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 Progressive profs

Effect of debates hard to determine

By Susan Stubing
 Staff Writer

Presidential debates are standard in America's election process today, but it is sometimes difficult to determine how much influence these often fiery confrontations have on voter opinion.

The impact of a debate and the influence it exerts on election results varies from year to year and from candidate to candidate, A&M political science professor George Edwards said.

"Sometimes a debate can be very effective in predicting people's opinions," Edwards said, "but the potential of effectiveness varies."

After one of the 1980 Carter-Reagan debates, Reagan's popularity in the polls increased substantially in the days immediately following the debate, Edwards said. Reagan eventually broke the neck-in-neck tie with Carter and won by 10 percentage points. In that instance, the debate clearly made a difference, Edwards said.

In the 1984 election, however, the debate did not sway voter opinion significantly.

"During the Reagan-Mondale campaign," Edwards said, "people's opinions were in place long before

the debates took place." Therefore, there was little potential for the candidates to influence the voters, he said.

But in 1988, Edwards said, the debates are likely to have a greater influence on public opinion because many voters are not yet "sold" on either candidate.

"The debates have more potential this year because people's opinions are more volatile," he said. "There is more indecision and people are less intensely committed to the candidates." An unusually large percentage of the population is not strongly committed to the campaign at this point, he said.

Although this year's debates may have a greater impact on the election than in the past, their influence still is not significant, Political Science Department Head Dr. Bryan Jones said, because most of the people watching the debate already favor a certain candidate. The viewers that would be affected most by the debate are those with few predispositions toward the candidates, he said.

"The debate itself is not tremendously important," Jones said, "because most viewers already know who they like."

What is important, he said, is how

the media portrays the debate to non-viewers.

"What the public hears about the campaign the next day determines the impact of the debate," Jones said.

The press plays a large role in determining the outcome of the confrontations, he said. Representatives for each candidate try to convince the media that their candidate won the debate, because positive media analysis is crucial.

As a rule, the underdog has the advantage, Jones said, because the candidate who is ahead has more to lose.

But determining who won the debate is a difficult task, especially if neither candidate makes a terrible blunder.

The way a candidate presents himself and how he responds to addressed questions are good criteria for evaluating the debate, he said.

"Clearly, I think that how one presents himself to the public makes a difference," Jones said. "It isn't the determining factor, but it does make some difference."

The candidates' views on the issues presented and the way they answer questions also can help decide the "winner." It is easier to deter-

mine who wins each debated issue than it is to determine the overall winner, Jones said.

"People do pay attention to issues to a certain extent," Edwards said, "but they don't make too much of a difference because the issues are not fully illuminated."

Associated Press

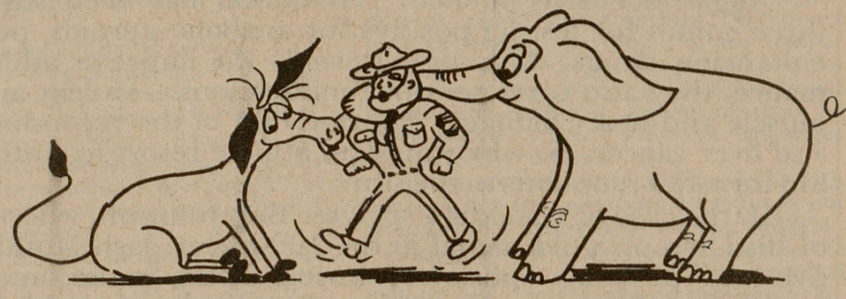
Michael Dukakis waved a \$20 bill in the air Wednesday and ridiculed George Bush's plan for a middle-class tax break as worthy of Ebenezer Scrooge. The vice president said his idea would give average Americans a chance at a little nest egg.

An aggressive Dukakis also accused the Reagan administration of permitting a "Hall of Shame" to spring up over the last seven years, citing dozens of top administration officials who broke the law or violated the public trust. He said he would crack down on lobbying by officials who leave their government posts.

Bush tried to turn the tables on his rival, criticizing the Democrat's plan for people to repay student loans through a lifetime of payroll deductions.

"We do not need to put the IRS on your tail for the rest of your life," he said.

Vice presidential candidates Dan Quayle and Lloyd



Candidates debate over tax breaks

Bentsen went through their daily campaign paces as they pointed toward next week's nationally televised debate in Omaha, Neb.

Dukakis stepped up his attack on Bush's new plan for tax-deferred savings accounts as he campaigned in Western Pennsylvania.

Waving a \$20 bill to represent the amount the average family would save in a year, he declared, "George Bush plays Santa Claus to the wealthy and Ebenezer Scrooge to the rest of us." That was a reference to Bush's call for a cut in the capital gains tax, a move that Dukakis says would give huge benefits to the rich.

Bush set out on a 150-mile bus tour through Illinois combining political offense with defense.

He said his proposal for tax-deferred savings account was a move designed to "give taxpayers a little nest egg." Under the plan, low or middle income Americans could invest up to \$1,000 a year in a long-term savings account and defer paying taxes on the interest.

A&M SAT scores rank high

By Juliette Rizzo
 Staff Writer

The Scholastic Aptitude Test scores for the Fall 1988 freshman class are the highest for any freshman class in the history of Texas A&M, Dr. Dale T. Knobel, director of the University Honors Program, said.

"The average freshman SAT score jumped 19 points," Knobel said. "This should place Texas A&M among the leading state universities in Texas."

This year, 636 freshmen had SAT scores higher than 1,250, he says. The average SAT verbal score was 486, compared with 478 in 1987. The math score was 557, an increase from 546 last year.

The 250 students here on prestigious academic scholarships such as the Lechner, the McFadden and the President's Endowed Scholarship, have a mean SAT score of over 1,370," he said.

A&M president William H. Mobley said this year's high SAT scores indicate A&M attracts top students.

"We are obviously pleased that our entering freshmen are coming to us with increasingly impressive academic credentials," he said. "We believe this to be reflective of our efforts to make Texas A&M even more attractive to top students. Honors programs, strong faculty, solid curricula in each of our colleges and A&M's emphasis on student leadership development combine to make Texas A&M a highly desirable university for top students."

Glenn Dowling, director of planning and institutional analysis said the freshman class' average SAT score of 1,043 is 139 points higher than the national average score.

Nationally, SAT scores declined for the first time in eight years. The

average national score on the verbal section was 428, and the average national math score was 476.

Dowling said that under an enrollment management program, enrollment in the University was controlled and limited this year.

"We maintained our standards from last year, but the required scores for automatic admission were increased at all levels of SAT and high school ranking," he said. "Students in the top quarter of their graduating high school class with an SAT score of 1,000 or above were admitted automatically."

Of 1,938 students who applied for admission, 1,496 were accepted.

Knobel says that over the last several years, A&M has been among the top 10 universities in the enrollment of National Merit Scholars. This

year's freshman class includes 113 National Merit Scholars.

He says that the scholars are attracted to A&M because of the honors program opportunities available here.

"Many students with high SAT scores received academic recognition in high school," Knobel said. "The overwhelming majority come here to actively participate in the University Honors Program. Those who, a few years ago, would only look at Rice in terms of academic and honors opportunities available, are now looking at A&M because of the honors program and because of cheaper costs, since that is definitely a factor in selecting a university."

"Overall, the image of the university as a leading research university and as a place where a variety of undergraduate study is available, is what attracts high quality students to A&M."

Freshmen gain election record

By Kelly S. Brown
 Staff Writer

When the Class of '92 came to Texas A&M in August as the largest freshman class in the nation, it was speculated that they might break a few other records as well, and so far, they're off to a good start.

The number of students running for freshman positions in Student Government has increased by 300 percent since last year — an A&M record.

Perry Liston, a junior business major and co-chairman on the election commission from the executive branch, said the competition is fierce.

One-hundred and five freshmen are competing for 16 positions, and the quality of these students is high, Liston said.

"I can tell they know they're special," he said.

"We're motivated with the turnout, we have great hopes for them, and know they'll produce a fine class," Liston said.

Liston attributes the increase of applicants to effective advertisement around the campus as well as Student Government being emphasized at Fish Camp this summer.

Whatever it was that drew the applicants in, it worked, he said.

Fifty-six freshmen are running for senator positions, and 10 will be chosen. Sixteen students are running for president, 14 for vice-president, six for secretary, six for treasurer,

four for social secretary and three for historian.

Student identification cards are required for students wanting to vote in the election Oct. 5 in the Kleberg Building, MSC flag room, Evans Library, Sbis Dining Hall and on the Quad. Run-off elections will be held on Oct. 10, if necessary.

Student Government also has 12 senate seats open to anyone, other than freshman on campus.

Seats open on campus include one senator from either Aston or Dunn and one senator from either Spence or Briggs.

Off-campus open seats include four senators from Ward II (west of Texas and south of University), one senator from Ward III (east of Texas and north of University) and four senators from Ward IV (west of Texas and north of University). A seat also is open to any agriculture senior.

Michael Kelley, a senior political science major and Speaker Pro-Tempore, said the Ward seats are traditionally the hardest to fill.

"We would like to see all positions filled, especially in Ward IV," he said. "Ward IV includes students living in University Apartments (married student housing), and they have never been represented, and we would really like to see them apply this year."

Applications can be picked up on the second floor of the Pavilion in the Student Government office. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday.

U.T.'s fight song may be replaced

AUSTIN (AP) — University of Texas Longhorn band director Glenn Richter said this week that the school's fight song may be replaced if students continue to replace the lyrics with a certain scatological phrase.

The official school fight song at the university goes, in part, like this: "Give 'em hell! Give 'em hell! Go Horns Go!" The song is played by the band during university football games.

But the 'Go Horns Go' portion of the song has given way to another phrase many students replace it with.

A University of Texas source said the phrase is replaced with 'Make 'em eat s---'.

Band director Richter would like to see an end put to the use of this phrase.

In a memo Richter sent this week to the University's Rally Advisory Committee, he said the fight song

may be replaced if students don't cooperate with attempts to end the phrase's use.

"These words are embarrassing for the school, the band and the student body," Richter's memo concerning the controversy said.

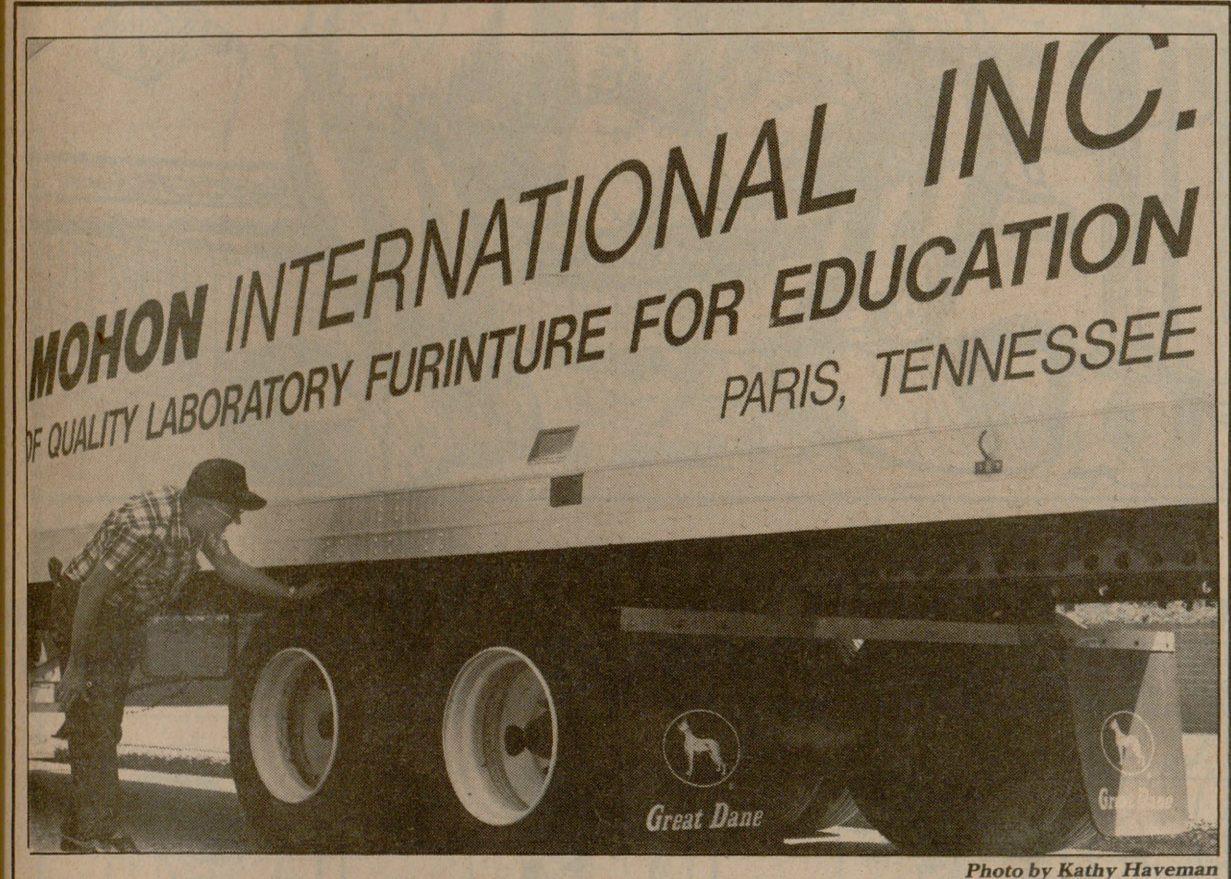
Problems with the song occur most often at high-emotion games, such as those games that are played against Oklahoma and Texas A&M, he said.

At those games, the chanting of

the phrase has been broadcast over national television and radio, Richter said, and they don't promote spirit or a good image of the school.

Melinda Jolly, a junior art major, said she believes attempts to stop students from modifying the song are not fair and seem to be "kind of judgmental."

"Everyone who says it knows it's just in good fun," Jolly said. "I think students are still going to use that quote."



What's wrong with this picture?
 Arnold Strickland of McKenzie, Tenn. checks a moving truck's tire while workers move furniture into the Old Chemistry Building Wednesday. He should have checked the spelling on the truck.

Opportunity to drop classes by Q-drop concludes Friday

By Juliette Rizzo
 Staff Writer

Friday is the last day for students to Q-drop classes without academic penalty.

After the 12th class day of the semester, a student can drop a class with the approval of an adviser in the student's college, says Kriss Boyd, director of general studies.

"In between the 12th class day and the end of the fifth week of classes, students can drop courses without a grade showing up on their transcripts," she says. "The only thing that does show up on the student's records is a Q, which stands for drop without penalty. Yes, the Q does show up on the transcripts, but it is not necessarily negative. The Q does not affect the student's hours or GPR."

Boyd says students may drop courses for a variety of reasons.

"Students may need to drop courses for personal reasons, health problems or because of a job," she says. "Some students find that they

just don't have the background to take a certain class."

Some colleges may put restrictions on Q-dropping, she says.

"The College of Business allows a student to Q-drop only two courses while in the college," she says. "In the College of Engineering, students are allowed only one 'free' Q-drop."

"With the increasing importance of GPRs to staying enrolled in a specific college, a student who is not doing well in a course may benefit from Q-dropping instead of letting one grade bring down his entire GPR."

To Q-drop a class, the student must fill out a Q-drop form by 5 p.m. Friday and have the request authorized by a college dean or adviser. Refunds are not made for courses dropped during the Q-drop period.

A student who drops a course after the Q-drop deadline will receive a grade of F unless otherwise specified by a dean.

NASA says shuttle will launch today

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Discovery's five astronauts, anxious to break an agonizing 32-month drought in American spaceflight, studied revised flight plans Wednesday as the shuttle was readied for a Thursday midmorning launch. NASA officials were nervous, but confident.

"The space shuttle is ready to fly," shuttle administrator Richard Truly said. "Even the weather is looking good."

The ship, obscured for weeks behind a giant scaffold, stood majestically in view after NASA retracted the structure. The process took place hours early, so workers will have a head start on final countdown procedures.

Fueling was to begin shortly after midnight, with the craft bathed in brilliant spotlights.

"This has been a long 2 years," Truly said of the difficult period since the Challenger accident in 1986. Liftoff was scheduled for 9:59 a.m., with a two-hour window to take care of weather or technical delays.