



The economic reply

A two month tale of repression, inconsistency, misunderstanding and seeming callousness by the telephone company against the intrepid Batt columnist, or Dial again, please

By MIKE PERRIN

Have you ever noticed how the only phone company in town tends to act like it? This column outlines a true telephone horror story (my own) and a solution to the whole horrible problem.

I left town before my December bill came, so I sent the company a check for \$25. Before school started, I mailed them another check for \$25 since I had not received a bill. Back in town by Jan. 19 (Sunday before school), I found a whole mailbox full of unforwarded mail, including two phone bills and a notice which said that if I didn't pay my bill by Jan. 21 that my phone would be disconnected.

The trouble was that it had already been disconnected. Calling up the phone company the next day, I found that it had been taken out of service Jan. 9. I was told, however, that as soon as my check came in that they would reconnect my phone. Since I had mailed it Jan. 15, I expected that reconnection would come soon.

I got my next bill (phone still out) on February 4, saying that it was due February 6. I decided to wait until the phone was reconnected to pay. My big surprise came last Saturday when the General Telephone man came and took my phones completely out of the house.

Here is what I couldn't understand — on the bill, it says that you pay for local service a month in advance, so that the February bill, payable by Feb. 6, pays for phone service until March 6. But since the bill for January had been paid in December, why was my phone disconnected?

In any case, I called the phone company. The nice lady on the other end of the line explained that my payment had been received on Jan. 20. This was one day before it was due to be disconnected, according to the notice I received in the mail.

Now, the question is, do I have to pay for the service which I didn't receive between January 9 and the 20th, which was supposed to be an operating period according to one notice? And if I paid by the deadline on the notice, then do I have to pay for the service from Jan. 21 until whenever the phone is put back in service? The answer goes like this: You don't have to pay for service you don't get if you paid for it in advance. You have to pay for service you don't get if you didn't pay for it in advance.

Explanation: Since I didn't pay for the January service in advance (since I didn't get a bill, I just sent \$25), then I do have to pay for the service I didn't get between Jan. 9 and 20. But since I did pay the bill in full (with the other \$25 I sent in) by the 20th, then this prepaid this month, so I don't have to pay for the service I didn't get from Jan. 21 until it is reconnected.

But there still is no real reason for pulling the phone OUT after it was disconnected or for not reconnecting it after the bill payment was received. Plus there was no reason to disconnect the phone on Jan. 9 and then send me a bill threatening disconnection by Jan. 21 unless the payment were received by Jan. 20, which it was.

In other words, the disconnect notice and actual disconnection are

unrelated, as are payments in advance for the next month. If you think that this sounds like the phone company makes up the rules as they go along, then I suspect you are correct.

This type of telephone high-handedness only occurs because they have no real competition. Political regulation cannot cure this type of abuse. Even if a statewide commission to set rates existed, it could not prevent this type of treatment. I doubt that they could end abuse from excessive rates, either.

The only reason that telephone companies are set up as legal monopolies is to provide service to the community at the lowest cost. This is predicted on the notion that the telephone company is a declining-cost industry, that is, the more customers hooked into the line, the cheaper it is per customer.

The point is that this assumption has never been critically examined; the other point is, that even with slight examination, it can be shown false.

Although connections have risen dramatically in this area, there has been no decrease in rates at all; there have been increases; there was even talk of making the calls between Bryan and College Station subject to long-distance rates.

So the phone company, like all other businesses, is an increasing-cost industry and works best with competition. Competition keeps the profit margins shaved much finer than the only seller market.

So let's get rid of the state and city rules that prohibit telephone competition; we'll get better service,

faster service and the increased jobs that another company would bring.

Anyone with a complaint about the phone company should send a short summary of the complaint to The Economic Reply, care of the Battalion, Reed McDonald building.

The Battalion

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Listen Up

E. D. freak critiques MSC

Editor:

I have been reading the recent letters to the editor concerning the new MSC and it's decor and now for what its worth I would like to add my comments.

Please let me preface my statements by saying that I am a student in the Department of Environmental Design and I have traveled some and seen examples of good design.

First and maybe foremost, where did this Mr. Pahlmann come from? Who picked him and what are his credentials? Evidently from his choice of furnishings he has never talked to any student and found out what his (or her) needs in a student union are. The non-practicality of some of the "Southwestern Decor" accent pieces is beyond belief. How long will the pseudo Fellini cowhide benches last and the tables and chairs in the brown bag area, the ones that are lashed together and have leather tops. Who is he trying to kid? This area will probably be one of the most heavily used spots in the whole MSC. How many wipeups with a damp rag will the table tops stand, or how many times will a tired student be able to sit in one of those chairs before it collapses? The whole space seems trashy, cluttered, and overcrowded.

As a person who is subjected to design problems daily by some of the finest and most talented faculty on the campus I have been exposed to many ideas and one of them is the philosophy set forth by Mies Van Der Rohe, one of the fathers of modern design, that less is more. Mr. Pahlmann evidently has never studied any of this great designer's work. In the beginning stages of the new lounge as I passed by I was amazed at the beautiful large clean space, I had hoped it would stay that way with a minimum of decoration so that the students could be the

main elements in the space, not the furnishings. This was not the case. The lounge is a study in over-decoration. The space, suffocating with too much stuffing in the furniture, too many colors, too many flags, and too many animal heads (who shot them and hasn't he heard of the endangered species).

It would do well for our fearless decorator to study the lobby of the Seagram Building in New York City. There is a place with real taste and class. The pieces of furniture are beautiful and they are practical and timeless. They may be expensive but they will last.

In closing this letter I would like to ask once again and I know this may be only a cry in the dark but what are the really important goals of this institution of higher learning, Education or Decoration (please excuse the poor choice of words here). When can we expect some response to students and needs and not the superfluous frills and whims of an overzealous decorator. Where is this Pahlmann? I would like to meet the man that has no insight into the needs of over 20,000 students.

John P. Hamman

students, have little influence in the deciding of issues affecting us. Thus we conclude with a question: Why waste our time and yours with discussion since it is evident that our options are virtually ineffective?

Mike Rasmussen
David Tittsworth

MSC respect

Editor:

This letter is written in response to Daniel E. Wheeler's recommendation to turn the MSC's "sleeping quarters" into a brothel.

Mr. Wheeler, I do not think you understand what the MSC is. The Memorial Student Center is a memorial to the men of Texas A&M who gave their lives during World War I and II. Its purpose is to foster the social, cultural and recreational phases of the student, faculty, and alumni lives.

Whether a student likes or dislikes the decor of the MSC is no concern of mine. Everyone has a right to his own taste. However, when a person like you tries to turn the MSC into a joke to stress a point I get very disgusted.

My reasons are very simple. I had a brother who graduated from A&M in 1969. In October of 1971 he was killed while serving in the Army. Knowing what it is like to lose a brother and an Aggie, the MSC has a special, simple meaning to me; it is a living memorial. Why do you want to put down the Aggie Spirit just to put across a point?

If you are mad about your building fee being increased I would be glad to pay it if my brother could know at this moment that I finally made it to A&M. But don't worry

Dan, with faith in God my brother and I will someday meet. When we do meet we will shake bull on our football team, my yell practice and all the spurs goes with A&M — which is two per centers like you.

Don't make a satire out of MSC. It is a part that makes great and unique. By the way have a tip on how to get out of building use fee: "Highway" both ways.

Texas A&M, ain't it great?
Russell K. T.

Student pub

Editor:

After attending the recent discussion of the possibility of the student pub, it is apparent that discussion is useless. The closed-mindedness of the administration and Board of Regents was revealed at the meeting.

According to Dr. Koldus, the final decision rests with Dr. Williams and the Board of Regents. Therefore it is obvious that we, the

Coach praised

Editor:

After watching the basketball game against SMU, we have become convinced that Norm Ben and not Shelby Metcalf is responsible for the Aggies present success. We do not mean to take away from the players; they should be commended for their excellent play.

For the first time in our history at A&M, the team is running a effective offense against a zone defense and an effective press, even showing signs of breaking out of that old SWC mold, and playing basketball on a level with other parts of the country.

We feel that Coach Ben serves the spotlight for the first place showing. As for Coach Metcalf, what other college needs three assistants on the bench during a game?

Jeff L...
T. Gell...



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