

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

Let Senate act on fees

A University administrator is about to have to act on a proposal that rightfully should be acted on by the Student Senate.

Vice President for Student Services John Koldus said yesterday that he will not recommend that \$41,000 in student service fees for the establishment of a student day care center be allocated. The Student Senate last month had recommended that the fees be allocated.

Dr. Koldus is right in that the fees should not be allocated at this time, but that action should be taken by the Student Senate.

Dr. Koldus now has more information on which to act than did the Senate when it originally recommended the allocation.

The recommendation by the Senate that the fees be allocated was on the basis of some hoped-for volunteer help and eventual funding from the College of Education. It is now evident this funding or volunteer help will not materialize this year.

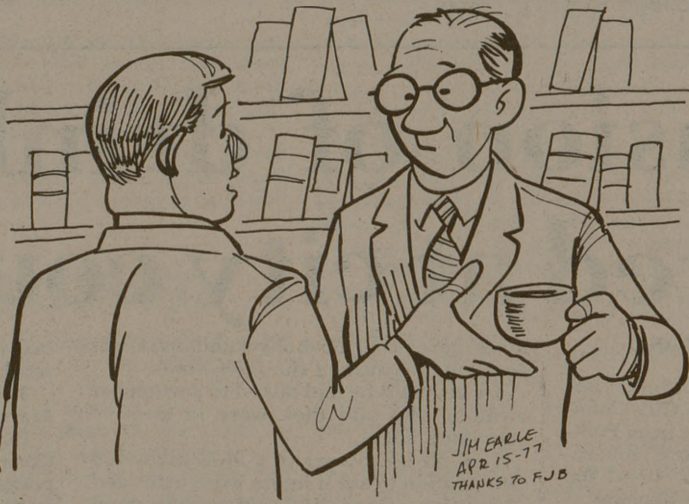
It has been established that many students want a day care center. The idea was right but the timing was wrong.

For the past several years, the Senate has had a good record in getting its recommended fee allocations through the Board of Regents.

If it fits within the time frame of the budget preparation (for the May 24 Regents' meeting), Dr. Koldus should give the Student Senate a chance at reconsidering the allocation before officially acting on it. The new Senate meets on April 25.

We should try to stick as closely as we can to the idea of students controlling the allocation of student service fees and not set a precedent this year of having an administrator having to override the students' recommendations on the allocation of these fees.

Slouch by Jim Earle



"IT'S ON TAX DAY THAT I HAVE MY STRONGEST RESERVATIONS ABOUT ALL OF THE WONDERFUL SERVICES OUR GOVERNMENT PROVIDES US!"

Niche in society tough to find

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the last of a four-part series on homosexuals, their lives and their problems. The Battalion is aware that the subject is controversial and that almost everyone has strong feelings about it. But The Battalion believes that more is to be gained by intelligent discussion than by rumor and invective. We hope that this series will contribute to understanding and enlightenment.

By JAMIE AITKEN AND SUE MUTZEL

Despite the marked social changes brought about by the sexual revolution of the past decade and a half, homosexuality has, at best, been tolerated by American society, and at worst, feared.

Psychologists continue to study homosexuality in order to determine its place in present society and the pressures it is placing on society for changing norms. The effect that an emerging gay rights movement is having on the nation is affording social scientists a unique look at a na-

tion uncomfortable with a growing fear of the unknown.

In 1974 the American Psychology Association voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Through years of uncertainty on the part of society as to the status of homosexuality, this fear of the unknown has perhaps been the greatest reason that homosexuality has not been allocated a place in our society.

The negative opinion of society to homosexuality appears to be an automatic reaction to society's attempt to maintain the status quo. Dr. Don Woods, clinical psychologist and assistant professor of psychology at Texas A&M University, contends that "one of the best ways of assuring yourself that you don't have a certain trait (of a group) is to repress that group."

Students just entering the university environment are often found to be insecure and unsure of themselves in a new environment without the cultural padding that may have been apparent at home. In a way, for many, these are the formative years where social mores are

fixed; where for most hetero-

sexuality is solidified and, in the process, homosexuality repressed and denounced.

Indeed, one writer contends that social pressure in these stages to widespread "homophobia," or fear of homosexuality, and more fear of sexual thoughts about sons of the same sex.

Psychologists have been known to agree to a cause of homosexuality. Erasing it as a mental disorder, they work with the definition "sexual orientation," and "preference."

The Christian church, in general, appears to consider homosexuality as a sin picked up during a life much as one might take up smoking or drinking. Being a sin, it is capable of being changed, an incapable of being changed. Homosexuality, then, is not considered here to be inherited. Do confirm that no evidence has found to prove homosexuality genetic occurrence.

Although causes may be (See SOCIETY, Page 7)

Plutonium benefits outweigh risks

By ROBERT PATLOVANY

Plutonium is a toxic, radioactive element, the existence of which has produced much controversy. But it is a good fuel which, with existing technology, can produce cheap electricity.

Even with billions of dollars of research solar energy and other alternate energy sources cannot hope to compete with plutonium as an energy resource for making cheap electricity. For a conventional size electrical power plant output, 20 to 40 square miles of solar collectors would be required. An orbiting solar power collector will require a five mile diameter parabolic receiving antenna on earth to collect the microwaves transmitted from the satellite. If you think solar power would be clean, think of the environmental impact of 20 square miles of solar collectors, or of a 5 mile diameter hole in the ground.

Of course, the biggest controversy is over the safety of having so much plutonium around in the first place. Environmentalists warn that its use will cause increases in cancer to the general population

and that it should therefore be banned forever. They are concerned about power plant explosions that could kill thousands of people. These people tend to look at the plutonium risk just a little out of perspective.

All of man's activities involve a risk of some kind. The logical way to

Readers' forum

handle risk is to weigh the costs of the risks with the savings of the benefits. Wherever the savings significantly outweigh the costs, the activity should be carried out.

Plutonium, being toxic and radioactive, involves a risk with its use. It is not, however, the most toxic substance known to man. Many people have died from the effects of botulism toxin, which is more toxic. Thousands of people worked with plutonium during World War II on the Manhattan Project. Because of the rush to win the war, safety precautions were not up to modern standards. In spite of the reduced safety considerations,

there has been no one incident of plutonium poisoning. These workers, their children and their grandchildren have experienced no statistical increase in any kind of cancer or birth defects when compared with the statistics for the unexposed general public.

The issue of safeguards for the control of plutonium is the possibility that plutonium could be pilfered from a reactor fuel reprocessing facility and machined into homemade nuclear explosives by a small determined group of scientists and machinists.

For this reason, some people say the United States should have nothing to do with plutonium for fear of giving terrorists the chance they need to build a nuclear explosive. If the risk is viewed out of perspective with the other risks that are routinely taken for granted, a valuable fuel resource may go untouched by this country.

No estimate of the money needed to manufacture a home-built bomb has been less than one-half million dollars. The usual estimate calls for about a \$12 million expenditure by

the group wanting to cause trouble. There are many far simpler and cheaper ways for a terrorist to kill thousands of people than with a nuclear weapon. Every day tank trucks carry butane, propane, ammonia, methane, and chlorine, to name a few, on the Interstate 610 loop around Houston. Last summer, an ammonia truck exploded in the open air killing 30 and injuring nearly 200 people. Before that, a butane truck exploded near Eagle Lake and flew 200 yards through two mobile homes before coming to a stop in a third mobile home.

Some nuclear power critics still worry about a nuclear power plant exploding like a nuclear bomb during an accident. Even if all the electronics and mechanical control systems fail, it is physically impossible for a nuclear explosion to take place in any power reactor. There have been accidents at nuclear power plants, but after over 250 reactor-years of experience, no one person has ever died from a commercial nuclear power reactor accident. The biggest accident so far was a fire three years ago at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Brown's Ferry plant which damaged electrical control circuits. There were no injuries and the reactor was not damaged, but the "disaster" story made front page news across the country. The damage was repaired, and since last October, TVA has reduced its customers' electric bills by \$3 per 1,000 kilowatt hours because of the cheaper nuclear fuel costs. With fuel costs rising as utilities are forced to use the more expensive coal, this country could use a few more disasters like that.

Breeder reactors convert uranium-238 into plutonium-239, while using uranium-235 and the converted plutonium to produce electrical power. A breeder produces more fuel than it uses by these prices. Only 0.7 per cent of uranium is the easily used 235 variety, and if plutonium recycle is not implemented soon, nuclear power may only last 20 years. President Carter wants to stop all breeder reactors from being built in this country because of plutonium risks, eliminating a nearly self-perpetuating source of cheap electricity. It appears the Cabinet could use a Department of Optometry to help Carter see the risks in perspective with the benefits.

Ceteris paribus

Apathy, rationality, and voting

By MARK RANKIN

One of the headlines describing last week's local election read, "Voters appear apathetic in council member election." If I had been asked to write that headline, I think it would have read, "Voters appear rational in council member election."

I am tired of seeing the word "apathetic" applied to perfectly rational behavior. It is my belief that individuals evaluate the costs and benefits associated with voting. Those who feel that there are net benefits will vote and those who feel that there are net costs will pursue a more favorable activity. The most common explanations regarding "voter apathy" are, in fact, variations on this theme.

If there is a large dispersion in candidate ideologies, people will vote.

The individual chooses among candidates based on the relationship among the views of those running and his own. This is to say that when there is a liberal and a conservative contesting the same position, there is likely to be a heavier turnout of

voters than if the election is between two moderates. The cost associated with the election of a conservative is very high in the mind of the liberal as well as vice versa. Likewise, when the contest is between individuals of similar views, people will consider the costs of either being elected about the same and the benefits of voting for one rather than the other will be trivial. This does create a paradox, however, in the sense that the more alike the candidates, the more likely that one vote will determine the outcome.

This is to say that, in the case of closely contested elections, your vote may be powerful in its potential to elect a "body" yet weak in its ability to determine a particular political philosophy. Few liberals would bother to vote in an election between Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. The most extreme example of the effect of a lack of ideological choice is the case where a politician runs unopposed as was the case in the three College Station council races.

If it is relatively easy to vote, people will vote.

This is to say that the nuisance associated with the physical act of voting is a very real cost to the voter. Voter participation will be much greater in a system where you can vote by telephone or proxy than in one where you have to travel five miles only to stand in line for two hours. Similarly, the degree of information that the voter possesses will influence his behavior.

One of last week's candidates made the statement that people were "confused" as to the relationship between the location of their residences and the particular wards which were represented by candidates. If this were true, then it can be said that it was simply too expensive for the "confused" individuals to ascertain the correct information. In point of fact, the "confused" individual excuse probably more adequately explains why 4.56 per cent of those registered voted as opposed to maybe 5.56 per cent in the absence of confusion. On the other hand, maybe voter "confusion" was responsible for making the turnout as high as it was.

Only in America can the non-voting individual be variously described as apathetic, confused, or rational.

Rankin is a graduate student in economics.

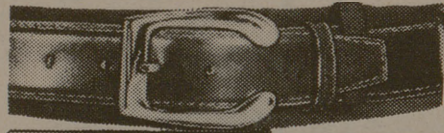
Knowledge is your best protection.

Advertisement for Diamond Room jewelry store, located at 3731 E. 29th St., Town & Country Center, 846-4708.

Advertisement for University Cleaners, offering final review uniform fit right, alterations and repairs, located at 112 College Main.

Advertisement for 3-C CORRAL, featuring the best bar-b-q in town, chicken-fried steak and salad bar, located at 1808 BARAK LANE (East of 29th St.).

GRAINED COWHIDE MONEY BELT KEEPS CASH TUCKED AWAY—JUST IN CASE!



For the growing percentage of us who are victims of robberies or lost wallets, a money belt is an ounce of prevention that really pays off. Dress belt of supple, handsomely-grained cowhide (1 1/2" wide) with smooth-polished metal buckle—goes well with any style of clothing. Concealed compartment inside over 16" long closes with two-way zipper, holds enough big bills for a round-the-world trip! Two colors: dark brown or black (with nickel plated silver-colored buckle). Cowhide money belt (SPECIFY EVEN SIZE) 32-44, color, and horsehoe (shown) or regular buckle style... \$12.95 (shipping incl.). Add 5% tax on shipments to Mass. addresses only.

BELTS P.O. Box 231, Boston, MA 02134

Advertisement for Harley-Davidson motorcycles, offering a free trailer, radio, and \$100 gift certificate. Includes a list of motorcycle models and prices.

Advertisement for The Battalion newspaper, including contact information and subscription rates.

Advertisement for SARTAS CIGARS, featuring custom blended tobacco and domestic & imported cigars, located at 3709 E. 29th St. Town & Country Center.

Advertisement for Sun Theatres, located at 333 University, offering Super-Grody Movies and Double-Feature Every Week.

Advertisement for the U.S. Women's Ski Team Diet, promising to lose 20 pounds in two weeks.