THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

For 120 Years the South's Standard Newspaper

James M. Cox, Chairman 1950-1957-James M. Cox Jr., Chairman 1957-1974

Jay Smith

Arnold Rosenfeld

Dennis Berry

Tom Teepen Editorial Page Editor

Glenn McCutchen Managing Editor

President

PAGE 8A, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 1989

A Pall Over College Playing Fields

The jurors at the Norby Walters-Lloyd Bloom racketeering trial must have felt more like sewer inspectors exploring the filthy underground passageways of big-time collegiate sports. How those dirtied dozen jurors must have craved a long hot shower after they rendered their guilty verdicts.

Specifically, Walters and Bloom were convicted of defrauding two universities by signing collegiate athetes to pro contracts before their eligibility was complete and, in Bloom's case, of threatening them with bodily harm if they reneged on their deals.

Unsavory as their offenses were, Walters and Bloom could say with justice that many of the colleges they blind-sided and the jocks they corrupted behaved no better.

Lawyers for the defense made a convincing case that two institutions in particular, Big Ten members Iowa and Michigan State, exploited football players just as the agents did, keeping them afloat academically on a life raft of featherweight courses, in effect denying them the education they had been promised. The signed athletes, for their part, were no saints either, often backing out of their agreements with Walters and Bloom without repaying the illegal loans they had accepted while in school.

In fact, if it had not been for the persuasive, straight-arrow testimony of Michigan football coach Bo Schembechler, to the effect that the two agents undermined his

good-faith efforts on behalf of Wolverine student-athletes, the jury might not have found sufficient cause to convict Walters and Bloom. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and its member schools should hang their heads in shame that the two defendants nearly beat the fraud rap.

College presidents and athletics directors are deceiving themselves if they see this trial as a warning to agents and athletes alone. They must put their own shambles of a house back in order.

The schools that do make good on their promises to athletes of an education and a degree are commendable exceptions to an all-too-dismal rule. That situation must be reversed, with rules changes like rescinding eligibility of freshmen to refocus attention on scholarship instead of sport.

Today's college athletes are essentially less-than-minimum-wage warriors producing multimillion-dollar box-office and TV receipts for their employers. The institutions that have contracted for their services owe them, at the least, a modest cut of the athletic revenue pie in the form of expense money, in addition to a decent preparation for a life outside of sport. If the football and basketball factories don't come through with these minimum guarantees, they are cheaters, just as Walters and Bloom were.

Abortion Poll Shatters Some Assumptions

The most startling feature of the latest Southern poll on abortion attitudes is what it reveals about people who believe life begins at conception, generally thought to be the most staunchly opposed.

Though numerous in the 12 Southern and border states included in the survey, they are by no means eager to impose their beliefs on others, poll-takers for The Atlanta Journal and Constitution found.

In fact, nearly 80 percent of those who said they believed life begins at conception said they favored keeping abortion legal, in at least some circumstances.

Completed before the April 9 march on Washington, in which more than 300,000 abortion-rights advocates took part, the poll found 51 percent of those who said life begins at conception in favor of abortion to save the life of the mother and in cases of rape or incest; 26 percent in favor of keeping abortion legal, as it is now. Only 20 percent said abortions should not be permitted at all.

Similarly, 50 percent of those who said life begins at conception opposed giving state governments the right to outlaw abortions in their own states; a decision by the Supreme Court to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling establishing the right of all women to abortions, would return the nation to the pre-1973 patchwork of laws that forced most Southerners seeking abortions to travel out of state.

Though discernibly more conservative than respondents who said life begins at birth or somewhere in between, 47 percent of those saying life begins at conception also favored the use of tissues from aborted fetuses in scientific research to help people suffering from incurable diseases.

In short, it is not just abortion rights that are ripe for scrutiny, as the high court prepares to review Missouri's attempt to restrict them, but long-held presumptions about where — and how fierce — the opposition to abortion is.

Fairness Doctrine: The Lost Cause Is Back

Oh, no. Congress is plagued once again by that awful nervous tic: the Fairness Doctrine. Every now and then, it takes time out from serious business to obsess on this useless and unconstitutional idea.

Last week, the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted to reimpose the doctrine on broadcasters. When a station airs controversial issues, the measure would require it to broadcast opposing views as well. Until a few years ago, the

School Board Got It Right

Atlanta School Superintendent J. Jerome Harris has scaled down his plan to tie teachers' salaries to students' test scores. He would pay bonuses of up to \$170 a year to teachers who boost standardized test scores, not \$675, the figure he floated before coming under attack from education experts and teachers' organizations. It would now cost the city not \$4 million a year but \$800,000, he says.

Even so, the school board has wisely tabled his proposal; it would have sent the wrong message to teachers and students.

If there is fat in the budget, it should be used to beef up teaching skills and dropoutprevention programs, not to refocus classroom attention on test-taking skills which, educators say, tend to produce illusory and short-term results. Teachers should be rewarded for the things they do to make their subjects more challenging and their schools more exciting, not for the sorts of numbers that can be elevated by allowing borderline students to drop out.

The board was right to require Dr. Harris to excise the plan from his otherwise thoughtful \$312 million budget Monday, and should now bury it. Raises should not be linked to standardized test scores.

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) enforced this practice by means of a rule. Happily, it came to its senses. The doctrine violates the First Amendment, the agency decided, and isn't needed in an age when airwaves are jammed with diverse views.

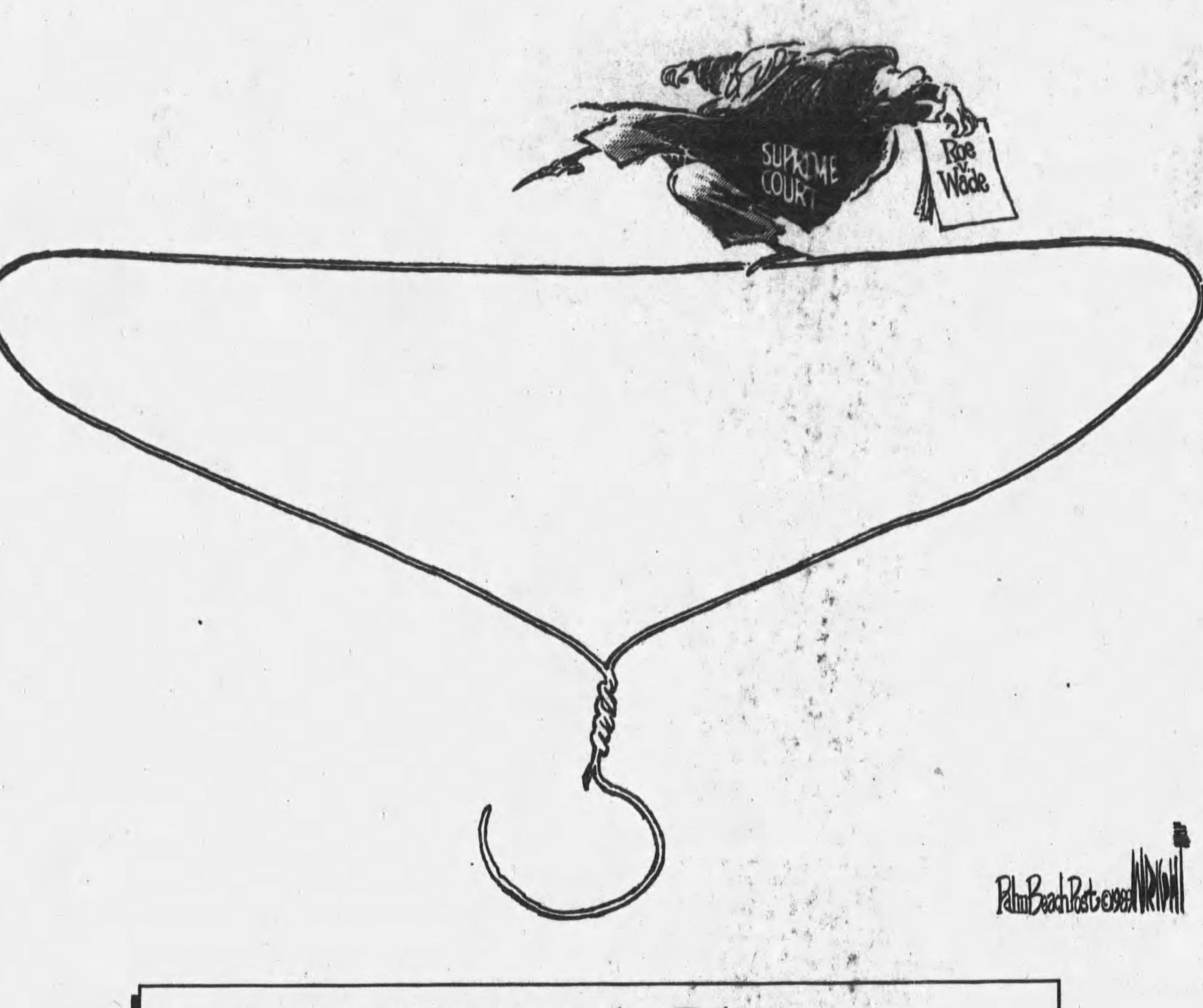
Some members of Congress have been in a dither ever since. It's not clear why except that, as politicians, most have been stung by broadcast criticism and may view the measure as a shield. They could be right. With the doctrine in place again, many broadcasters will try to dodge trouble by dodging controversial issues altogether.

After the FCC dropped the doctrine in 1987, Congress tried to write it into law. President Reagan vetoed the measure, to the consternation of many on Capitol Hill. Now Congress wants to test President Bush. On the campaign trail last year, Mr. Bush promised to veto any new measure, and the Justice Department today is advising him to do just that.

Should the measure become law, the Supreme Court would surely overturn it. As Rep. Tom Tauke (R-Iowa), an opponent, told his colleagues last week: When our founders added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution two centuries ago, the nation's communications outlets were very limited.

"Then, as today," he explained, "some of those media outlets sometimes engaged in activities which ... may actually have been unfair. But the Founding Fathers said there was a greater risk in attempting to control the media by imposing fairness than there is in permitting a free media to perhaps occasionally be unfair."

Congress should stop wasting time on this lost cause and save the court and the president the trouble of killing it.



Letters to the Editor

Outer Perimeter Issue Can't Be Decided Without Voters' Input

An editorial of March 21 referred to the critical pollution problem facing Los Angeles, where some authorities would "ban gasoline-powered vehicles by 2007." It also disclosed that although Atlanta is in relatively good shape in that regard, we are one of some 90 other metro areas that fail to meet federal clean-air standards.

Yet on March 31 you urged Cobb County voters to approve the proposed extension of the local option sales tax in order to continue building roads And while Editorial Page Editor Tom Teepen, in a recent column, did counsel caution before plunging ahead on the Outer Perimeter around Atlanta, the media and the power structure in general endorse that project. Immediately after the General Assembly approved the 1-cent increase in the sales tax last month, the state Transportation Department announced that it would start buying right-of-way property, although I am not aware that the Legislature has given its specific approval for the Outer Perimeter.

As I understand the workings of the system, the Legislature appropriates the money and the highway administrators decide where it will be spent. Such should not be the case, at least on the Outer Perimeter, because of the awesome impact it will have on communities, on family farms and on the environment in general. It should be put to a statewide referendum, since state money is paying the tab. It should be an important issue in the 1990 elections, and no steps should be taken toward building it until it can be aired before the public.

am aware that we have been lulled into assuming that the more economic growth we have, the better off everyone will be. And we could benefit if the growth were not concentrated in a few areas. The promotion of urban growth, with millions of square miles of open land, is nothing short of collective

Call it Big Brotherism if you wish, but we need to contain economic growth, including the geographic di-

mension. And since the problem is national in scope, such policy should be at the federal level rather than at the state or local levels, where nothing ever gets done because of the dominance of special-interest groups. Meanwhile, we could and should

take a hard look at the Outer Perimeter proposal. Some will argue that it would disperse population to the outlying areas, thus relieving congestion in the inner city. I would insist that it would draw more people toward the region and thus increase traffic problems, just as Interstate 285 has done.

I am not necessarily saying that the Outer Perimeter should not be built. But since its effects would be felt for generations to come, it should be viewed in terms of the common welfare rather than allowing it to be pushed through by those who are only concerned with short-term gain.

> MACK A. MOORE **Professor of Economics** Georgia Tech Atlanta

Booby-Prize Competition

The bickering between Atlanta and Washington, D.C., officials as to which metro area has more crime is asinine when you look at the sad statistics in your April 1 issue. This article was printed on an appropriate day, .April Fools Day.

Both cities have a very serious problem, and it will only get worse until these conditions are acknowledged by responsible officials and steps taken to correct the situation.

The statement made by Atlanta Public Safety Commissioner George Napper that "we don't have that kind of extreme fear factor that characterizes Washington" is a little ridiculous and doesn't help to reduce the number of serious crimes in the Atlanta area. If there is no "fear factor," why do the citizens of Atlanta hesitate to go downtown after dark?

Here's one consumer who will do Those people responsible for the reconstruction of Underground Atlanta are in for a shock when it turns into a second financial fiasco.

JESSE BATEMAN Atlanta

Alaska Spill Fuels Big Oil's Greed at the Gas Pumps

From what I read in the newspapers and hear on television and radio, the oil from which comes the gasoline that I buy here in Georgia does not come from Alaska, where Exxon spilled almost a tankerload in the ocean. Yet I'm paying about 15 cents a gallon more for gasoline than I did before the big ship ran aground.

How come?

The oil companies have given us several reasons for being "forced" to charge more. Not one of these reasons, or all of them together, logically are enough to justify price increases that total about 20 percent in less than a month (with perhaps more to come, due, the oil companies say, to "increased demand during the vacation season").

Horsefeathers!

The major reason the oil companies are charging the retailers more

(and some retailers have tacked on their own increases) is greed. They're all using one company's problems to gouge the consumer.

no more non-essential driving as long as the unreasonable prices are charged. If enough consumers do the same, we can gouge back. Even with higher prices, the oil companies will make less money because we're not buying so much gas.

And, by the way, we should let Fresident Bush know that any federal government cleanup costs should be billed to Exxon, not to taxpayers. In fact, as a message to the oil companies, perhaps Uncle Sam should charge Exxon triple any expenses to help pay for damage to animal, plant and other ecological life.

WILLIAM E. HARRINGTON

Lujan a Bust at Interior

Well, good ol' George "Weed my wips" Bush, the world's greatest whirling dervish, has done it again.

While campaigning, he contended he would be the best friend the environment ever had. Now, weeks have gone by since the worst oil spill ever, and he has only done three things: waffled, stonewalled and lip-flapped.

Choosing the leaning Tower of Texas for secretary of defense was bad, but choosing Rep. Manuel Lujan Jr. for head of the Department of Interior may be even worse.

A quick read of Lujan's voting record in the House will show that if the choice was between developers and oil companies or a safe environment, he voted 78 percent of the time against the environment in his 15 years in Congress. Bad call, George.

By contrast, a competent head of the National Parks Service was replaced by Bush with a friend of Dan (Dobie Gillis) Quayle's, a man who was Quayle's best fund-raiser in the recent campaign.

Keep it up, George.

JIM COX Roswell

Send letters for publication to: The Atlanta Constitution, P.O. Box 4689, Atlanta, Ga., 30302. Letters are subject to editing for style and space requirements. Writers must sign name and provide address.

Exxon Spill Costs Don't Justify Increase in Gas Prices Exactly 20 years ago, in 1969, a naly, refuses to foot the bill for the enor-

tionwide CBS study delving into American business practices concluded that excessive profit hunger would undermine the sound foundations of Western capitalism.

Today, if we ask the question whether there is any change in such practices since then, the answer is yes — a change for the worse.

Let us take the recent oil spill at Valdez, Alaska, which, by the way, was not the result of drilling malfunction or pipe rupture, but a transportation mishap due to "human error," a more often quoted explanation for a growing number of large-scale catastrophes in our overgrown, overproducing, hightechnology-dominated industry.

Without going into the well-known details of the accident itself, let us concentrate on the incredible hike of the price of gasoline at the pumps, in some instances 20 to 25 cents per gallon. Is it justified? Hardly.

Looking for a culprit, we find Exxon's transportation division. Since the Bush administration, rightly of wrong-

mous expenses of the cleanup operations, Exxon get stuck with the costs, Experience should tell us that a huge corporation never gets itself caught in a profit-losing proposition. It is thus evident that the estimated \$200 million to be spent on the restoration of the environment to more or less its pre-oil-spill conditions will be paid by the customers of Exxon products.

There are two questions popping to mind immediately: Why do we have to pay the price before the work and its actual costs are even concluded? Furthermore, why do all the rest of the major — and minor — oil companies raise their prices as well? Do Texaco, Phillips, Mobil and the rest pitch in to aid Exxon in providing the money for the cleanup? Of course not! They only find it as a good excuse to hike their prices.

With business practices of this kind, it is obvious we do not need organized crime. The legitimate businesses provide all the requisites.

ERVIN MEREY-KADAR Sylvester