

IS IT LIVE, OR IS IT MEMOREX?

Recent news reports appear to repeat stories, issues, cycle through familiar patterns



CALEB
McDANIEL

"Circle the word of your choice in each set of parentheses to write your very own piece of investigative reporting!"
"Today White House Press Secretary (Mike McCurry/The New Guy) announced that (Saddam Hussein/President Clinton) refuses to cooperate with (UN Weapons Inspectors/The Office of the Independent Counsel)."

In a surprising related development, (Republicans/Democrats) on Capitol Hill have been clamoring for the president's (impeachment/censure), (in spite of/because of) the fact that a shocking (majority/minority) of (Americans/Iraqis) have expressed their (approval/disapproval) of the proceedings in Congress.

"In other Congressional news, the House of Representatives has voted to release the (lewd/salacious) details of President Clinton's escapades for broadcast on (the Internet/television/bathroom stalls across America)."

"In other news, (tropical storm/hurricane) (Bonnie/Mitch/Monica) continues to wreak millions of dollars of damage in (Honduras/Nicaragua/Little Rock)."

"Also, (George W. Bush/Jeb Bush) was elected governor of (Texas/Florida), and his dad is former President George Bush. Political experts say this is really neat."

"In still other news, (astronaut/national hero/really old guy) John Glenn ate (tuna fish/Vienna sausages/dried ice cream) for (breakfast/lunch/dinner) (yesterday/today/tomorrow). In a televised press conference that cost taxpayers millions of dollars to be broadcast from outer space, Glenn said, 'I think every American should have the opportunity to eat (tuna fish/Vienna sausages/dried ice cream) in zero gravity. It sure is swell.'"

"The names of the other crew members on Glenn's historic voyage are (not available/not important)."

"And in brief news, renewed violence in the Middle East has many (Israelis/Palestinians) wondering whether peace is still a possibility."

"Oh, and Newt Gingrich resigned from

Congress, leaving vacant his position as the bearer of the most (colorful/laughable) first name in the House of Representatives."

Journalists (interested in purchasing

this script/deeply offended by anything tongue-in-cheek) should (contact news bureau/contact news bureau)."

Who knows? Maybe this is the dawn of a new era in passive media. After all,

history repeats itself. Why shouldn't headlines? Why shouldn't headlines?

Caleb McDaniel is a sophomore history major.



BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

EDITORIAL

The Battalion

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Gore's support of striking workers serves political aspirations

Labor unions have always had significant political clout, now they have proven their ability to use it in new, innovative ways.

There is nothing wrong with the creative strategies an ABC network workers' union employed last week, but Vice President Al Gore's response was less than admirable.

Last week, technical crews for the ABC network staged a one-day strike. When they tried to return to work the next day, they found themselves locked out by network management.

Uncontent to stage the standard protests and picket lines, the workers' union used a more unusual technique to influence their employer. Union representatives urged politicians to refuse interviews with the network — even though last week's elections were the top news story.

The request was honored by some political leaders, most noticeably Gore who cancelled a

scheduled appearance on "Good Morning America."

Unions can use whatever tools they have available in an attempt to reach their goals, and when the displaced ABC employees found they had less leverage than they expected, it was time to call in the favors.

The first day after the strike, most network production proceeded unhindered. There were reports of "Good Morning America" hosts looking into the wrong cameras, and a few daytime dramas postponed filming. For the most part, however, the public did not miss the locked-out workers.

Not to be forgotten, the union played to Gore's political prowess. Unions are traditionally strong supporters of the Democratic party. Consequently, pandering to a union — any union — will aid his campaign for the Oval Office.

With union support, Gore can count on thousands of votes and plenty of cash — two essential assets for a successful campaign.

Gore's decision served his interests and the out-of-work ABC staff, but it did not benefit the rest of the nation — the majority of the nation.

Political heavyweights have meddled with labor disputes in the past, but the situations were vastly different.

When airline pilots went on strike prior to the holiday season, President Clinton called for federal arbitration to settle the dispute as quickly as possible. The airline strike warranted such action. Holiday travel problems would have affected most Americans. Striking cameramen, on the other hand, would have a much smaller impact.

Internal disputes at a media organization do not deserve attention from the American vice president, especially when the dispute is only a few days old.

Gore is, of course, a private citizen who can make personal decisions based upon his moral convictions. However, opting to cancel a media interview in this manner could create a troublesome precedent.

If Gore begins denying interviews to ABC because the network is fighting with a supportive union, the next step might be refusing White House press information to media outlets running unfavorable news stories.

The vice president is a busy man. He cannot honor every media request. That discrimination, however, should be based on considerations such as exposure, topics of discussion or scheduling. Instead, Gore is pursuing a personal agenda and not the national interest.

If Gore felt an interview on ABC worth his time before the one-day strike, the event would have been just as valuable after the lock out. Gore's public appearances offer him an opportunity to present the Clinton administration's point of view and address the American people. When he cancelled the interview, he threw away an opportunity in exchange for making a statement few people even noticed.

The drafters of the Bill of Rights considered the press a valuable asset, choosing to protect its freedom. Gore's action indicates he considers the press unimportant. He chose to manipulate a media institution instead of aiding journalists who work to serve their consumers.

Dave Johnston is a senior mathematics major.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Homeless population faces disdain, misunderstanding instead of assistance

The recent fire that swept through Dorm 9 should remind students how easy it can be to become homeless.

The homeless population is often held in disdain by those who are more fortunate. Many perceive homeless individuals as lazy people who choose not to work and decide to live on the streets. The reality is different and much sadder.

The homeless population has been victimized by closed minds for too long. The homeless are convenient to ignore. They are difficult, if not impossible, to count in the census, they possess no political power and the entire issue is discomforting.

Although it may be an exaggeration to say everyone is "one paycheck away from being homeless," a string of poor luck can put anyone on the streets.

Aside from the somber reminder provided by the recent residence hall fire, recent news from Nicaragua and Honduras describes thousands of people whose homes were destroyed by Hurricane Mitch. Closer to home, recent floods washed away many central Texas homes.

Other homeless may have lost their savings trying to pay medical bills that followed a serious illness, or they may be coping with mental illness or chemical addictions. The National Coalition for the Homeless reports 50 percent of women and children on the street are fleeing domestic abuse.

Any number of tragedies can lead to homelessness, and once someone has lost his or her home, it can be very difficult to climb back on the streets.

By the time someone is forced to move into the streets, he or she is usually without transportation as well. With no way to get around, keeping a job can be tough. Resumes without addresses or phone numbers look at least suspicious.

Homelessness can become a downward spiral offering no hope of escape.

There are, however, many programs designed to aid the homeless population, and these organizations deserve the attention — if not the support — of the entire community.

Groups such as Habitat for Humanity provide materials and volunteer labor for building or repairing houses or homeless shelters. Food banks and homeless shelters collect food and clothing throughout the year to help provide for those in need.

The Christmas season brings out Salvation Army foot soldiers ringing bells and collecting donations for the needy. And as the holiday season approaches, there are more opportunities to help the homeless.

With dropping temperatures, shelters will see a high demand for blankets and warm clothing.

Locally, Twin City Mission is already making preparations to provide a Thanksgiving meal to the area's needy.

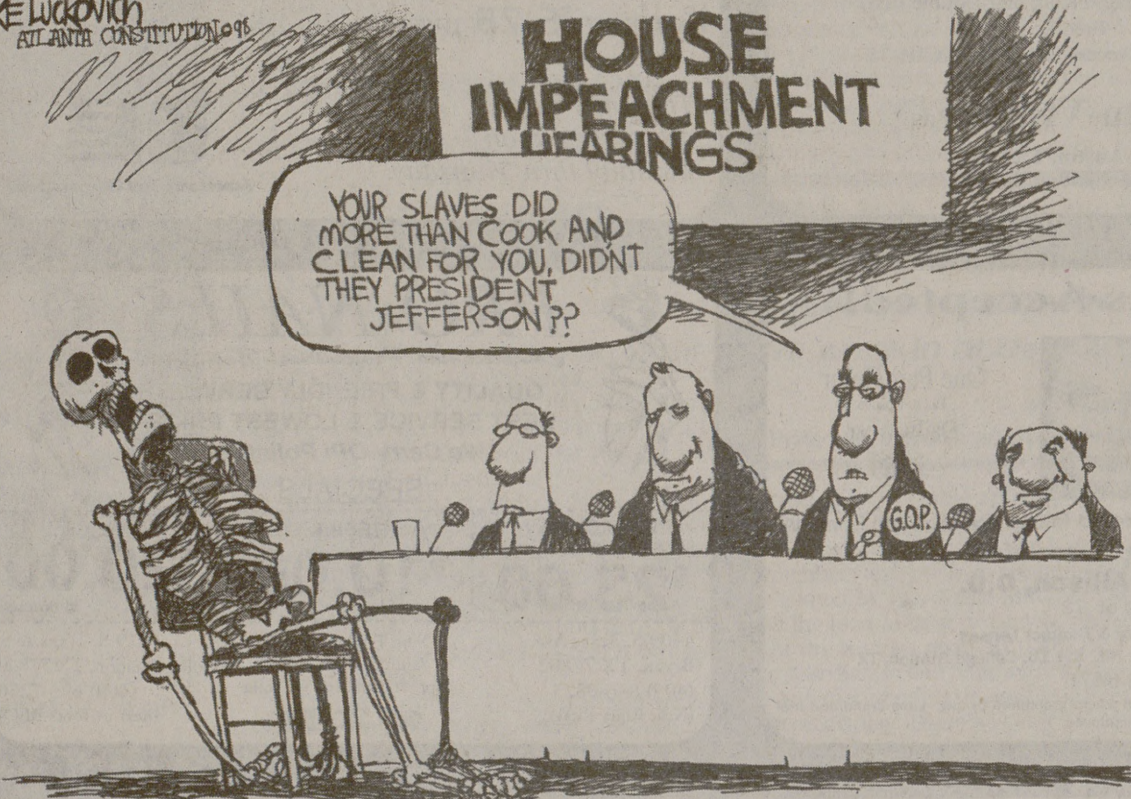
The opportunities are great, but so are the needs.

Instead of flippant attitudes, the homeless population requires serious help. Instead of merely offering disdain, it is time for Americans to begin offering substantial help.



DAVE
JOHNSTON

MIKE LUCKOVICH
ATLANTA CONSTITUTION '98



MAIL CALL

Kind act helps Aggie in need

On Nov. 6, I missed the bus for my afternoon class. A young girl who witnessed what had happened stopped and gave me a ride to campus. I had a test that day, and because of a random act of kindness by a complete stranger I made it to my test with plenty of time to spare.

With all the problems in the world it is comforting to know some people are still kind. Thank you.

Brian van Staveren
Class of '99

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