

# The Battalion

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## Rule may increase student suspensions

By WENDY TAYLOR

Student suspensions may increase because of Texas Atty. Gen. John Hill's recent ruling on student's rights to their transcripts.

The ruling says students cannot be denied a copy of their transcript if they owe money to the University.

The University will have to take some other recourse in order to guarantee repayment of funds," Dr. John J. Koldus, president for student services said last Wednesday. "Before, we had the options of not allowing students to graduate, withholding their transcripts or blocking enrollment. What's left now but suspensions?"

One of the Student Service staff members upset by Hill's ruling is Dr. Charles Powell, director of student affairs. Powell said Friday that Hill's ruling is typical of legislation originally thought favor-

ing students, but when applied proves disadvantageous.

"This ruling won't help students," Powell insisted. "It's going to hurt them. The way the laws are written today makes the counseling service inflexible. Where before we could try to work through the problem with the student, whether it be money or what, now we're going to be forced to come down harder on him to insure payment."

Powell said Hill's ruling has taken away the University's only deterrent against debtors — the transcript.

The transcript has to be cleared by the Registrar's Office before a student can graduate. The student needs the transcript to transfer to another university, and to apply for graduate school. Frequently the transcript is also required as a job reference.

"Hill had no idea what he was doing,

None of them (lawmakers) ever do when they make a ruling like this," Powell said.

Powell explained that the University's previous procedure of handling debtors depended on the debt.

"If it were a great amount of traffic fees or something of this nature, we'd try to hold them until payment was possible, usually to the end of the semester or even right up to graduation," Powell said. "If the debt involves room and board payment, it's the University's policy to suspend, but only after a long period of time when nothing else could be worked out."

Powell said instances of such suspensions have been few. "Before, it's just been an unnecessary thing to do," he said.

He explained that Hill's ruling could change all that.

"It's going to put those students owing money more into a financial bind" he said. "We're going to have to hit them up for

payment earlier or we'll be forced to take the ultimate recourse—suspension. We just can't afford to carry them on any longer."

Powell said he's afraid the majority of the students will favor the ruling without considering its implications. He said he expects many students to try to get past the suspension through legal appeals.

"Unfortunately," Powell pointed out, "they just don't win many of these, but they don't know that. I'm afraid they're going to have find out about this ruling the hard way."

Powell questioned the authority of Hill's ruling.

"Just because Hill ruled on it does not make it law," Powells said. "A ruling is not a law, it's just one man's interpretation of that law. It has to be tested before it becomes a law, and in order for that to happen a court must rule on it."

Powell said it could be as long as a year before that ruling occurs. "But sooner or later, it will be tested," he said.

Until then, Koldus said the ruling probably will not have any immediate effect on the University unless it incurs a significant increase in delinquent payments.

"Then you can bet the fiscal office would waste no time recommending suspensions," he said.

Powell added that the broader implications of the ruling are just as devastating to universities as the apparent ones.

"This ruling can reach even further," he said. "It can be interpreted to imply we can't block records. Then we couldn't refuse readmission to a student previously suspended for failure to pay his debts. From there it could be said to mean we can't refuse students any other University services for failure to meet their financial obligations."

Kent Caperton, Bryan attorney and former assistant to Hill, said Monday he believed the ruling to be misunderstood by the University and defended Hill's decision.

"A large majority of people do not understand the basis of an attorney general's rulings," Caperton said. "They're not always his personal opinions. They're usually based on court decisions that have been upheld in the past, and what will probably be upheld in the future. Of course, there's always the chance he's wrong, but I have a great opinion for the attorney general's interpretations."

James H. Colvin, vice president for business affairs at the University of Texas, requested Hill's opinion when two former students were denied copies of their transcripts.

## Problem getting worse

### Stray animals burden inadequate facilities

By SUSIE WILLIAMS

Increasing numbers of stray animals in the Bryan-College Station area are putting burden on the Humane Society of Brazos County (HSBC), a society spokesman said today.

Lack of funds prevents HSBC from offering food and shelter to stray dogs and cats in the B-CS area, according to Kathy Nemece, a board member of HSBC. And city records show that about 1,800 strays in Bryan and 517 in College Station were picked up in 1976.

The problem is getting worse because the city has the facilities to handle the stray animals," Nemece said.

College Station does not have a pound. The city uses the Anderson Ridge Veterinary Clinic at 1101 Anderson as a holding place for its stray animals. Bryan's pound is small to handle the number of incoming animals.

Nemece said that individual HSBC members had been taking strays into their homes. However, the number of strays has grown so much they had to discontinue this practice.

Right now the stray animals not reclaimed by their owners or adopted by people looking for pets are donated to the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine. The animals are either disposed of by euthanasia (putting to death painlessly) or are used to train veterinary students.

"The only times the vet school disposes of an animal by euthanasia is when the owner requests it or the school knows there is no hope of survival for the animal," said Roberto Espitia, supervisor of the small animal clinic in an interview last week.

Animals that have fatal diseases or have broken backs as a result of automobile accidents are two examples of animals that would be disposed of by euthanasia, he said.

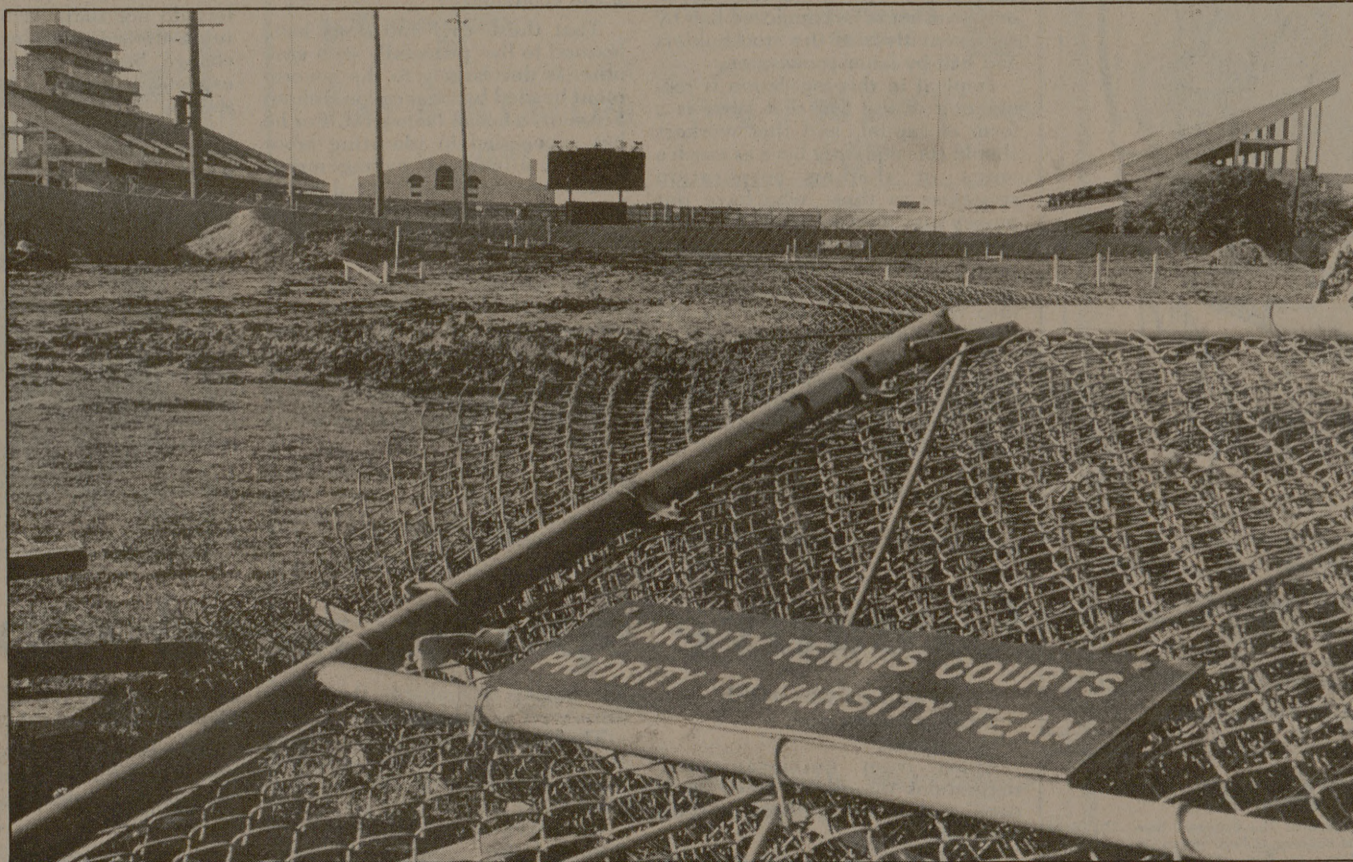
Owners of the animals or people wishing to adopt a pet from the pound have a certain amount of time in which to do so. The maximum length of time College Station holds an animal is three days. Bryan holds its animals eight days.

"HSBC has placed all its energies for the past year in trying to get an animal shelter built here," Nemece said.

Ann Barrow, president of HSBC, said Sunday that the society has been unsuccessful in dealing with the Bryan City Council on the shelter project. She also doubts the society will get a shelter from the College Station Council.

Barrow said the HSBC is trying to build a shelter using private funds. She feels it has the best chance this way.

"The shelter would provide facilities for spaying and neutering animals to reduce unwanted breeding," Barrow said.



Battalion photo by Tracie Nordheim

### Tennis facility under construction

Eight varsity and 14 practice tennis courts have been under construction since Jan. 1 and are expected to be completed Jan. 1, 1978. The tennis

complex, which will also include stands to seat 600 people, showers, storage facilities and office space, will cost about \$710,000.

## Legislators debate farm tax proposal

United Press International

AUSTIN — Admired epitaphs for the small farmer and warnings of suburban sprawl, the Texas House has formed a committee for its first urban-rural confrontation. House members today planned to continue debate on a proposal by Rep. Bill Sullivant, D-Gainesville, to tax farmland according to productivity.

The House yesterday adjourned without voting on the measure to allow committees to hear testimony on controversial

coal slurry pipeline and public school finance legislation.

Sen. Bill Moore, D-Bryan, said he would try again to bring up for Senate consideration his bill to prevent insurance companies from penalizing drivers ticketed for driving 55-70 miles per hour.

Moore yesterday was two votes short of the four-fifths majority needed for Senate debate. However, three senators were absent, and Moore said he will try again today.

Sullivant said his proposal, supported by rural lawmakers, would protect agricultural farmland and keep it productive.

Opponents claimed the plan would force suburban homeowners to subsidize taxes normally paid by farmers and substantially reduce tax collections, thereby hurting public school finances.

"What's happening in Texas is you're driving the little farmer out of business," Sullivant said. "Only big corporations that are able to subsidize farms from some

other businesses will be able to maintain farms near metropolitan areas."

Rep. Joe Robbins, D-Lubbock, said 50 per cent of the undeveloped land within the Lubbock city limits would qualify as agricultural land under Sullivant's plan. He said city, county, school and hospital tax districts would lose three-fourths of their tax base on the undeveloped land.

"The American urban homesteader has a problem — big tax burdens," said Rep. Tony Polombo, D-Houston, who contended the plan also would close many "mom and pop" groceries that could not afford added tax burdens.

The House defeated an attempt by Rep. Ron Waters, D-Houston, to postpone consideration of the bill for one month. Waters said lawmakers needed more time

to consider the bill's effects on school taxes.

The House then approved an amendment by Rep. John Bryant, D-Dallas, designed to prevent large corporations from buying agricultural land and using it for marginal operations.

"What are you and I, who are not farmers, going to do for food if we keep turning farmlands into concrete parking lots?" Sullivant asked.

"I'm not trying to make money for the farmer," Sullivant said. "I'm trying to make it easier for him to stay on the land and produce food and fiber. If it takes a corporation or corporate structure to provide us with our food and fiber then I see no reason we should discriminate against this type of enterprise."

## Highway bill up for consideration

United Press International

AUSTIN — A Senate committee has voted to give a subcommittee two weeks to decide which is more important: schools or highways.

The Senate Finance Committee yesterday was considering Gov. Dolph Briscoe's \$561 million highway bill, but critics said if the bill passed there would be no money left to fund teacher salary increases.

"If we don't do something to improve these roads we're going to be in worse

trouble now than Mississippi was 15 years ago," said Sen. William Moore, D-Bryan, who sponsored the bill in the Senate.

"The issue is whether we're going to fund these highways or give the school teachers all they think they need."

Grace Grimes, president of the Texas State Teachers Association, said teachers were not opposed to good roads but want legislators to look at all state needs before designating money for highways.

"Education has the same problems that

the highway department has — reduced purchasing power and increased needs," she said.

Moore asked the Finance Committee to approve the highway bill for full Senate debate, but Sen. A.R. Schwartz, D-Galveston, won the 8-4 vote to send the bill to a subcommittee for two weeks.

Gov. William Hobby, a chief critic of the bill, was summoned to Briscoe's office shortly before the committee hearing began.

"He said he wants his bill," Hobby said. "I said, well it's being considered."

Comptroller Bob Bullock told the committee approving a special \$561 million allocation for roads would leave only \$792 million in the state treasury to provide additional aid to public schools and fund teacher pay raises and pensions.



### Looking for a job?

The Career Planning and Placement Office on the 10th floor of the Rudder Tower is a good place to start. Paul Tyler, a senior management major, uses the employer information section of the Placement Office library to acquaint himself with the opportunities he may have with certain com-

panies. The library also helps students to prepare for interviews that are arranged for students attending Texas A&M University. (See story in tomorrow's Battalion for more information on the Placement Office.)

Battalion photo by Kevin Venner

### Weather

Clear and mild today with temperatures in the low 60s. Low tonight in the high 30s. Partly cloudy and mild tomorrow with a high in the upper 60s. Winds will be southeasterly at 5-8 mph today through tomorrow with no precipitation forecast.

—Darrell Lanford