

No lack of drama in Texas politics

Molly Ivins
Syndicated Columnist

While this vast, Brechtian drama takes place in China — not to mention (why do we always say that when we're about to mention something?) the elections in Poland, the death of the Ayatollah, the extraordinary developments in the USSR and other matters of some note — we get Texas politics. Lucky us.

Former Sen. Ralph Yarborough suggested two weeks ago that the drama of students in Beijing struggling to bring democracy to their country should inspire us — "Why not bring democracy to Texas?" he cried, "Why not bring democracy to Texas!"

Oh, I don't know. The Soviets have Gorbachev, the Chinese now have martyrs and all we have is Jim Mattox wandering around sticking his pins into his Ann Richards voodoo doll.

The language from China and the Soviet Union is riveting. "Will you shoot at us if they order you to?" asked citizens surrounding an army truck Saturday.

"We have to obey orders because we are soldiers," said the driver. "Otherwise, we will be punished. In any case, there's no way they will order us to shoot the people."

"Why do you have guns?" shouted one man.

"A man is not a soldier without his gun, is he?"

"I tell you, there will be no good end for you if you follow your order loyally," screamed an old man. "You have parents and you have brothers and sisters. You should not beat your fellow citizens under any circumstances."

"We are shocked," said a Chinese journalist. "The troops and the police, they are supposed to be our brothers."

"I saw a young woman tell the soldiers that they are the people's army, and that they mustn't hurt the people," a young doctor said Sunday. "The soldiers hurt her, ran up and bayoneted her. . . . I couldn't tell if she lived or died." (Quotes from the *New York Times*)

So sad. A faint echo there of the Ohio National Guard at Kent State.

Another echo of that terrible time came from the Soviet Union, where Dr. Andrei Sakharov was attacked last week by a Soviet war hero for having spoken out against the war in Afghanistan. There were vitriolic accusations that he is unpatriotic, a traitor, because he opposed the war.

He responded just as sharply that it was an unjust and an unwinnable war. And, there was not a word of that entire debate in the Supreme Soviet that of us who lived through the war in Vietnam had not already heard. So very strange to hear it coming from Soviet lips.

Meanwhile, our own version of strange is shaping up nicely, what with Clayton Williams, known to most of you as the fella in the cowboy hat who speaks on TV for Claydesta Communications, poised to take his first gubernatorial plunge.

Local wags maintain that Williams, most likeable fella, will win the Republican nomination, but that Boone Pickens will steal it away in a hostile takeover.

I'm still rooting for T. Boone Pickens — no one else can add the *je ne sais quoi* that Pickens can to a Republican primary.

Secretary of State Jack Rains wants to run real bad — my own impression, that he bears a strong resemblance to hyperbolic hamster, but I can never predict Republican preferences. Last time out they picked Bill Clements instead of my man Tom Loeffler with his immortal slogan "Texas Will Always Be Texas."

Railroad Commissioner Kent Hamrick would appear the only guy in the pack who has any resemblance to a serious politician, but he bombed last time out. If the Republicans in this state ever find out he has a sense of humor, the man is dead meat.

And on the Democratic side, the sheer chutzpah of Jim Mattox continues to amaze all who know him — even those who know him well. He's selected Jim Carville, the ragin' Cajun politician pro, to run his campaign. Carville's specialty is "pushing rednecks' button" — you can imagine what a delightful time we're in here for. Death penalty! Tough on crime! The lag! Bring back Willie Horton! All those issues so critical to a state that stands 49th in general public welfare.

For attorney general, it could be fun on the Democratic side. Congressman John Bryant of Dallas will be facing, among others, Rep. Dan Morales of San Antonio. Morales will be running as a Hispanic in South Texas and as a conservative everywhere else — his big deal is Tough on Crime.

I've got nothing against people who are tough on crime, but I never know anyone who built a political career out of that issue who wasn't a rank demagogue. Ever ask yourself why we keep needing politicians who are Tough on Crime when we never vote for anyone who is Weak on Crime?

But there's another Hispanic hope on the horizon — Rep. Hugo Berlanga from Corpus would have run for Gary Mauro's seat had Mauro not decided to stay put as land commissioner instead of going for A.G. So now Berlanga is eyeing the state treasurer's race and is confident that he can get the money for a statewide race. Sure would be nice to finally see someone who isn't white get elected to a statewide office, and Berlanga is smooth and smart and a nice guy, even though he dances on Gib Lewis' string in the House. A couple of women also are looking at that race, as is Steve Gutow, a Dallas lawyer.

There will be no shortage of electoral festivities from here on out, but the Mattox-Richards race should be unparalleled for sheer spectacle.

AIDS legislation makes its way through Texas Legislature

Mail Call

You were a hit

EDITOR:

I am so proud of you - the Aggie baseball team and staff. You are true Aggies in every sense of the word. More than being the best team in college baseball, in your behavior, attitude and sportsmanship, you exemplified the best America has to offer.

Your record of most wins and fewest losses will always be etched in my memory and in the annals of Aggie lore. The hitting (for the average and the long ball), the field-

ing, the pitching, the base running, the mind — you excelled in all the areas that make a baseball team.

You were magnificent in victory and defeat. You are champions, you are the best, you are winners, you are the Aggies.

Thank you all so much. I would not trade you for any other.

Frank Cox '65

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer. Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words.

Congress should take needed time-out from ethics battle

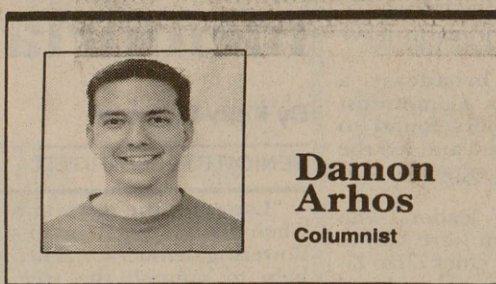
The biggest partisan ethics war in American government since Watergate has begun in the House of Representatives. Charges of ethical misconduct are flying back and forth in Washington, each party adamant about scoring revenge against the other. Call me crazy, but the whole thing really reminds me of a professional football game. Democrats vs. Republicans.

The Republicans won the coin toss with the election of President George Bush. But Bush fumbled the ball early in the first quarter when he nominated John Tower for defense secretary. This error resulted in a touchdown for the Democrats when Tower failed to be confirmed by the Senate because of charges of moral impropriety.

Democrats 7, Republicans 0.

So, the ball goes back to the Republicans. House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich received it on the 15 yard line, and ran it to the 60 with allegations that House Speaker Jim Wright had violated several of the ethics rules governing the body. Wright was injured in the play but continued on the field, denying any wrongdoing.

Late in the second quarter, though, the Republicans got their big chance. Gingrich's initiative proved successful with the resignation of Wright. Touchdown Republicans. The extra point came when House Minority Whip Tony Coelho of California resigned at the half-time buzzer. This play was performed impressively. It was as if the Democratic players had helped the Republicans score by concurring that Wright should leave at half-time, Democrats 7, Republicans 7.



Damon Arhos
Columnist

Dancing on the field during half-time and before were the reporters. Like glorified Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders, the reporters rallied around the players to entertain the fans. Because of the media's affection for scrutinizing the lives of every prominent public figure, Americans everywhere anticipated Tower's failure and Wright's resignation. We saw every flag thrown, every point scored and every player injured on instant replay.

The second half was scoreless despite several changes on the field. In for the Democrats were Reps. William Gray III of Pennsylvania, Roy Dyson of Maryland and Gus Savage of Illinois. The Republicans have Reps. Joseph McDade of Pennsylvania and Donald Lukens of Ohio. Each player was charged with House ethics rules violations by the other team. The ball was run back and forth, but each side seemed to be playing offense and defense at the same time.

So, the game went into overtime. With a tie score, the two teams have vowed to battle it out until one is victorious.

Each side does not seem to realize this is one game neither can win. The only losers in this big game are the American

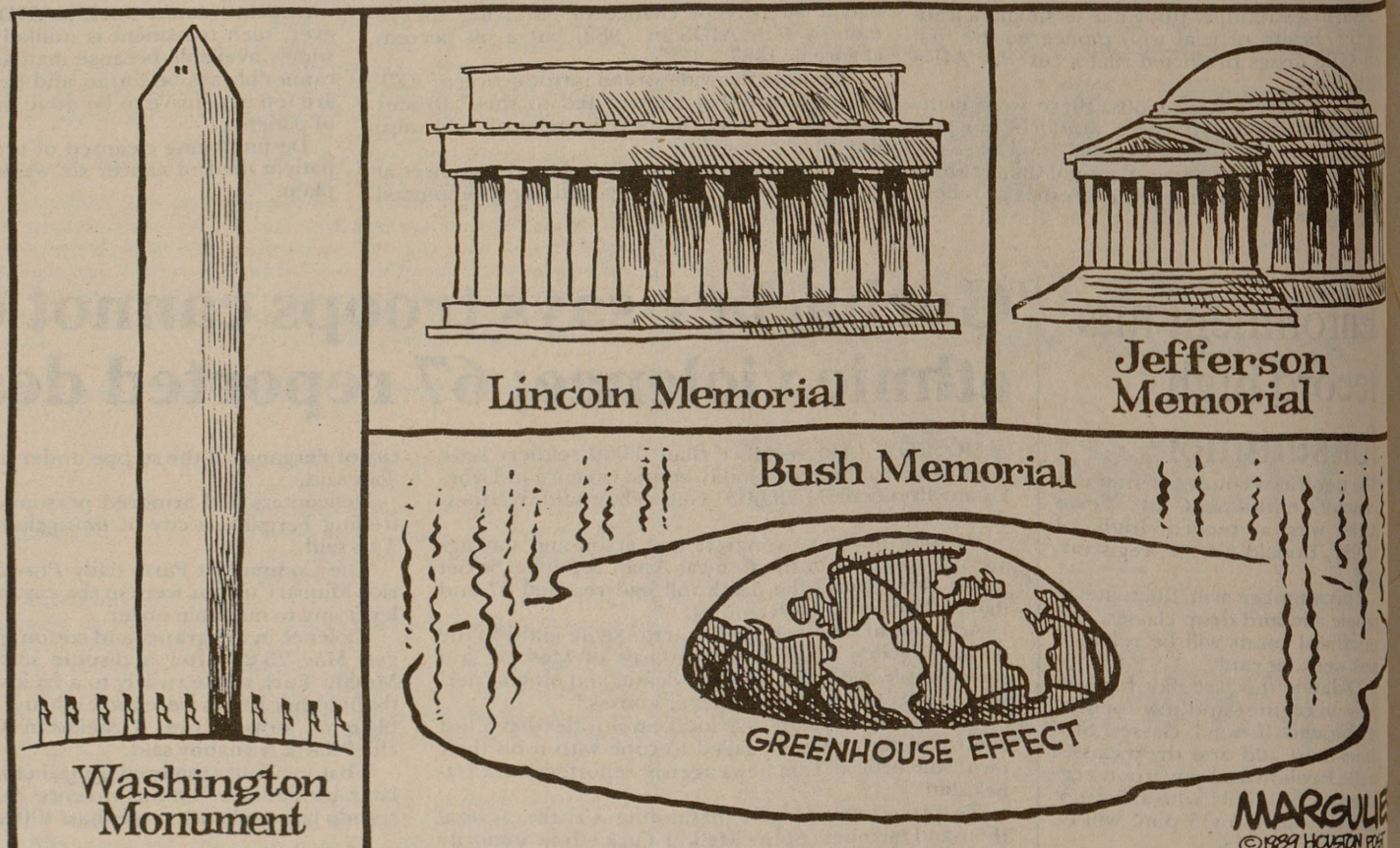
people. It is time for our elected officials to quit squabbling over ethics violations and to start working on the American agenda.

When Jim Wright resigned last week, he said, "It is time to bring this mindless cannibalism to an end." He stressed the important fact that the nation has a lot of very important business and does not have time to waste on needless "distractions."

Just as football players work together as a team, so should our lawmakers, regardless of political affiliation. The House ethics rules are very important. Any member who does not follow them should be forced to resign, just as any football player who does not play by the rules would be thrown out of a game. However, it is very important that the members of the House of Representatives recognize genuine ethics rules violations and not scrutinize each other's financial disclosures for the sole purpose of ousting each other from Congress.

As for the players, it is time for them to hit the showers. And if it were up to me, I would put both teams on two year probation with no bowl game for a year.

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(USPS 045 360)

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

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.