

commentary and analysis

The Tar Heel

WILLIAM DURHAM, Editor
AMY SHARPE, Managing Editor
ELLIOTT WARNOCK, Associate Editor

JOHN ROYSTER, News Editor SUSAN MAUNEY, Copy Editor
SARAH WEST, Features Editor TOM MOORE, Arts Editor
CLIFTON BARNES, Sports Editor SHARON CLARKE, Photography Editor

Carter's choice

The spectre of debates has reared its head again. President Carter already has decided to debate one-on-one with Ronald Reagan; now he has decided to open the possibility of another debate.

Carter has continued to rule out a debate with his Democratic rival, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy; but John Anderson, tirelessly attempting to maintain his viability as a candidate, is obviously on Carter's mind.

Carter, however, has stipulated that any aspiring debate candidate must have "at least a theoretical possibility of winning." This condition brings to mind the question of just what constitutes a "theoretical chance of winning." For as the polls stand now, Anderson just doesn't qualify.

Carter, dealing from the position of champion, does not have to accept a challenge from anyone but a true contender, such as Reagan. Anderson must earn the stature of contender before Carter will feel pressured to defend himself.

Anderson, according to the polls, holds one-fifth of the American people on his side. However, his popularity is spread thinly over the entire country. He does not hold a plurality of voters in any one state. In a national election, he would not receive one electoral vote.

Anderson, then, must consolidate his votes into a few states or else make a quantum leap into popularity.

Anderson desperately needs the exposure that a debate would give him. Standing at a podium next to Carter will give him the image, if not the actual power, of candidacy. And by the time the debates roll around, Anderson will need all the exposure he can muster. After the Republican and Democratic conventions, he will have been out of the limelight for quite a while. Anderson, no doubt, hopes that, just as Kennedy came through in his Nixon debates as witty, poised and in control, so will he come through as a candidate to be reckoned with.

Anderson proved, in the televised Republican debates last winter, that he is sufficiently urbane and forceful to command respect. And respect might be enough to give him an edge.

The decision, then, is up to Carter. He can create or dismiss Anderson as a candidate. Ideological views aside, it would not be to Carter's advantage to bring upon himself a challenge of Anderson's potential.

Transgression unjustified

An unwritten commandment has held sway in Chapel Hill ever since William R. Davie plunked himself down under his famed poplar tree in the late 1700s. Thou shalt not cut down a tree.

Transgressions against this commandment have been treated harshly in the past. Orville Campbell, editor and publisher of the venerable *Chapel Hill Newspaper*, once related a meaningful parable to illustrate this point.

As Orville told it, there once was a Sunoco gas station, possessed of a great and majestic tree that, to the owners' thinking, blocked the view of their garish sign. The owners plotted to chop down the tree, but the *Chapel Hill Weekly*, as the paper was called in those days, got wind of the nefarious scheme and campaigned vehemently against it.

To this day, as Orville pointed out, you can drive down Franklin Street and see the station is gone—but the tree is standing.

Some scalawags obviously have not learned the lesson of that little tale, for, not more than two weeks ago, some mean and wretched souls chopped down the young trees in front of the Undergraduate Library and the Pit. The mere striplings were mercilessly hacked to an untimely death, the bricks around their roots ripped up to expose the sandy loam underneath.

Perhaps there was a purpose to all this. We recall the early '70s campaign promises of the Blue Sky Party (that promised to abolish the student government if elected) among which was the solemn oath to bring the Pacific Oaantnkt south of Hinton James.

Perhaps the persons that eradicated our shade trees to bring all the sand merely are laying the beach for the Blue Sky Party.

Our stance on this is simple. Hurry up. We'll tolerate the sand sans sea while the days remain cool, but when the summer's sweltering heat comes, we'll expect the Pacific Ocean to be at our campus doorsteps.

Only that could justify cutting down a tree in Chapel Hill.



Reagan running strong in front of weak criticism

By Elliott Warnock

A common refrain in local cocktail party conversation these days is "If Ronald Reagan wins the presidency, I'm leaving the country."

Sound advice to persons who say that might be to have a bag packed and ready to go by the front door... just in case.

Reagan already has the look of a winner to the Republicans. The upcoming GOP convention in Detroit will be more of a coronation than a political spectacle, and the only problem for Reagan will be choosing his crown prince.

Critics of Reagan are frittering away their time worrying about the former California governor's age and political naivete. The age question smacks of wretched discrimination; the question of naivete doesn't seem to bother the American voters who think a former peanut farmer is too much an insider.



Reagan

The news media's continual corrections of Reagan statements have done little to sway the public. For example, when Reagan mistakenly claimed the U.S. General Accounting Office had misspent \$50 billion, NBC's Don Oliver pointed out it was "only \$30 billion."

The public was not overly relieved to be informed it was "only \$30 billion."

The question of Reagan's conservatism is the main issue of the campaign.

Reagan, after coming so close to the Republican nomination in 1976, took a page from Richard Nixon's strategy book. Like Nixon, who helped pick up the scattered pieces of the GOP after Barry Goldwater had flung them to the wind in 1964, Reagan worked from 1976-1978 to regain congressional seats for the Republicans after the White House was lost.

In doing so, Reagan picked up innumerable political debts, and, like Nixon in 1968, cashed in every one for his

next bid.

Like Nixon, Reagan has spent the four years since his first defeat to gauge the mood of America, and seems to have gauged it correctly. He is simply telling the majority of voters what they seem to want to hear.

Reagan isn't making as many statements and promises as he is asking questions. The principal question is straightforward: How long can a liberal president and Congress, elected in the public trust, squander the national wealth before the economy falls into ruin?

State and local governments already are feeling the burden of that question. The term "tax revolt" seems too neat and catchy to aptly describe the shift of political mood, but fits somewhat nicely.

The famed (or infamous) depending on one's viewpoint Proposition 13 in California was the first salvo of the tax revolt to earn the ear of American voters; it led to others... the Kemp-Roth Bill in Congress, calling for a severe cut in federal income tax, and little-known constitutional convention proposal that has gained almost as much ground in state legislatures as the dying ERA.

If Kemp-Roth and the constitutional convention proposal are any indication, the federal government is next on the citizenry's hit list.

From 1971 to 1977, state and local tax revenues grew from 11.7 percent of the GNP to 12.1 percent. In 1978 they fell to 12.1 percent, and then to 11.9 percent, while the federal revenue share of the GNP in 1976 was 18.5 percent and grew to 19.6 percent in 1978.

Projections show the divergence will increase; the federal share of the GNP growing to 21 percent (or \$582 billion) if present spending habits continue.

The taxpayers clearly do not want the habits to continue, and they are manifesting the same attitude as the British who swept Margaret Thatcher into England's No. 10 Downing St.

The British are renown for their reserve, but Americans are known for wild enthusiasm and long swings of the political pendulum, hence the viability of Reagan as a candidate.

Elliott Warnock is associate editor for The Tar Heel.

The Tar Heel

Writers: Elson Armstrong, Marc Barnes, Sammy Batten, Jeff Bowers, R.L. Bynum, Thom Daniels, Bruce Davies, Dawn Dixon, Laurie Dowling, John Drescher, Peggy Edwards, John Fish, Cindy Grossman, Lynda Hettich, John Hinton, Martha Johnson, Faith Kiffney, Carol Lee, Diane Lupton, Alison Lynch, Jennifer McCabe, Bill Peschel, Jon Pope, Dorothy Rompalske, Yvette Ruffin, Cathy Sheets, Ann Smallwood, Angie Sullivan, David Thompson, Julie Trotter, Jac Versteeg and Melanie Welch. Photographers: Bob Anthony, Flora Garrison, and Jack Mohr. Copy desk: Maria Biro, Alison Bonds, Mitzi Cook and Terri Garrard. Business Manager: Mark Kadlec. Advertising: Nancy McKenzie, manager, and Paula Brewer, coordinator. Secretary/Receptionist: Linda Allred. Composition: UNC Printing Department. Printing: The Hinton Press, Mebane