

Smokers' tax break ridiculous

At a time when airlines are considering a complete ban on the use of tobacco products and just weeks after the surgeon general's toughest warning ever on the dangers of cigarette smoke, the U.S. Congress is wrapping up yet another gift for the tobacco industry.

A House-Senate conference committee may decide this week to slash the current tax on each package of cigarettes from 25 to 50 percent next year.

That's right, Congress is giving a tax break to one of the biggest killers in America — the cigarette — all because it is too spineless to stand up to the tobacco lobby.

What kind of people are writing the laws of the land? Are the votes and campaign contributions of the tobacco industry so important that they merit ignoring the evidence on the dangers of cigarettes?

The latest report by the surgeon general says that cigarette smoking endangers smokers and non-smokers alike — causing lung cancer, heart disease and a variety of other ailments — and calls for strict regulation of tobacco products.

But Congress, bowing to pressure from lobbyists, has responded to the report by continuing the hefty subsidy tobacco farmers receive for growing their crop.

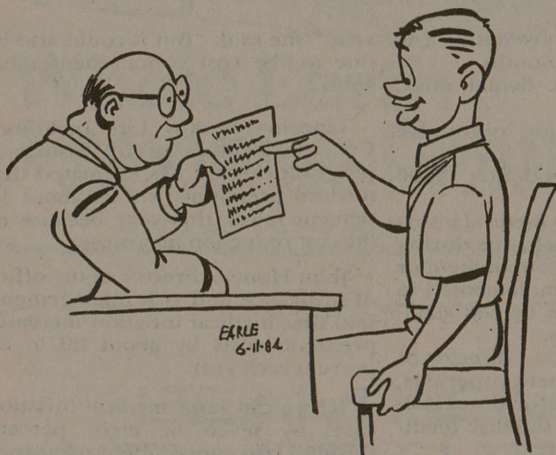
It's bad enough that Congress sees fit to ignore the dangers of cigarettes, but to subsidize the killer at a time when the budget deficit bulges over \$100 billion is absurd.

The tax on cigarettes should remain the same or be increased and all government support of the tobacco industry should be cut off.

Let the powerful lobbyists for the tobacco industry foot their own bills.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

Slouch by Jim Earle



"I'm sorry I didn't write T or F for true or false. I wrote H and T for heads and tails."

The Battalion
USPS 045 360

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Rebecca Zimmermann, Editor
Bill Robinson, Editorial Page Editor
Shelley Hoekstra, City Editor
Kathleen Hart, News Editor
Dave Scott, Sports Editor

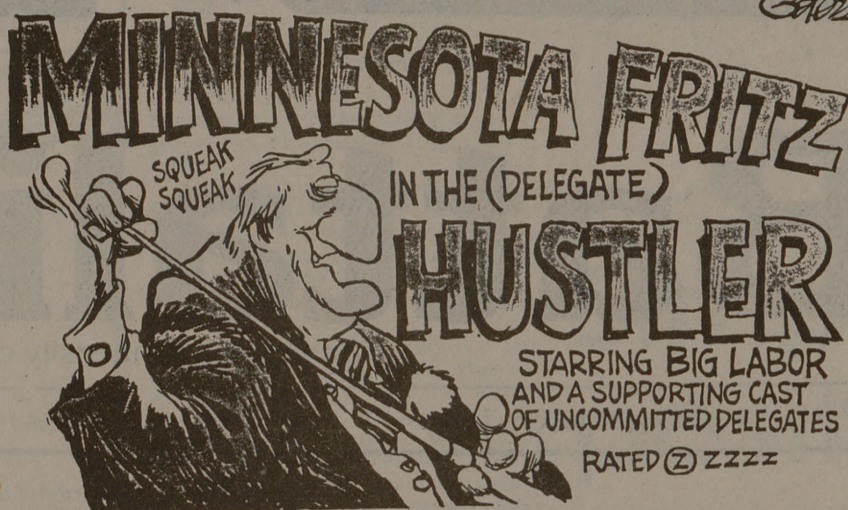
The Battalion Staff

Assistant News Editor.....Dena Brown
Staff Writers.....Robin Black,
Kari Fluegel, Sarah Gates,
Travis Tingle
Copy Editor.....Tracie Holub
Photographers.....Peter Rocha,
Dean Saito

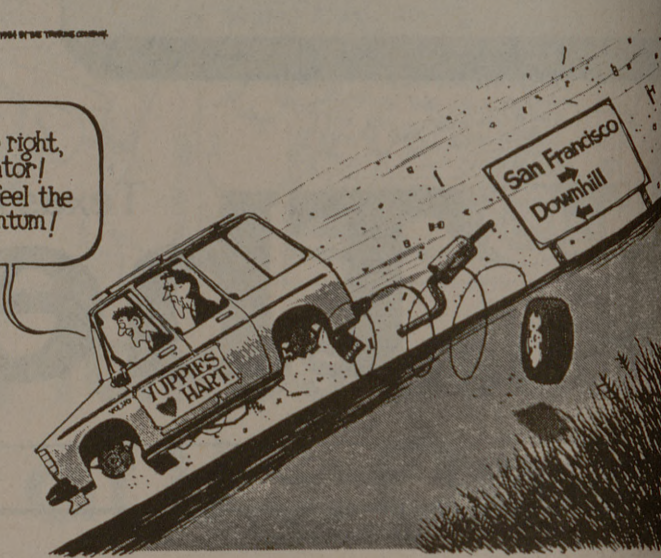
Editorial Policy

Letters Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station. Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents. The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$10.75 per semester, \$53.25 per school year and \$55 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Our address: The Battalion, 210 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.



You're right, Senator! I can feel the momentum!



Prime time journalists miss mark

robin black

Picture this: A reporter — minus one conscience and any taste to speak of — scrambles on top of a group of firemen as they attempt to revive a fallen partner. He shoves a microphone down into the tangle of fire helmets and oxygen hoses as a minicam hovers nearby. "Is he dead, or what?" the reporter demands.



The firemen ignore the parasite and continue working on their buddy. The reporter persists, practically crawling on top of the group. "I said, is he dead, or what?"

This rather disgusting character was one of several unlikable individuals — all media persons, coincidentally — featured in a recent TV movie.

The uncomplimentary portrayal of the reporter on the street (or anywhere else for that matter) has, tragically, become a common stereotype in movies and on TV.

Other classic examples of shows that have overused the negative stereotype include: soap operas, any TV police series and the movie "Absence of Malice," which was a total farce as far as media depiction is concerned.

Too frequently we journalists are portrayed as unscrupulous, uncaring, insensitive and sub-human creatures who will stop at nothing to get a story.

Fortunately, 99.9 percent of us are nothing at all like that.

Unfortunately, the public often does not believe this.

With great frequency, journalists, reporters in particular, are considered anti-anything Mom, apple pie and America stands for, with anything but puritanistic morals.

Much of this got its start in the late '60s and early '70s with the Johnson and Nixon administrations.

Neither president was exactly fond of anyone claiming to represent the media.

Johnson was opposed to the treatment the media gave the Vietnam War, and on more than one occasion, violent anger notwithstanding, phoned CBS and the other networks and newspapers to object to their method of coverage.

Nixon and close aide Haldeman were highly defensive of the way his administration was treated by the press, and this showed in the White House's attitude toward the press, especially in news conferences.

The Nixon administration even went so far as denouncing the national media in a kind of anti-public relations blitz.

You may remember some reporters' remarks,

in particular those of CBS' Dan Rather, that were pooh-poohed by the White House as being antagonistic and smart aleck.

Taken out of context, they might appear to be just that, but if the whole scene was examined, the remarks were usually pretty harmless.

But, because of great efforts by certain public officials to blame everything on the media — to mention countless movie and TV producers and directors' overuse of stereotypes — the reporter is too often seen as a hollow-eyed, drooping monster waving a red flag in one hand with copy of the Communist Manifesto in the other.

The media stereotype, like most other stereotypes, is overdone and unrealistic.

A more accurate portrayal of the members of our profession can be found in the Emmy award-winning series "Lou Grant" (cancelled, unfortunately, but still syndicated in re-runs).

"Lou Grant" reporter Joe Rossi never climbed on paramedics performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and inquired about the biological status of the victim.

Yes, we do take into consideration others' feelings, especially when treading on questionable ground. No, we do not shove microphones into the faces of disaster victims and no, we are not trying to move the White House to Moscow.

Yes, we have feelings and consciences and ethics and some of us even cry at sad movies.

Stopping terrorists not an easy task

By ROBERT SHEPARD

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — Most members of Congress agree international terrorism is, in the words of one congressman, "one of the scourges of our time," but it is unlikely that Congress will be able to do much to ease the threat.

Terrorism reached into the halls of Congress itself last year in the form of a bomb explosion outside the Senate chamber. That led to much tighter security around the Capitol, but those responsible for the bombing have not been caught.

The Reagan administration responded to the problem of terrorism at home and abroad by proposing a package of new laws intended to thwart terrorist groups and those supporting them. People in Congress and out praise the goals of the administration plan, but fear it could endanger constitutional rights.

That concern alone would be enough to doom the legislation, but the package faces the additional problem of time. Congress will be in recess much of the time during the next few months for the political conventions and the election campaign and will have little inclination to resolve the controversy and come up with an acceptable anti-terrorist package.

One bill in the package would authorize the payment of rewards for information about terrorists while another would make it a federal crime to provide training or support to any inter-

national terrorist group or foreign government in support of terrorist activity.

The American Civil Liberties Union says the proposals are "clearly unconstitutional" because they would have the effect of a blanket prohibition on association with certain groups.

At a recent hearing, Rep. Stephen Solarz, D-N.Y., pointed out the difficulties of tailoring a law that can distinguish between terrorists and other groups.

Solarz even read from the Declaration of Independence, which endorses the use of force to throw off a repressive government. He questioned whether the American revolutionaries and Europeans who backed their efforts would be covered by the proposed anti-terrorist legislation.

Administration officials insisted they would not be covered, but the point remains open to debate.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richards said there was "no question George III had immense problems ... but I do not recall any accusations that these groups were engaged in terrorism. They were in active insurgency, and that distinction is terribly important."

Solarz followed by asking if modern day groups might qualify as terrorists and trigger the ban on aid from U.S. citizens.

He cited rebel groups in the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique, Jewish forces that

fought British occupation of Palestine, and black Africans opposed to the white minority government of South Africa, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization and the CIA-backed contras in Nicaragua.

"I would have real problems with legislation that made it legal for Americans to provide advice and training to the government of South Africa, but made it impossible for Americans to provide advice and training for the African National Congress," Solarz said.

Richards said he had "no information that the contras are practicing terrorism." He said the African National Congress is a complex organization with some extreme elements. "The bottom line is that the distinctions involved in this problem are very difficult to make," he acknowledged.

Richards said the legislation does not propose labeling groups as terrorist or non-terrorist, but would be triggered by "certain categories of behavior," such as kidnapping, bombing, and airplane hijacking.

Solarz, reflecting what many in Congress feel, said he would back any effort "to reduce the threat of terrorism in this country and around the world, so long as the methods which are being proposed do not create more problems than they solve."

Fat lady already sings in Mondale camp

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

A summit meeting was held last weekend at a Holiday Inn in the outskirts of Washington between the leaders of the Mondale, Hart and Jackson forces to discuss Democratic Party unity. The conference was called at the behest of Mondale's campaign managers.

The Hart and Jackson people were stone faced.

Mondale's man was the only one smiling. "Now that the battle is over and our man has won, we feel it is time to heal the wounds of the primary race and work for a victory in November."

Hart's man objected, "The opera isn't over until the fat lady sings."

"We thought you'd say that," Mondale's man retorted. He pushed a buzzer and a fat lady entered the room and started to sing "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The Hart man stood up and said, "That's one more dirty trick. How do you expect us to agree to unity when you pull a stunt like that?"

"We were only kidding around, to ease the tension," the Mondale man said. "Let's be serious. Mondale has the delegates and he's going to be the candidate. But we need to work together if we're going to beat Reagan in November."

The Jackson man said, "Mondale stole our delegates. We're not going to agree to unity until we get them back."

Mondale's man said, "We played by the rules. You don't change them after the game is over."

Hart's man said, "Gary doesn't consider the game over. He wants to go into overtime."

"How can he go into overtime when the score is 2,000 to 1,200?"

"It doesn't matter what the score is. Hart won California. That proves the voters have rejected Mondale."

Jackson's man said, "Jesse got cheated out of delegates in California and New Jersey."

Hart's representative said, "Gary doesn't want to be a spoiler. He is willing to meet Mondale halfway."

"What does that mean?"

"He will get up at the convention and say numerically Mondale has the delegates, but politically it would be a disaster to nominate him."

"What kind of a unity message is that?" Mondale's man shouted.

"It's the best Hart can do after the things Mondale said about him."

Jackson's man said, "I can't guarantee Jesse will even come to the convention if the Democrats don't change the rules."

Mondale's man took a sheet of paper out of his briefcase. "The candidate has given me permission to offer Gary the vice presidency on his ticket."

"Big deal," Hart's man said. "How can Gary be vice president when he can't stand being in the same room with Mondale?"

"A vice president never has to be in the same room with the president," Mondale's man said. "That's what makes the American president work. Mondale can always communicate with Hart through Lane Kirkland."

Jackson's man said, "Jesse wants to be secretary of state."

Mondale's man said, "We can't offer Jesse Cabinet position if we don't win the election. But in the spirit of unity Fritz would like Jesse to nominate him at the convention."

"Jesse thought you'd come up with a stupid idea like that. He said if you did he would use the time to tell the country how he got cheated out of his delegates."

"That's fine with us," Mondale's man said. "Then it's agreed. We will announce to the press that the party has been unified."

The fat lady started singing, "San Francisco open those golden gates," and Hart's man said, "Oh shut up."