

# Batt column evaluated

## The Student Government point of view

By TOM WALKER  
SG Exec. Director

In "The economic reply" (Feb. 25), Mike Perrin argues that Student Government, in a large part or as a whole, is consciously attempting to conspire against the best interests of the student body, is busy squandering the student's money without providing any substantial services in return and is engaged in bootlicking the administration while dragging its feet in areas of student rights. The alleged existence of the "Necktie Party," he states, is *prima facie* evidence that a need exists for something new and that the old system is not working well enough to suit the student body. The formation of a party indicates only that a disagreement exists on ways to solve a problem, not that the new party's platform is *prima facie* any more viable than existing policies.

SG is not, as he states, a representative body because of the low voter turnout which he cites. However, let's place the blame where it belongs: on those who do not care enough to vote and on those who thoughtlessly vote for senators who do not care enough to actively participate. For these, SG can never be truly representative. This is exemplified by the number of appointed senators cited by Perrin. A lion's share of these seats were vacated by people who found that Student Senate required a little time and effort, a possibility they had not anticipated. Those people were elected by students who didn't take the time to look into their candidates' desire and willingness to work.

That lack of participation and representation is at the root of all of SG's alleged shortcomings — lack of power, lack of earthshaking projects and lack of universal student involvement. It is interesting to see the same small group of senators sign up for all SG projects and the same large group complaining about how hard they have to work every other Wednesday. This can be changed by the constituents — if they care.

Blaming Student Government for Student Service fees increases is absurd. These decisions were made by the administration and the AggieLand increase (interestingly enough) was made by the Student Publications Board, under whom Perrin works. Nevertheless, I challenge Mr. Perrin to find a book that contains so much and costs so much to produce for only \$9.50. Still, if the AggieLand doesn't interest him, he need not buy it.

In the interest of truth, four years ago, when prices were lower, we were without a new student center and a modern, well-equipped hospital (I won't debate their services or aesthetic quality). In addition, student activities and services have been upgraded and added to; for example, the Personal Counseling Center, Arts and Crafts Center, OPAS, etc.

While we're speaking of Student

Service fees, Perrin failed to mention that \$65,000 of them go to the Battalion and they are requesting (from Student Government) \$95,000 for next year. This is in spite of the fact that the Batt is making \$21,000 profit off advertising. It is also interesting to note that while the SG Executive Committee and senators serve without compensation, the Battalion staff, including Perrin's wife, the managing editor, are salaried.

Throughout his article, Perrin speaks of the timidity of SG in failing to properly castigate the administration for not allowing all university decisions to be made solely by students. Unquestionably, the administration, and especially the Board of Directors, have made a number of decisions this year that have not set well with many students. If Perrin objects to the words "takes strong exception to" in the Senate's Building Use Fee Resolution, he should have seen to it that the Student Senate was composed of people who would have voted for the stronger wording that was introduced with "demanded" an explanation. He had that opportunity last April, as did all of the other "unrepresented" students. Even as I write this, two officers of your "timid" SG are in Austin testifying before the House on limiting building use fees.

Perrin complains about lack of input in administrative activities, but of the ten students at the Board meeting, Feb. 25, I counted six who were connected with SG and Perrin was conspicuously absent, "instead of trying to solve the problem."

Perrin apparently feels that because another university has a good idea, it is beneath our dignity to use it and probably improve on it. Admittedly, another school had the idea for a "book mart" but in our first feeble attempt, we saved the students approximately \$9,000, handling \$30,000 worth in books. This was made possible because 600 students rent SG refrigerators, providing the capital to buy the books. Those "other universities" at a recent Texas Student Association meeting expressed their astonishment that our Book Mart handled more books than all others in the state combined — in its first year. Indeed, where would the Battalion be if its staff did not communicate with others through journalism conferences (March 6 and 7, 1975)?

Should SG terminate its efforts in such areas as food and gas co-ops, a recycling center, reduced utilities deposits, personal property insurance and student volunteer involvement just because some other university has tried them and had good results? Sure, other universities had a Student Lawyer before we did, but only two of these were in Texas. He wonders why we are just now getting student financed professor evaluations years after those "other universities" while in the same breath asking for lower

Student Service fees in ignorance of other universities' activities. He pleads for the establishment of an open-air radio station, citing such stations at "other schools." Such a station would be a great addition to the university but would require approximately \$30,000 for minimal equipment. Perhaps the Batt would be willing to give up some of its allocation.

Perrin chastised SG for its "get-along" attitude with the administration, citing as examples former SG leaders who have worked for the University. If Perrin will examine the records, he will find that the people he mentioned in particular were instrumental in some of the most progressive and much-needed reforms at A&M, including Disciplinary Appeals, female housing and student membership on university committees. Rather than being hired because they had been yes-men, they were recognized by the infamous Administration as thinking individuals with the interests of the students in mind. If the Necktie Party did not believe in a "get-along" policy, fine, but they will have to get enough student support to be able to back up their demands. With only 20 per cent concerned enough to vote, they obviously would not have a strong enough support base to carry out their "up against the wall" policy.

Throughout the article, Perrin refuses to make the distinction between SG as a whole and its various branches. Certainly, the legislative branch does seem to the ordinary student to be overburdened with nebulous parliamentary procedure. As a result of overemphasis on the once-every-two-weeks meeting by the Battalion, most students, including Perrin, equate the Student Senate with all of SG. Indeed, most of the work of Student Government takes place not on the floor of the Senate but in committees and during the SG projects, as is the case with most representative bodies. If, when Perrin used the words "Student Government," he included all of SG, he as one of the nine members of the judicial branch could be accused of timidity, inactivity, and having a "get-along" attitude with the administration. An interesting outgrowth of this is that should any election question come before the Student Body Judicial Board, a question of conflict of interest would assuredly arise concerning Perrin's promotion of one certain party in the election.

This letter is not meant as a blanket condemnation of either the Battalion or Mike Perrin. It is the duty of any medium to stimulate questioning of established organizations, policies, and persons and their relative value and contribution to the society. Perrin's job as part of the Battalion does confer some responsibility to serve as the watchdog for the students over every aspect of life at TAMU. Certainly, his column has always done that and for it, I am grateful.

He should understand, however, that it is the function of any representative body to serve as the mediator between all factions of a society for the good of all. Compromise is inherent in this process; as the Neckties call it, "getting along." If we all really look at it, Student Government is only as strong as the students it represents. The administration realizes this and if SG doesn't have the power it should, we can only turn inward to see why.

### B.S. breakdown

#### Student on the Board?

By BILL SHEEN

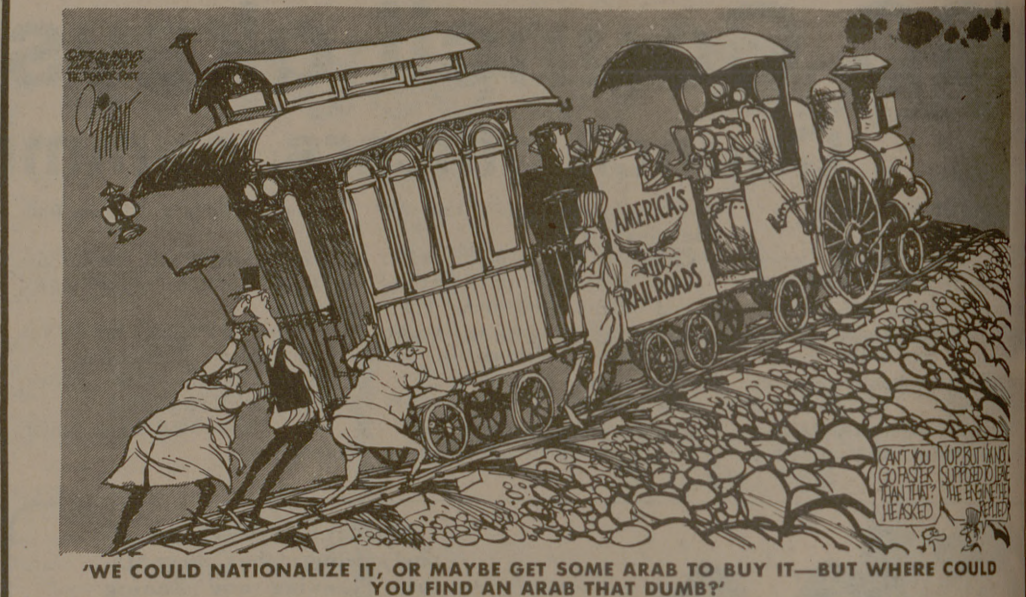
I spoke last week about some alternatives to actually having a student on the Board of Directors. But why shouldn't there be a student on the Board?

The most important argument given against such a proposal by administrators is that a student could never get a feeling for the responsibilities of being a Board member in the one to four years he would be appointed for. It is a job of terrific responsibility and it demands a huge amount of varied experiences and abilities.



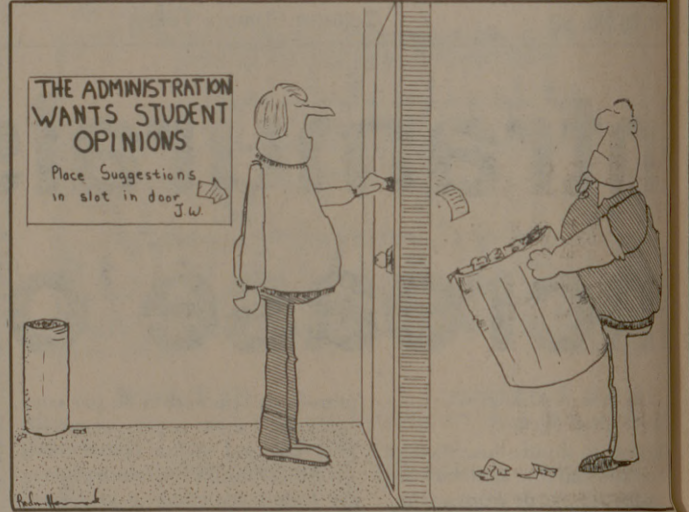
But that alone is not enough to keep students off the Board. The presupposition is that the student would have extraordinary voting strength — enough to overrule the prudence of regular Board member decisions. But most people in favor of student representation would agree that voting strength is not their primary goal. They seek more direct student input into Board decisions.

If it was decided to place a student on the Board for his peculiar student viewpoint, how would one be chosen who could be representative for all the conflicting student viewpoints on campus? What student knows a large enough cross-section of students to be able to adequately measure student opinion?



## Input must come from other sources

Coasters and Co. By Rodney Hammack



And if students need more input, what about the faculty? They have at least as large a stake in this university as students do. What about staff members and other non-teaching employees of Texas A&M? Where will the line be drawn? These could be taken as very good arguments for Board independence.

In a very real sense, the Board of Directors of a major university is much like that of a Board of Directors of a large company. They both make policy in order to make their company or university more efficient or more attractive to prospective customers. It doesn't ask maintenance men whether it ought to build a new plant in Navasota. If it doesn't do a good job, it gets fired. But how do you fire a university Board member? You don't. You're stuck with him for six years. So why should they care what the faculty thinks? Or students; they're in transit, anyway.

I think Board members often forget that whether they like it or not, they work for us, a government agency, not General Motors.

But these are theoretical problems. On a practical level, things are even more complicated. It would be very difficult for most Board members to speak candidly on an equal basis with a student.

And a very special sort of student would have to be chosen. We don't need a belligerent vote getter. We need one that would be willing to work with the Board and not against

it. If neither the Board members nor the students were willing to listen to each other, the Board meetings would likely degenerate into bickering shows of one-upmanship.

That's why I don't think that TAMU is ready for a student on the Board of Directors. The Board we have now may not be much, but it would not profit much by student inclusion.

Both students and the Board have a lot of growing up and communicating to do before they are ready to meet on equal ground. And nothing of value will be accomplished by a Board that has no feeling for the problems of students. The same applies for students with no conception of administrative problems.

I still stand behind my proposal of last week. In fact, I think it is far away much more practical than student on the Board.

I suggested personal interaction through meetings between the Board and students. Those students would be elected.

The meetings would be private and informal with no reporters and no pressure. They used it at Rice and I think it would work here.

There was a misprint in my last column. It read, "The general public isn't allowed to talk before a session of the Board during a 'comment-from-visitors' session after regular business."

The comment-from-visitors session is a regular part of Board meetings and the Board invites anyone in the audience to speak.

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CHOCOLATE OR VANILLA?

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BUT YOU'LL ALSO PROBABLY BE A GENTLEMAN, AND A GENTLEMAN IS ALWAYS COURTEOUS TO A LADY!

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