

# Opinion

## Under the big top

The antics of all involved in the Filipino presidential election would make even the most accomplished circus performers jealous.

Early vote tallies were inconclusive. President Ferdinand Marcos, according to the government election commission, is leading 53 percent to his opponent's 47. Unofficial counts show the challenger, Corazon Aquino, ahead by the same margin. Aquino held a victory rally of sorts, claiming "the people have won this election."

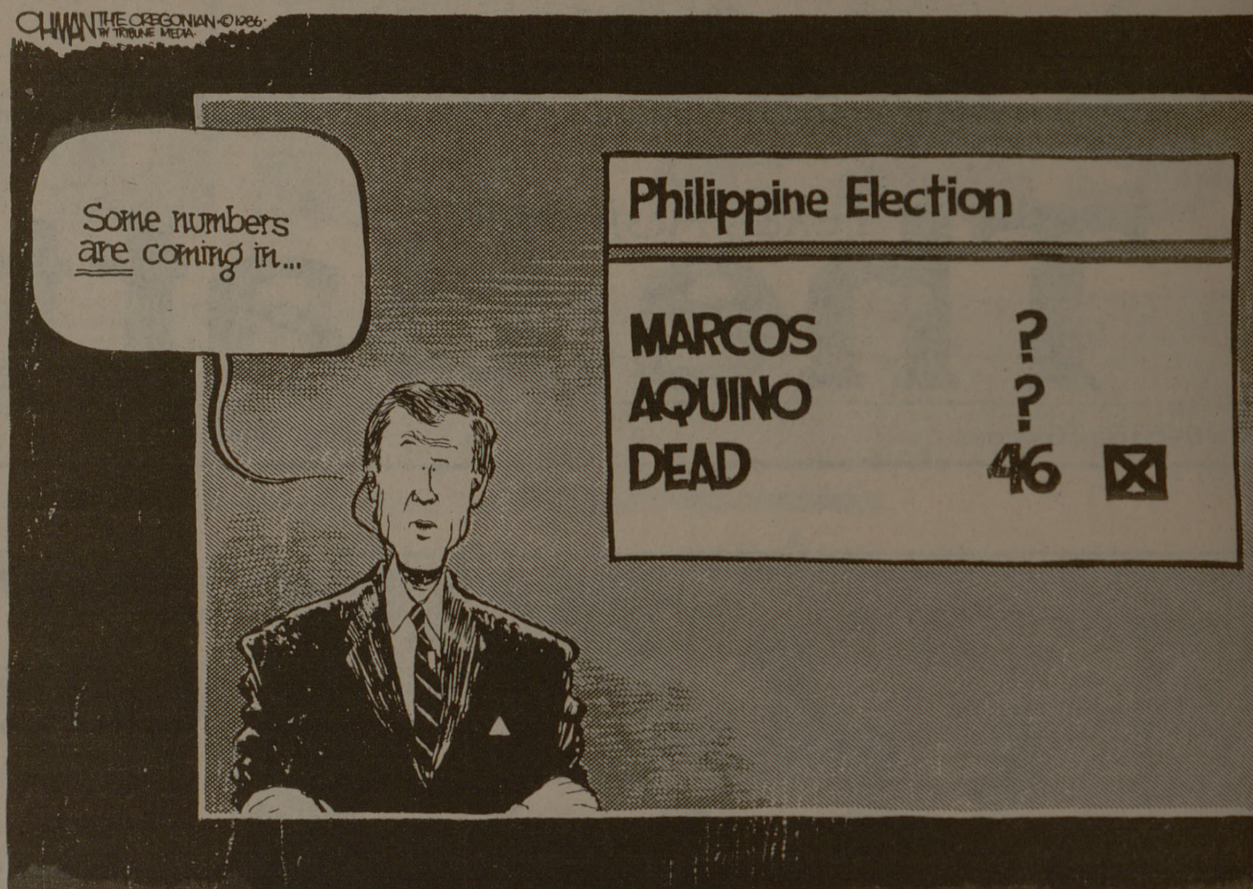
The results still are unclear five days after the polls closed. The National Assembly is charged with determining the official outcome and has yet to agree on rules for the election canvass.

Thirty computer operators tallying votes walked out Sunday, claiming fraud in the tabulation, which showed Marcos leading. Other reports of violence, sabotage, vote-buying, intimidation and ballot box stuffing and stealing cloud the legitimacy of the so-called democratic election.

Marcos has the power to declare the election void, as he threatened shortly after the first unofficial counts showed Aquino ahead.

The farcical proceedings have turned a serious democratic event into a circus even P.T. Barnum would be proud of.

The Battalion Editorial Board



## Behavior of inner city poor not unique to blacks

Before I could write this column I had to call my parents in Florida. I had to ask if I could write that my maternal grandfather, seemingly the storied immigrant of American mythology, tried to abandon his family. After coming to America, he was pressured by relatives here to do the right thing. Only reluctantly did he send for his wife and children. That's how my mother came to America.

Richard Cohen

My paternal grandfather was hardly a mythmaker, either. He, too, came to the United States with the promise to make enough money to send for his family. He, too, let time slip by until the women he had left behind — an arranged marriage in any case — must have seemed less and less attractive. Under pressure from relatives, he too finally sent money for the passage.

I cite these stories from my own fam-

ily lore by way of saying that the behavior now associated with the inner-city blacks has been seen before. I raise it, further, with the absolute confidence that what was true for my family was true for many others. You don't have to go back far in any family, especially one that was once poor, to find the relative who went out for a pack of cigarettes and never came back. In time, the kids called a different man "daddy."

It is important to dredge up the worst of your family's history because increasingly people are citing the apparent disintegration of the poor black family as proof that there is something awfully wrong with young black men — something in the genes.

In a *Playboy* magazine article, Hodding Carter III quotes a fellow guest at a Washington dinner party as saying, "You have to face the fact that some people are culturally and genetically unsuited for democracy." I have heard the

same sort of thing. This so-called facing of the facts is nothing new. When enough "facts" get faced, people wind up getting lynched.

The awful truth is that no one can totally explain what is happening to the poor black family. No one really knows the precise cause of the high rate of out-of-wedlock births, or if there is only one cause. There are studies to show that welfare is a factor, studies to show that it is not, and guesses at what would happen if (as some have suggested) welfare were abandoned altogether. Like the archetypal immigrant family where one son becomes a cop and another a crook, there is no explaining why welfare launched many blacks into the middle class and kept others hooked on the dole.

Of course, it's too simple to compare my grandfathers with ghetto kids today. They have come from different cultures, different eras and, besides, my

grandfathers reluctantly wound up doing what is called "the right thing." (A cousin, though, did not; the family he left behind in Europe eventually perished in the Holocaust.) Many others — as countless of the poor have always done — abandoned their families, raising new ones whose descendants now make sanctimonious remarks about the innate immorality of blacks.

If ghetto youth and my grandfathers had something in common, it was that economics played a role in their thinking. My grandfathers struck out for America thinking life here would be better for them. It wasn't. It was worse and one of them never found work that lasted. The family that he was not allowed to abandon eventually came apart anyway — a wife dead, a daughter sent to live with relatives and two boys put into an orphanage.

Things change, but they also remain the same. The lifestyle of poor urban

blacks is also a product of cultural and economic reality — unemployment, poverty, and, yes, it's intended to harm welfare. When people are poor, they simply cannot cope with life, they behave in ways that may be immoral that make sense to them. This is not how blacks behave; it is how people behave. The "gene" for immorality is carried within us all.

In a different era, people wonder about men like my grandfather. He said their poverty and exotic ways were in their "blood." The American mythology of immigrant success later was over the dismal reality and cleaned up. But the harsh truth is that the poverty that ravages the poor black family of today also blighted the white poor yesterday — maybe not identical, maybe not as extensively, but certainly as tragically. When it comes to immorality, the house we all live in is made of glass. Throw stones at your peril.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for the Washington Post Writers Group.

## Mail Call

### Militant protest hinders goals

EDITOR:

In response to Sheila Clout's letter of Feb. 6: There are many women out there who believe that the so-called "feminist realization" isn't all it's cracked up to be. Although feminists' concern about discrimination on the basis of sex is a valid one, militant protest serves only to hinder their efforts at being respected as equals.

It would be better to spend less energy complaining about the injustice of it all and devote more time to developing your own potential and realizing your own goals. Hal Hammons brought up a good point — if a woman pursues a career simply to prove a point or to show she's "just as good as any man," she is to be pitied. She has really missed the point.

Women are people with the same dreams and capabilities of all people. That we also have the added gift of being able to bear children should be a source of joy, not anger or bitterness or sorrow.

I also disagree with Clout's idea that to be a lady is to be a passive plaything in the world of men. Being a lady earns a woman respect. It is not patronizing nor demeaning. I would feel demeaned by being considered only a woman, for being a lady implies a much higher status.

I applaud the ladies who courageously stand up today to say they are proud to be housewives and mothers as well as those who pursue other challenging careers outside of the home. To attain our goals and to realize our potential, to enjoy what they're doing — whether it be as housewife or

mother or businesswoman or lawyer or doctor — isn't that what we are looking for anyway?

Julie K. Hope  
Class of '87  
Future Physician, Wife and Mother

### Twelfth Man a yearlong job

EDITOR:

We were shocked and appalled at the apathetic attitude displayed by some members of the Texas A&M student body during the A&M vs. SMU basketball game. These "privileged" students had very visible seats on the floor at the north end of the court. Their lack of enthusiasm and failure to participate in the traditional A&M yells is a sad reflection on our scholarship athletes.

They were unceasingly supported during the fall semester, including the occasion in Dallas on Jan. 1. However, they did not feel compelled to show the same consideration and support for their fellow athletes on the basketball team.

We hope those at fault will reassess their superior attitudes and realize the true spirit of a Texas Aggie. The Twelfth Man is a year round responsibility for ALL members of the student body.

Lisa Holy '87  
Michelle Lawson '88

### Be there!

EDITOR:

On February 18th at 7:30 . . .  
● YOU might win tickets to the Houston Rockets game  
● YOU might win dinner at Dan Patrick's Sports Market  
● YOU might get VIP passes to Fizz.  
BUT . . .  
. . . YOU must be in the stands during the Aggie Ladies vs. Texas Tech women's basketball game at G. Rollie White Coliseum . . .

This game is sponsored by the Brazos County A&M Mothers' Club and their portion of the receipts will go toward two Texas A&M Scholarships, one to a Bryan High senior student and one to an A&M Consolidated High School student.

BE THERE!  
Mrs. Richard Crawford  
Brazos County A&M Mothers' Club

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.

## Deficit unites, divides

More so than any other major public issue, the budget deficit unites philosophically and separates politically. Everyone is against it, but they're against it in their own ways.

Asked where to cut spending, Americans give a thousand different answers, and many of those answers are colored by their particular relationship to government, particularly by the benefits they receive.

Therefore, while the desire to reduce government spending appears to be as strong as ever, the reluctance to cut spending where it might hurt particular projects is equally strong or stronger. It is a strange case of division in unity.

Theoretically, there is almost no limit to the number of spending items that can be eliminated or reduced in a budget of \$994 billion, but if asked to pick them every American's list would differ in some way.

The Grace Commission, formally referred to as the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, last year listed 2,478 "separate, distinct, and specific" recommendations to save billions of dollars by reducing waste.

Practically speaking, it said, "these savings, if fully implemented, could virtually eliminate the reported deficit by the 1990s versus an alternative deficit of \$10.2 trillion in the 1990s if no action is taken."

These measures, it continued, could save \$424 billion in three years, rising to \$1.9 trillion a year by the year 2000, "without raising taxes, without weakening America's needed defense buildup and without in any way harming necessary social welfare programs."

But implementation is another

matter, because one person's "waste" is another's income or security.

In place of effective action, Congress and presidents have snipped and clipped here and there but have avoided real surgery. In fact, trickery of a sort has been resorted to by shoving some items "off budget."

Devices proposed in this year's budget proposal include selling off assets, selling off loans (the purchasers presumably would seek to collect at a profit) and imposing user fees, such as for federal meat and poultry inspections.

An "oil import fee" to raise revenue has been mentioned, even by the president, but the difference between a fee and a tax is a hair so thin that even lexicographers have difficulty presenting a convincing distinction.

Perhaps the most promising move made by Congress was passage last year of the Gramm-Rudman Act, which requires the gradual elimination of budget deficits by 1991. But that law was immediately challenged in the courts.

Unable to cut spending — unable to decide what items should be shaved or excised altogether — Americans and their leaders have simply resorted to the technique of spending beyond their means and wishing for a miracle.

Instead, economists argue, they have flirted with the threat of economic disasters in the form of inflation, high interest rates and deep recessions.

But even if these disasters remain threats rather than actualities, the American people already pay a big price, because one-third of personal income taxes now go to pay for the big debts rather than for government services.

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