

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Confirmation of Coleman as regent is needed

Governor Dolph Briscoe took a positive and progressive step in nominating Dr. John B. Coleman of Houston to the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents in January.

Coleman is the first black ever nominated to serve on the board of regents of a major university system in Texas.

But now Coleman faces a test. The Senate Subcommittee on Nominations will hold a confirmation hearing on Coleman's nomination on April 6.

Several individuals and groups have expressed opposition to Coleman's confirmation. One wonders whether the question of race might not be an underlying contributor to some of this opposition.

Senator Bill Moore of Bryan initially cried "foul" upon Coleman's nomination, charging that he had heard rumors that Coleman's nomination was made as a political favor to blacks for their support of State Democratic Party Chairman Calvin Guest in his bid for reelection last September. Guest was Briscoe's choice for the party position.

Even if this charge were proved true, it would cast no shadows on the qualifications or integrity of Coleman.

Indications are that it was an empty charge made by Moore to achieve another political purpose.

Dispersions are now being cast on the character of Coleman because he operates an abortion clinic in Houston.

An anti-Coleman letter campaign to the Senate Subcommittee on Nominations is apparently being waged by anti-abortion groups.

However some people may feel about abortion personally, the fact remains that abortion (within limits) is legal in Texas and that Coleman's operation is above-board.

The Texas A&M University System includes Prairie View A&M University, a predominately black school. Blacks also attend the other universities in the system.

As Prairie View A&M University Student Senate President Sidney Hicks has said, "There are blacks in the A&M System, and the fact of representation still remains."

The Texas A&M University System has always been "the people's university system." Coleman's confirmation would reaffirm this by providing representation on the Board to a sizable minority of the people of this state.

Even though these arguments are offered, the ultimate basis of a decision should transcend race, religion or occupation. The decision should be based on Coleman's qualifications and experience as a professional.

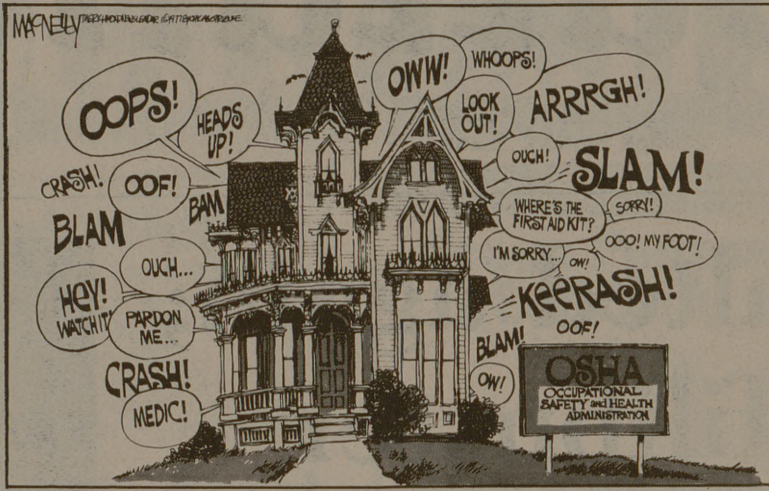
Coleman is well-educated and has proved himself capable and qualified to function in responsible administrative positions. He has served as a regent of Texas Southern University and as chairman of the United College Fund Drive.

It's 1977 in Texas and high time that all the people of this state are represented on the governing board of Texas' quality university.

Let's hope the Senate Subcommittee on Nominations reaffirms Texas A&M's status as "the people's university" by confirming the nomination of Dr. John B. Coleman.

Editor's note: If you support the confirmation of Dr. Coleman as a Texas A&M University System Regent, write a letter or mail this editorial along with your name and address to:

Senator Peyton McKnight, Chairman
Subcommittee on Nominations
Texas State Senate
Austin, Texas 78701



France has tax problems

By JACQUELINE GRAPIN

PARIS — Every year about this time, Americans used to look enviously at the French, who considered tax evasion to be normal behavior. But conditions here have changed, and France's President Valery Giscard d'Estaing is now beginning to crack down ruthlessly on fiscal fraud.

The trouble is, however, that the government's efforts have triggered a series of political disputes that are promising to become far more serious than the actual question of tax collection.

Some 6,000 inspectors were recently ordered to intensify the pressure against tax dodgers, for two principal reasons. The government, hard hit by the economic recession, is seeking some of the estimated \$10 billion per year lost through evasion.

And Giscard's conservative regime, which is being challenged by a coalition of Socialists and Communists, has been trying to demonstrate its belief in fiscal equality.

The inspectors have been putting suspected tax dodgers through vigorous audits. In addition to plugging loopholes in old laws, the government has been attempting to impose new procedures aimed at curbing evasion. One such method has been to require that company-owned automobiles display red windshield stickers in order to prevent their being used by executives for pleasure trips.

Meanwhile, the government has been dramatizing flagrant examples of cheating by prominent figures, especially in the entertainment business but also in other fields.

Not long ago, for example, the singer Charles Aznavour was charged with depriving the treasury of nearly \$1 million, and a superannuated rock star, Johnny Halliday, has been indicted for avoiding some \$600,000 in taxes.

Dr. Robert Jude, a distinguished surgeon, went into voluntary exile after being accused of failure to report more than a half-million dollars in income.

The loudest complaints, though, have been coming from small merchants whose marginal enterprises could not survive if they operated honestly. Last fall, one of these merchants committed suicide, allegedly following a probe that uncovered tax irregularities.

The spokesman for the small entrepreneurs, Gerard Nicoud, has been organizing campaigns against the tax drive, claiming that the government is running an "inquisition" that "denies all sense of humanity."

Nicoud has also been mobilizing vigilante groups to resist fiscal "repression."

Reacting against Nicoud and his supporters, the government has said that it would not allow "intimidation," and would take judicial action against "persons who are responsible for threats."

But many businessmen, physicians, lawyers, architects and other professionals who do not ordinarily associate with shopkeepers nevertheless share Nicoud's hostility to the government measures, and their political influence is important.

As a consequence, Giscard appears to be backtracking. His aides are currently contemplating codes that would restrain the zealous tax inspectors. This could mean, in effect, that a unit might have to be formed to control the fiscal controllers.

In many ways, the furor touched off by the offensive against tax dodgers may be as pointless as the offensive itself. For the French fiscal system is based on indirect taxation, since it takes into account the fact that about half of the country's citizens pay no income tax at all, either because of evasion or because they enjoy deductions, credits and allowances of one sort or another.

Less than 20 per cent of the government's total revenues are derived from personal income taxes.

Student jury system is needed

Editor:

In the Thursday edition of The Battalion there appeared an article on the activities of last Wednesday's Student Senate meeting. In that article three sentences mentioned a proposal by John Oeffinger to form a student jury to interview and recommend candidates in the upcoming student government elections.

These three sentences dismissed a truly innovative democratic reform with little explanation. I strongly urge The Battalion to interview Mr. Oeffinger about this bill and to conduct some research on his proposal. If you will resist the tendency to dismiss the idea without consideration, I think that you may find yourself intrigued by the idea, and may find it appropriate for some sort of article.

I must hastily admit that I am not familiar with the details of Mr. Oeffinger's proposal, but I think I have a grasp of the basic idea.

One of the major difficulties involved in choosing a responsible, mature candidate for student government lies in the fact that we, as students, do not know most of these candidates personally. Thus we often find ourselves voting for a certain class presidential nominee merely because we liked his advertising, which means we are voting for the best advertiser, not the best candidate.

In the last election I knew only one candidate on the ballot. I had not the faintest idea of what the others were like, or what their qualifications were, except for the meager bits and pieces gained through third-rate campaign slogans. Moreover, I really don't have the time or the real need to find out their qualifications.

Therefore I can only conclude that I, along with most other students, have no basis on which to make a rational choice for student government officers. This is where the student jury comes in. We live in a democratic society where it is generally believed that most people can make a rational decision when given enough information. Thus we have juries to decide on the guilt or innocence of our peers. Then perhaps we can have an informed student jury to recommend certain candidates for office in order to help the rest of us make a rational choice.

This jury would consist of ordinary students selected at random. They would then be given information furnished by each candidate about his qualifications and could then interview the candidates and perhaps hear witnesses for each. Then they could choose the one person they felt was best qualified for each office. The ballot would then be printed as usual, except that one person for each office would have the designation of Student Jury Nominee.

Giscard, whose position has grown increasingly uncertain, has therefore been aggravating his political difficulties by his attempts to collect taxes. His fiscal push, however, recently revealed that the two biggest taxpayers in the country are women — which means either that French affluence has undergone a sex transformation or that the ladies have incompetent accountants.

Giscard writes on economic issues for Le Monde, the French daily.

Most of the debate against a bill at the Senate meeting revolved around the argument that the bill would institute "government committees." The argument was also made that it is a function of press (in this case, The Battalion) to present information on the candidates and to make endorsements of the candidates.

The first argument is misleading at very best, and the second argument, although true, does not include the possibility that such a system would work and be beneficial.

The present Senate has no more meeting (April 5), but the next Senate may want to look into such a system. If you wish to see the Senate adopt this system, let your new Senators, as that is the decision to implement it, have to come from.

Editor's note: You have the system here. What you need to develop is that the jury members under Oeffinger's proposal, will be selected randomly from the computer-generated formula of the master list of students in the office of the Vice President for Student Services — for example, the fifth student in the right-hand column of every eleventh page of the required number of student members were selected.

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The Battalion

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