

## America's future: debatable or not?

In the debate Sunday night, President Ronald Reagan asked: are Americans better off today than they were four years ago?

This is a moot question.

Walter Mondale asked *will* Americans be better off in the future than they are today?

Not if you're black, poor, old, disabled, foreign-born, an environmentalist, an auto worker, a non-Christian, a farmer, a small businessman, a woman, a marine.

But even Mondale's question doesn't directly address the issue that worries us most.

That is, does anyone care about America? How many people cared enough to watch the debate through to its conclusion. How many people will care enough to listen in on the other debates?

It seems that the only people on the Texas A&M campus who are concerned with politics are those dressed in tweed and blue blazers — the people training to be government tools. They include almost none of the people who will feel the negative effects of the current Reagan administration policies.

The future depends on all people becoming aware, registering to vote and voting. We're glad to see the debate had some effect; United Press International reported that over 400,000 people registered to vote in Texas on Monday after the debate.

It is important for all Americans to listen in on the debates.

So, Thursday night when you have a choice between watching the debate or watching MTV, make the choice that will affect your future — not your next record purchase.

— The Battalion Editorial Board

## Real-life events distract artificial campaigners

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WASHINGTON POST COLUMNIST

NEW YORK - The terror bombing of the U.S. Embassy Annex in East Beirut did not set off shock waves in domestic politics, but it did serve as a reminder of the impact of real-world events on what has been so far a largely artificial campaign.

The destruction of the Annex, the wounding of the ambassador and the death of two Americans brought back memories of the far worse casualties this nation had suffered last year as a result of the unwise decision by President Reagan to make an open-ended commitment of Marines to the misnamed international "peace-keeping force" in Lebanon.

But even in Grand Rapids, where one of two American casualties had lived, the news of the bombing did not stir any great political upheaval, as far as this visiting reporter could see. It will take something larger than that to shake people's inclination to give Reagan a second term.

What that something might be is speculative, of course, but it would have to be something of large dimension and consequence: a serious presidential illness; a sharp warning of looming economic or international trouble; or a major blunder by Reagan himself.

Nothing Democratic challenger Walter F. Mondale does is likely to shake Reagan's lead, and my impression is that the standard political arguments are not going to change things much, either. The reason for saying that is that Reagan's current strength seems rooted in twin realities that are of massive political weight - the force of his personality, and the health of the national economy.

Those are realities, and it is foolish for so many Democrats to be wringing their hands about the way Reagan is exploiting them - or the way Mondale is failing to deflect their political consequences.

A good many liberal columnists and commentators have argued that Reagan is cynically exploiting a situation for which he can claim no credit and, conversely, that he has engineered a political revolution as large and lasting in its consequences as the Franklin D. Roosevelt political realignment of 1932-36.

Both theories strike me as being the products of hyperventilation. It is certainly true that Reagan and his managers are doing their best to deny the country the benefits of a genuine policy debate in this campaign, by jamming Mondale's message, by holding the press at bay, and by keeping the President's speeches at such a stratospheric level of partiotic banality that even Reagan seems bored.

It is, as I said of a similar tactic by Richard Nixon in 1972, "a parody of a political campaign."

It is a disservice to the nation and to Reagan himself. He has earned a reputation as a politician of conviction, but the cautious counselors around him act as if they did not trust either Reagan or his ideas in the arena of political debate.

I think the President is foolish to accept their advice, for he is denying himself the opportunity to win anything he could legitimately claim as a policy mandate from this election.

The reason he has been able to sustain his above-the-battle posture is that he has built a deserved reputation as a strong leader. And he is enjoying a strong economy, whose reality is also visible to the voters.

Were those realities not present, none of the balloons, the bands or the ads would be sustaining Reagan's lead in the polls. If there were a perception of failed leadership, or serious and visible problems, then the Democrats — whatever their difficulties — might be competitive in this election.

But does the likely Reagan victory — and especially his strong support from younger voters - herald a permanent political realignment? Maybe, but I doubt it. Not unless Reagan is proven right and his critics wrong on the issues they say are not being debated in this campaign.

If the key to perpetual prosperity and low inflation lies in cutting tax rates and running up huge trade and budget deficits, as Reagan has done, then four more years of Reaganism may produce that "Republican majority" some have seen emerging ever since 1968.

If ever-rising defense expenditures and start-and-stop diplomacy in every critical part of the world from Central America to the Middle East to the Soviet Union are the key to peace, as Reagan seems to believe, then Republicans should enjoy a long reign.

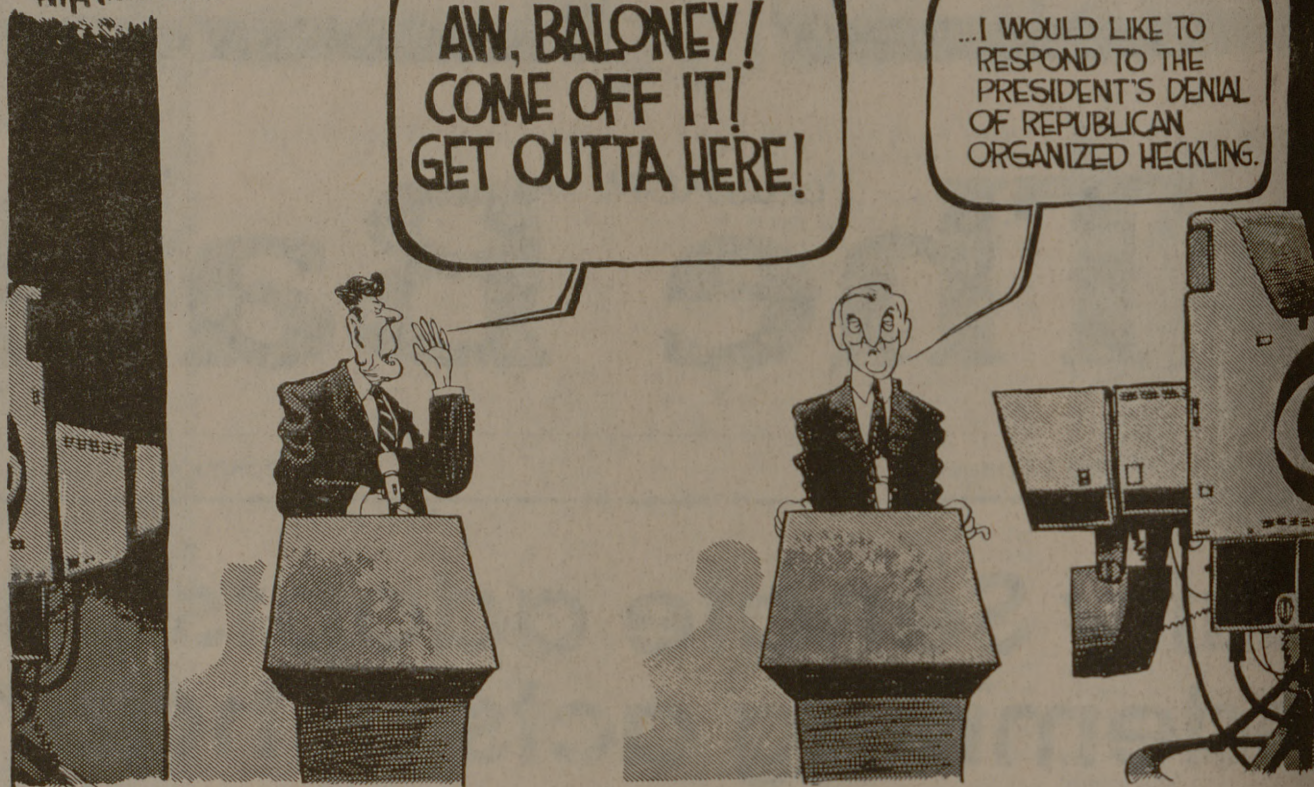
If the baby-boom generation wants the preachers and the courts dictating their private sexual morality and providing school prayers for their kids, then Republicans are the wave of the future.

And if this country is comfortable with steady encroachments on environment, civil rights and civil liberties protections, and steady growth in economic inequality, then Reagan and Reaganism are the new New Deal.

Personally, I don't buy any of those propositions, any more than I believe Reagan is winning on his soft, fuzzy ads or because his people stage more photogenic rallies. He is winning on low inflation, a rise in real income for the record number of employed, and on leadership that is palpably stronger than that of his recent predecessors.

Give him his due, dear liberals, but do not sign any articles for surrender.

OPINION THE OREGONIAN  
OF PORTLAND  
METRO SERVICES



## Cruising Austin's Sixth Street

AUSTIN — Sixth Street is only an hour and a half away from Aggieland by car, but worlds apart by culture.

"It's eleven o'clock in Austin," a radio from a blue Ford truck blares. "We're enjoying another fun Saturday night at KLBJ-FM."

The Ford is cruising Sixth Street. Three males are crowded into the cab, and a girl in shorts sits on the wheel base of the bed. She has a silver balloon flying beside her.

Huey Lewis comes across the airwaves, but the light holding back the truck has turned green and the sound disappears and the balloon sails past.

Not that they're going anywhere. The truck dwellers are studying the streets. People are jammed together on the sidewalks; watching the truck, and other cars going by.

One sports car revs its engine, but the driver isn't trying to move out fast either. That isn't the point on a Saturday night on Sixth Street.

Further down the street another car tries to beat the amber light. The driver gets across half the street as the walk light comes on. It's the pedestrians' cue. A mass of people starts walking across. The car is trapped, as well as traffic coming the other way. No one honks or even seems to care. The car occupants are embarrassed, but it's their first night on Sixth Street. They don't know the rules.

The streets are filled with T-sips, flyboys from Bergstrom Airbase and Aggies. Yes, one brave soul even wore his ATM shirt. Two young girls appear beside the Aggie. One girl looks no more than 10, the other couldn't be older than 8. But they know Sixth better than the crowd.



Bonnie Langford

Both girls run through the people. The younger one barefoot; both are wearing more make up than anyone their age should even own. They run past a prostitute arguing with her pimp. The pimp tries to ignore his employee, but she keeps yelling.

The girls go past a scantily dressed brunette selling her hair. The brunette is wearing a short black dress. She's flirting with a guy trying to buy a rose to impress his date. His date gets mad.

The girls are lost in the crowd, just past the sell-off glow-in-the-dark flowers and ropes. These hawkers also young women in titillating clothes. They're having some impressing a young flyboy. The boy with short curly hair and a look of small-town innocence watches shyly as a hawked drape fluorescent string around his neck.

Across the street, in front of a bar, an old woman dressed in a fancy cowgirl outfit complete with fringe, plays a harmonica. She looks down on her luck, but some of the crowd gather by and start clapping along. Her eyes look up appreciatively.

Another instrumentalist sits in front of an empty building — a young Hispanic with a guitar. He's strumming the "Saturday Night Blues," but no one claps with him.

Nearby, a guy who looks like he just stepped out of *MTV* turns to his date. "It's a zoo here tonight," he tells her.

She replies, "Yeah," shaking her frizzy, wild hair. She looks like she missed her last grooming appointment. "L... at those fools in the truck."

The blue Ford has made it's way back down the street. Blue Oyster Cult now blaring out. The girl and her date have been joined by four laughing males. It's gonna be a Austin night.

Bonnie Langford is a night news editor for The Battalion.

## Student Body President: work with administrators

During the last three years, I have repeatedly read on these pages a number of rather vituperative assertions directed toward the administration of our university. To their credit, the individuals who make up this much-flagellated group have generally withheld any response, although in most instances a reasonable rejoinder could have been given.

Having had the opportunity to associate with the aforementioned on numerous occasions, both formal and informal, I have found them to be quite concerned about student opinion and the implications of various policies thereon. Since this newspaper plays a role in shaping students' perspectives, a reminder herein, amid all the clamor to the contrary, that the administration of TAMU is not actively researching methods to inconvenience students is in order.

Before inflammatory thoughts regarding a lack of commitment to student interests on my part are put to paper, I assure the reader that I am not a sycophantic turncoat who occupies a second-floor office in the Coke Building or resides in a house on Throckmorton Street.

Indeed there are occasional issues on which the majority of students have an opinion which differs from that of the

administration. The important thing to remember is that when such issues surface, the reasons for them generally relate to an old economic axiom; to wit, while there are limited resources, people have unlimited desires.

As a case in point, there are reasons for the cancellation of check cashing in the Fiscal Office. The fact is that the staff of the above mentioned office was overburdened with an increase in compulsory responsibilities, not the least of which included the additional duties associated with a 30 percent increase in the volume of student financial aid activity. While this administration of Student Government remains committed to the restoration of these privileges in some form and does therefore disagree with the outright cancellation of this important student service, it is our obligation as responsible students to consider the dilemma in which the administration finds itself.

I recognize the irrepressibility inherent among youth and fervently hope it is never squelched. That the administrators generally have student interests at heart is an overlooked fact which should occasionally be noted.

I add in conclusion that students are encouraged to visit the Student Government office at 221 Pavilion or the office of the Vice President of Student Services in the YMCA Building whenever a legitimate concern arises.

David Alders  
Student Body President

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

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

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