

Viewpoint

Thursday
October 27, 1977

The Battalion
Texas A&M University

Public education — for better — or worse?

Over the last few years we've been hearing more and more about the incapability of high school graduates to perform in today's job market. Frustrated cries have bounced from the walls of college freshman English classes to the doors of the nation's employment offices, and yet a comprehensive and workable solution to the problem has not been found.

The public school system brought education to the masses; a system, its proponents said, that would be cheap compared to the social benefits of an educated society.

There is little doubt that public schooling has been good for the country. But suddenly we discover this schooling becoming more expensive, both in administrative costs and in what society is getting back for its money.

The fact that so many high school graduates today lack even the slightest proficiency in reading and writing is mandate enough for some drastic improvement before the added expense of public schooling turns to the waste of a valuable resource — human intellect.

Some schools have tried to put a check on diminishing proficiency levels by raising the minimum graduation standard from "D" to "C".

This measure could work for individual school systems that take it seriously. But the magic lies not in the letter "D" or "C", but in the proficiency levels that denote those grades.

Who's to say that "D" level work in one area is not some other administrator's "C" level work? What standards is there that defines "D" from "C" work, or for that matter "D" from "A" work?

Raising a graduation standard by letter or grade is only effective when the levels of proficiency are raised as well.

A "C" graduate who cannot read or write is no more qualified to meet the demands of society than a "D" graduate with the same shortcomings.

The answer lies with today's administrators and educators. They can turn substandard public education into a sound societal investment by not being afraid to hold onto students needing more training and graduating only those



worthy of the degree. It boils down to an individual commitment on the part of those staffing our public school system. Granted, this is an idealistic approach, but it could be a comprehensive solution.

For what public schooling costs today, the graduate's degree should not have to be cheapened by a bad reputation.

J.A.

Arabs, Israelis preparing for new war

United Press International

BEIRUT, Lebanon — The Arabs are convinced that Israel has no interest in meaningful peace negotiations and have begun to prepare themselves for the cancellation or failure of the Geneva conference.

Syria and the Palestinian Liberation Organization already have warned of the dangers of a new war.

Unable to accept either American or Arab visions of peace, Israel also is preparing for the possibility of renewed fighting.

Feeling increasingly isolated by unaccommodated pressure from the United States — however slight it may be so far — political forces in Israel have begun to come together against perceived external threats.

In this context comes the decision by Yigael Yadin's Democratic Movement for Change to join Prime Minister Menachem Begin's ruling coalition.

In one stroke, Israel has been given a stronger government and a deputy prime minister who could take over the reins of power in an emergency from Begin, who has a heart condition.

The Soviet Union is slowly swinging into the Middle East picture more and more and the PLO is playing a leading role in trying to patch up parochial inter-Arab quarrels such as those between Syria and Iraq and between Egypt and Libya.

The Arabs are demanding total withdrawal from all territories Israel seized in

for a peace agreement — full diplomatic, trade and cultural ties — this also is rejected by the Arabs, who say that three decades of enmity cannot suddenly be converted into full friendship and cooperation, and that the change must come in stages.

So even if a Geneva conference is convened, chances are there will be little common ground for discussion and the best that can be hoped for is long, drawn-out, inconclusive talks whose only advantage would be that a war of words is better than a ground war.

Both Israel and the Arabs appear to have reached this conclusion and have set about their military preparations even as they go through the gestures of trying to hammer out procedural issues for a Geneva conference.

"Israel is facing its most difficult situation since 1948," Yadin said as he joined forces with Begin.

Syria's daily newspaper Tishrin called an Israeli military strike a "foregone conclusion." The Saudi daily Okaz recently accused Israel of "pushing the Middle East towards a fifth Arab-Israeli war."

Commentary

the 1967 Six-Day war, as well as establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This is flatly rejected by Israel, along with any suggestion that the PLO should be represented at Geneva talks.

The Israelis, however, have agreed to talk to West Bank Palestinians who are not PLO members — as long as they are identified with an Arab delegation.

This, in turn, is rejected by the Arabs, who insist on separate PLO representation.

As for the conditions set by the Israelis

Letters to the editor

Empty corps dorms contradict room shortage

Editor:

I applied for Texas A&M University a year before my graduation from high school. All of the necessary forms were filled out and my housing deposit hopefully reserved a dorm. Before the fall of my freshman year, I was informed that I was number 900 on the waiting list. Frantically, the search for an apartment began. I am presently classified as a sophomore living off-campus. I realize TAMU is rapidly growing and housing is a definite problem. However, I do not understand the reason behind an empty corp dorm. If there are not enough corp members to fill these dorms, then why can't the people on the waiting list be given an opportunity to move in? Or is it being saved in case President Carter brings back the draft?

—Lisa Taylor, '80

don't mind that as much as they seem to overlook what might have happened if A&M hadn't fumbled on the one yard line or if the referees hadn't made two bad pass interference calls which helped Rice score. The Aggie football team played a respectful game and I don't think they need to apologize to anybody. The Aggies won and it doesn't matter by how much or what if because the what ifs didn't happen.

I don't know how long you two have been Aggies but I suspect it hasn't been too long. I was raised an Aggie and I can remember when we would have been happy just to win a game regardless of the score. Instead of complaining about us not scoring enough you ought to be congratulating the team on a win but I guess you're just used to winning all the time. As my daddy used to say "A one point win is as good as a 100 point win because it all goes in the same column."

—Roy Holcomb '77

God in government

Editor:

It appears to me that Mr. Mullin (see "Lowering Heaven" editorial 10/24/77)

Slouch

by Jim Earle

has let his religion get in the way of the truth. The Declaration of Independence refers to "...the Laws of Nature and Nature's God," and not to a Christian God as Mr. Mullin implies. This is due to the beliefs of the founding fathers, who were mainly Deists. In regard to God as a unifying factor in the construction of America, I wonder if Mr. Mullin has read *The Treaty of Peace Between the United States of America and Tripoli* (November 4, 1796)? Article eleven states "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion."

During the Eisenhower Administration the words "under God" were added to the Pledge of Allegiance and according to Leon Lindheim's *Facts and Fictions about Coins*, the words "In God We Trust" were not made mandatory until July 11, 1955. Although this motto had appeared on certain coins as early as 1864, its presence can hardly be called unifying. In fact, the only unity I can see in the motto is one between money and religion. I feel that we should add three words to the motto on our money, making it "There is Money In

God, We Trust." Although this would not be acceptable, at least it would be truthful.

—Raymond J. Grimaila, '81

What's the truth?

Editor:

This is in response to Mr. Mullin's letter (Lowering Heaven) of Oct. 24 concerning the campaign of Madalyn O'Hair to remove the words "In God We Trust" from U.S. currency.

First, I must question the validity of the phrase in this technological age. God is no longer the dominant force in our society. This truth evidenced by the generally apathetic attitude toward religion which has prevailed throughout the latter part of this century. How many of us really consider God to be the driving force in our lives and can say so with any degree of credibility?

I further discount Mr. Mullin's contention that God was "the key factor to America's becoming the greatest freeworld power." Certainly England is not devoid of God-fearing citizens. In fact, the intense religious fervor of the Britons and their intolerance was a factor in colonial migration to America. But despite their beliefs, England never rose to prominence enjoyed by the U.S. This is because it was limited democracy with emphasis on peoples' rights which catalyzed our rise to greatness. The freedom to worship God in our own ways must be the same token guarantee the right to deny the existence of same. Why not take these words off the currency and let the choice lie in the minds of the individuals? Why must we assume that ALL Americans trust in God?

Clearly, the "unifying factor" in America was and is freedom of choice. In many ways Ms. O'Hair represents this spirit in her rugged individualism in the face of harassment by religious zealots. Men like Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock are demigods in our eyes, but they were considered to be little more than rabble rousing radicals in their day.

I do not by any means embrace the beliefs held by Ms. O'Hair. Yet I am not afraid to admit that she has a point.

—Lamont Hall '81

Editor's note: Mr. Hall, you say you don't embrace Ms. O'Hair's beliefs, but you write like an atheist. Whether or not that may be the case, do not disregard the number of people who do believe and "trust in" God. Beware the ivory tower mentality that convinces you that no one believes in God just because you don't.



Wishbone does it all

Editor:

The criticism made of Bellard's wishbone last week in the Batt inspires me to write and disagree with those claiming that the offense should be discarded.

The major opposition to the wishbone is that it is defensible. As the Aggies have been playing it, it is a very true statement. But the Veer, wishbone, I, T-set, are all defensible if left to simple tactics. Our offense is too simple, defenses know plays before we know them. The answer: variety.

We saw a commendable start at Baylor and Rice: the offense ran the ball to the left, not their favorite right side. Best of all we broke Aggie tradition and passed on first down — with fantastic results!

Our offense needs the edge on defenses — keep them guessing — vary the hand-offs (Woo mustn't get them all). My day will be made when I see Dickey in motion — damn, won't the defenses back up! They have to respect his speed. Also send Dickey, whoever, long, throw the bomb, defenses will have to double team him and so loosening their defense so we can move. But hey, when in motion in the flanker position you have the Veer — variety, ah! The wishbone can do it all.

—W. R. Neal '77

A win is a win

Editor:

I would like to address this letter to Paul Arnett and David Boggan. These two sportswriters apparently believe in the word "if" more than they believe in facts. The two articles I am referring to appeared in the Batt this afternoon (Monday, Oct. 24). They seem to dwell on what might have happened instead of what did. I

Top of the News Campus

Battalion wins AP award

The Battalion has been awarded an honor rating of "First Class" by the Associated Collegiate Press. The award was based on issues published during the spring, 1977 semester. Judges were professional newsmen chosen by the organization. This year's award marks the second year in a row that the Battalion received the rating.

Local

Briscoe denounces KKK patrol

Governor Dolph Briscoe Wednesday denounced the proposed patrolling of the Texas-Mexico border by the Ku Klux Klan. "There has never been any place for the KKK in Texas, and never will be," Briscoe said. "There is no place for any organization which preaches hatred and racial divisiveness." Briscoe was in College Station along with Texas House Speaker Bill Clayton to attend a reception honoring State Representative Bill Prenal.

State

City manager not reinstated

A former Kingsville city manager dismissed more than three years ago for insubordination lost his appeal for reinstatement Wednesday in the Texas Supreme Court. J. E. Keaton, who was dismissed by the Kingsville City Commission because he said he would not abide by a settlement in a municipal employment discrimination case, first filed libel and slander suit against the city and its commissioners, then changed the suit to seek only reinstatement. The Supreme Court agreed with lower court decisions upholding the city's action in dismissing Keaton.

Hospital loses \$35,100 suit

A Sherman, Tex., hospital which failed to check an employee's references before he was hired must pay a patient, William M. Davis, \$35,100 in damages because the employee attempted to improperly remove a catheter from Davis, the Texas Supreme Court ruled Wednesday. The court upheld lower court decisions that the hospital was negligent in failing to check the employment history of Leslie C. Looman, who was expelled from the Navy Medical Corps School after one month of training. Evidence in the case showed Looman attempted to remove the catheter from Davis' bladder without first deflating the balloon which held it in place.

Nation

Enterprise makes last free flight

The space shuttle Enterprise dropped from the back of its jumbo jet mothership Wednesday in its last free flight, falling at a rate of more than 11,000 feet per minute to a landing on a concrete runway and a royal welcome in Base, Calif. Prince Charles of Great Britain was waiting near the landing site when the Enterprise came in like a dive bomber. The test was to make sure the stubby glider could land on concrete, and to verify its ability to brake within 5,000 feet.

No decision on gas-guzzling cars

A House and Senate conference committee has discovered once again the hardest features of an energy policy are the ones dealing with the automobile. Negotiators could not find a ready compromise on whether to outlaw altogether the worst gas-guzzling cars. Part of the energy conservation bill before the conference would double the penalty for cars that fail to meet certain federal standards for gasoline mileage. The same bill has the outright ban of any 1980 model getting fewer than 16 miles to the gallon. And the energy tax bill the House passed has a tax on cars based on their gas mileage. The Senate is debating the tax bill this week.

Adair fights U.S. oil well fire

Famed oil well firefighter Red Adair arrived at the government-owned Elk Hills oil reserve in California early Wednesday and immediately began preparing to try to douse a runaway oil fire in which three men died. An underground explosion at the rig owned by the Department of Energy on the reserve killed workers in a basket atop the rig Tuesday afternoon. Flames billowed 50 to 150 feet in the air. There was no official word on what caused the explosion and fire.

World

Iraq blamed in murder attempt

Syria has accused radical Iraq of masterminding an assassination attempt on Syrian foreign minister that instead killed a top official of the United Arab Emirates. A gunman fired on the officials Tuesday from a balcony at the Abu Dhabi airport. Officials said the burst from the submachine gun was aimed at Syrian Foreign Minister Saif Halim Khaddam but instead killed Emirates Foreign Minister Saif Bin Said al Ghobash. Khaddam had been on a tour of Persian Gulf states urging Arab opposition to a U.S.-Israeli agreement on resuming the Geneva Middle East talks.

Weather

Partly cloudy and continued mild today and tomorrow with southerly winds four mph. High both days mid-80's. Low tonight mid-60's. No rain.

The Battalion

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Address correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *The Battalion*, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

Represented nationally by National Educational Advertising Services, Inc., New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday from periods through May except during exam and holiday Wednesdays and Fridays.

Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester; \$33.25 per school year; \$35.00 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Address: *The Battalion*, Room 216, Reed McDonald Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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