

Tech college: unsound idea

In Monday's Board of Regents meeting, Texas A&M Provost Gordon P. Eaton said the University is forming a committee to investigate establishing a College of Technology.

One possible model for the college would offer a "two-plus-two" degree. This would offer a two-year associate degree with an option to continue two more years for a bachelor's degree. But a student wouldn't be required to continue for a bachelor's degree.

"As soon as we look into associates degree, a lot of red flags are going to go out," said System Chancellor Arthur G. Hansen.

Good. Red flags should go up.

Offering a two-year associate de-

gree goes against everything Texas A&M has been striving for. The associate degree has been the province of junior colleges and community colleges. It has no place in an institution that talks of raising academic standards and limiting enrollment.

It would be ironic for Texas A&M to institute a two-year program at a time when Prairie View A&M — in an effort to raise academic standards — is phasing out such programs.

Fortunately, the idea is only in the discussion stage. If a College of Technology would mean offering an associate degree program at Texas A&M, we don't need it.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

Electronic-Democrats abandon party's roots

By DAVID S. BRODER

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SAN FRANCISCO — In the welter of colorful and confusing scenes that the Democratic National Convention presented, one symbolic shift may have been most significant. Except for the presidential nomination, where the television networks insisted on the traditional roll-call of states, all the voting was done for the first time on an electronic data system.

I may be making too much of this symbolic "nationalization" of the voting process, but it shows a fundamental shift that has taken place in the Democratic Party and suggests one reason why it faces a hard fight in the coming election.

First, let me say that the Democrats dodged the bullet here in San Francisco. When the convention began, there was a degree of uncertainty whether the Democrats would leave the city as one party or three or four quarreling tribes. They came out as one party.

The mood at the end was positive, if not ebullient, and the assumption here is that the first round of post-convention national polls will show the Walter Mondale-Geraldine Ferraro ticket within striking distance of President Reagan and Vice President Bush.

But whatever the national standings, every state-by-state analysis points to a massive Reagan-Bush advantage in Electoral College terms.

The weakness of the Democrats' Electoral College situation is not a recent discovery. But it struck me forcibly here that it reflects a fundamental flaw in the party's approach to politics — a preference for nationalizing its philosophy and procedures and an inclination to ignore the federalism that is built into the structure of American politics and government.

The permanent building blocks of the party are no longer its state and local affiliates but its national ethnic and interest group caucuses.

Perhaps the best speech of the convention was given by New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, whose potential as a presidential dark horse has been so generously praised in recent months by many of us in the press that we risked becoming partisan publicists for him. But the Democrats are so tuned to Washington and national-coalition politics that they managed to ignore the star in their own constellation until the nomination search was over.

The irony is that the Democrats have forgotten the essential federalism of this political system at a time when their greatest strength and greatest talent is in local and state government. Cuomo may be the most eloquent of the 35 Democratic governors, but there are many others who could give him and the country lessons in effective economic development, education and budget management — to mention three of the domestic issues of greatest concern to the voters. At the city level, the Democrats enjoy a near-monopoly on the talent.

This is the real weakness of the national party, displayed here once again this week. The great public doubt about the Democrats, as Sen. Fritz Hollings of South Carolina has pointed out regularly, is not about their ideals but about their capacity to discipline their hungry factions sufficiently to govern.

The best refutation of those doubts is found in Democratic-led state and local governments. And the National party, by ignoring those components, even in its new voting procedures here, resolutely cuts itself off from its own greatest strength.

The Democrats really do need to rediscover their roots.



SORRY, CINDERELLA... BUT ACCORDING TO THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, I DIDN'T HAVE TO TELL YOU WHEN THE WARRANTY RAN OUT...

Choices necessary in electoral process

"In the middle of the faithless sky there hangs a small, dark world that once was green and blue. Some say it killed itself by stabbing all its lovely lands with deep atomic wounds. Some say it took an overdose of hate."

(Opening paragraph of "The Song" by Calvin Miller.)

The attitudes of those that govern us (not just in the United States, but everywhere) give us the impression they would prefer all out war, or even total annihilation, to egg-on-face.



Steve Thomas

Jimmy Carter proved that even great countries could withstand humiliation; proved it over and over again. Before him, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon did their damndest to keep America's John-Wayne image clearly focused in the eyes of other nations, while craven military decisions eventually turned Vietnam into our most humbling national experience since the Great Depression.

And now, in light of San Francisco's recent Democratic infestation — and its decision — we have been presented our candidates for president.

It is almost as if Nixon were running against Carter: the showman Republican against the spineless Democrat. And though an itchy trigger finger on the big red button isn't good,

economic disintegration is worse. We have to keep Reagan for our own economic good.

Yet it is a paradox of our times that, while we tease disaster like a child teases a snake, we make social advances of almost proportionate caliber.

If a young, black preacher had stood before the Democratic National Convention 30 years ago, told them he wanted to be president, declared an almost totally theological platform and asked for their support, the side-splitting laughter would have been unbearable.

And had that same black preacher kissed the convention's female chairman on international television, as Rev. Jesse Jackson did Wednesday night, the repercussions could have made him just as immortal as Jackson's mentor, Martin Luther King.

Equally surprising was the selection of a female running mate for the Democratic presidential ticket; surprising because it has taken so long to get around to doing it that we began to doubt its likelihood.

Women, of course, have just as much claim to intellectual superiority over animals as men do. It's a shame that a decision of this import came first from a drowning underdog, reaching for any kind of voter buoyancy he could find.

Hart wouldn't work; too much controversy. Jackson wouldn't work; too headstrong and philosophical. Nobody else could turn the voters' heads, except maybe a dark-horse female.

But the Democrats have done their

best in a lesser-of-many-evils situation, and now the nation must choose its best in November with the same kind of choice.

It is a disgrace. The thought must rest in the mind of every educated person's mind: "Why must I choose between a lesser-of-many evils?"

We continue to award the leadership of the most powerful nation on earth every four years to that man (and possibly someday, to that woman) who paints the prettiest picture before the voting public, with reckless disregard to qualifications and track record.

Our system of democracy is faulty, nor is our system of selection. We must redesign our qualifications criteria so as to ensure capable candidates.

I don't think the founding fathers would be the least bit offended if asked for quality personnel in the highest positions. In fact, were they wake up tomorrow, they might scold us for our stupidity in letting the circus last this long.

They allowed for as much as they could. And though they were remarkably prophetic, we must take up slack in their foresight.

Possibly, if we do, we can avoid peanut farmers — and the actors.

(Steve Thomas is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.)

Even Republican finds hope in Ferraro choice

It's happened. Geraldine Ferraro has become the first female vice presidential candidate of a major political party in the United States, something which pleases even a Republican like me — and not someone who could normally be called a "feminist."

There has been some question as to her qualifications for the position, but then, the vice president is, according to the June 4 issue of Time magazine, "so to speak, flash-frozen and then, should the need arise, thawed out later." John Nance Garner, Vice President in Franklin Roosevelt's first two terms, said that the office "isn't worth a pitcher of warm piss."

What are the qualifications for vice president, after all? The job description could read something like this: Wanted, public relations expert, able to support — at least in public — all the policies of the president of the United States, willing to attend funerals of heads of state, and capable of

The job description could read something like this: Wanted, public relations expert, able to support — at least in public — all the policies of the president of the United States, willing to attend funerals of heads of state, and capable of presiding over meetings of the Senate and vote at those meetings in case of a tie. Period.

presiding over meetings of the Senate and vote at those meetings in case of a tie. Period. It doesn't sound like a very difficult position: a parliamentarian who's good at PR and owns a black suit (or dress).

However, the representative from Archie Bunker's Queens district may not meet some mythical qualifications for the office.

Time magazine says: "Ferraro is the first to admit that she is being considered mainly because of her gender, not her qualifications. But she adds, 'If I weren't capable of doing the job, I wouldn't be talked about.'"

It is her capability of doing the job that allowed her to attend law school at night while teaching. She passed the bar exam in 1960 and practiced law from her home while her three children, now 22, 20, and 17, were small. Later, as an assistant D.A., she set up her district's Special Victims Bureau.

Then, in 1978, she mounted a campaign for Congress, and won.

As a representative, Ferraro votes "from her own life," says the July issue of Ms. Magazine. She voted against Reagan's budget and tax cuts in 1981, against funding the MX missile and tightening food-stamp eligibility, and in favor of a nuclear-arms freeze and domestic-content legislation (a protectionist measure backed by organized labor). Most controversial of all in her district, she has taken a pro-choice position on abortion. She is the only woman in the Democratic leadership of the House of Representatives. And she is the first woman to chair the Democratic Platform Committee. She is called, after just six years in Congress, "not only one of the leading Democratic politicians but also one of the party's leading politicians, period," by the June issue of Ms. And House Speaker Tip O'Neill says she was his

choice for the Democratic vice presidential nominee.

But whether or not she's what Democrats believe to be the best choice for vice president — which is what party's vice-presidential nominee should be, after all — she is a good choice as a vice-presidential nominee because she is a woman.

I normally don't believe that women should be given a job, any job, simply because of their sex any more than they should be denied a job solely on that basis. However, Ferraro's nomination and the rampant discussions her qualifications will do much to help this country "It's OK to seriously consider a woman for a position of power even to put her in that position if she's qualified." If it says only that, it doesn't say that a woman should be put in a position of power simply because she's a woman, doesn't say a woman should not be considered simply because she's a woman; if it does say that a woman's qualification should be looked at as seriously as a man's, then Walter Mondale will have done a lot for women in this country.

But I'm still voting for Reagan.

(Kathleen Hart is a senior journalism major and the news editor for The Battalion.)



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