had not graduated from their respective schools. The statistic should be of some embarrassment to the NBA, which has significant image problems already.

Fidel Castro had planned to show the road show this fall through France, Austria, Spain and Sweden — all socialist governed countries. But now President Mitterrand, possibly fearing backlash at home, has canceled his invitation to Castro. As a result, the Cuban leader has postponed his trip indefinitely.

Learning the American way? According to a survey by the Allensbach Opinion Agency, West Germans today are increasingly interested in spending time with their families. They also believe holidays are more important than work.