

A&M profs dispute article criticizing training

By DIANE BLAKE
and
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Special to The Battalion

Never before has the teaching profession been under such fire. Controversy has arisen in the past year over the quality of instruction in public schools. Concern has centered on the lack of basic skills displayed by teachers on competency tests in the Dallas and Houston school districts. Texas Monthly magazine added fuel to the fire when it printed an article in its September issue that blamed the education departments in Texas colleges and universities for the declining teacher quality. Among other things, the article charged that education courses were "puffed with heat" — that their subjects were too limited to be taught in separate courses, and that many of them dealt with what should be common sense. The article said this characteristic of education courses discourages talented people from entering the teaching profession. "Gifted students are forced to choose between certifying to teach and getting a decent education," author Gene Lyons said. "How many potentially fine teachers are lost because they refuse to submit to mindless busywork? When both the ambitious and the idealistic are eliminated, the incompetent fill the gap." Lyons also said college teacher education programs in Texas suffer from grade inflation and low entrance standards compared to other disciplines. He said many teachers are certified even though they are lacking in basic areas of knowledge. Predictably, the article has aroused the ire of people in education departments around the state. "Few deans in Texas would agree with the article," said Dr. James J. Garland,

dean of the school of education at Southwest Texas. "We do feel, however, that teacher education needs improvement — no question about it." Dr. Robert Shutes, head of the department of educational curriculum and instruction (EdCI) at Texas A&M University, called the article "a mixture of some truth and some yellow journalism." "It's interesting the author was able to indict all 63 teacher education colleges (in Texas) on the basis of inspecting two." For his article, Lyons looked into the education departments at Southwest Texas State University and the University of Houston. Educators at Texas A&M, however, feel that their program is significantly better than the ones mentioned in the article. Education faculty members point out that entrance to the University does not automatically ensure admission to the college of education. Students are required to post a 2.25 GPR in their sophomore years to be admitted to the student teaching program. To graduate, the college requires a 2.25 overall and 2.25 in the teaching field. The University requires only a 2.0 GPR to graduate. Moreover, Shutes said the college is contemplating using a general-knowledge competency test to screen prospective education students. Dr. John E. Morris, associate professor in EdCI, said the teacher preparation program here is among the best in the state. "We are one of the few — maybe the only — state institutions that has a full semester of student teaching," Morris said. "The Texas Education Agency requires only six hours of student teaching for certification. We require 15 hours in elementary education and 12 hours in secondary." "At the teacher preparation program at Texas A&M, most students graduate with more than 133 hours," he said. "At most other institutions, it's only 126 hours."

Morris also said that Texas A&M does not have a problem with grade inflation. "In fact, it's probably the reverse. When people look at a transcript from Texas A&M, they're not worried that the grades are inflated." In addition, Dean Frank Hubert said the College of Education tries to "make all of our courses intellectually stimulating." Many graduates of Texas A&M's education program said that methods courses, criticized harshly by Texas Monthly, had proved valuable to them. Methods courses deal with teaching techniques. Texas Monthly described one class at Southwest Texas in which students spent much time performing a skit demonstrating how to play tennis. Bill Baugh, Texas A&M elementary education graduate of 1978, said the methods courses he took here "are the most valuable things I ever had. The things I learned then I use now." Baugh teaches third grade in the Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston. He said the amount of practice teaching required by Texas A&M prepared him well for teaching. "By the time I left A&M I had experience with teaching every age of kids (in elementary grades) except one." Hubert says it is the salary scale for teachers, not the quality of college education courses, that discourages bright students from entering the teaching profession. "There is darn little incentive to teach when you have discipline problems, have to fight your way through the day and at the end of the month pick up a paltry paycheck," he said. Schutes agreed, saying the average salary offered a May 1979 Texas A&M education graduate was \$946 a month. In comparison he says beginning civil engineers from Texas A&M were offered an average of \$1,498 a month and that some unskilled laborers make nearly twice what a teacher does.

THE BATTALION

Vol. 72 No. 16
20 Pages in 2 Sections

Monday, September 24, 1979
College Station, Texas

USPS 045 360
Phone 845-2611



End zone dance

Spectators stare in disbelief as Curtis Dickey dances to a halt after scoring his last of three touchdowns against the Penn State Nittany Lions.

Dickey ran 21 yards for this score in the game Saturday. Texas A&M won, 27-14. Related stories, pages 9 and 10.

Battalion photo by Pat O'Malley

Anti-nuke rally draws 100,000 in NYC

United Press International

In New York, there was music and talk of the "fighting spirit." In Vermont, more than 160 demonstrators were arrested. It was another Sunday of anti-nuclear protests.

The demonstrations stretched from New York City to Harrisburg, Pa., to Bremerton, Wash., to Vernon, Vt.

The Vermont protesters — facing arraignment today on trespassing charges — refused to identify themselves to authorities Sunday after slipping under a rope and entering a restricted area at the gates of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon.

A total of 167 demonstrators were arrested at the plant, which has been closed for seven weeks for repairs and refueling.

More than 100,000 protesters — sponsors put the figure at twice that — gathered in New York, where music was the medium for the anti-nuclear message in the shadow of Manhattan's World Trade Center.

Organizers said the rally on a three-block-square landfill site was the biggest protest in the history of the anti-nuclear movement.

Entertainers Pete Seger, Graham Nash, Jesse Colin Young and Tom Paxton were among the speakers, and some of them urged the crowd to elect an anti-nuclear president in 1980.

Consumer advocate Ralph Nader was there, too, shouting in a hoarse voice to the crowd: "Stopping nuclear energy is fighting cancer."

"Do you have the will to win?" Nader demanded.

"Yes," the crowd responded, breaking into a chant of "No nukes, no nukes."

Officials reported 25 people were treated at the scene for sunstroke, lacerations or drug overdoses.

Actress Jane Fonda appeared at both the New York rally and one in Harrisburg, Pa.

Fonda told over 1,000 demonstrators

protesting the troubled Three Mile Island nuclear plant to fight nuclear power in the same spirit she fought against the Vietnam War.

"Your patriotism will be attacked, but through it all you must maintain your fighting spirit," she said. "You must remain united and brave."

Fonda and her husband, political activist Tom Hayden, were embarking on a nationwide tour to discuss issues in the 1980 presidential election.

A crowd of about 200 people gathered in Bremerton, Wash., to call attention to the dangers of shipping nuclear waste. They launched a mock nuclear waste caravan on a week-long journey to Richland during the rally in Roosevelt Park.

Speakers at the rally denounced plans for a 400,000-gallon spent-fuel storage pool at Bremerton's Puget Sound naval shipyard.

The mock caravan was to travel by rail to the Hanford nuclear reservation, where it was to meet caravans from Idaho, Montana and Oregon.

Married student housing to open four new buildings

By LAURA HERTENBERGER
Battalion Reporter

Four new buildings in Texas A&M University's married student housing may be completed by this spring, the manager of the student apartments office says.

F. Ken Nicolas, manager of the Student Apartments Office, said finishing those buildings will make 32 new apartments in the complex on University Drive available for occupancy.

"There's a good chance we will be able to make those apartments available to applicants for the spring semester," Nicolas said.

Built to take advantage of the prevailing winds, the apartments have windows in front and back as well as room dividers which allow free air flow throughout the unit. The 350-pound dividers are movable, permitting tenants to choose floor

plans. They will also have space-saving furniture, shelves, desks with lamps and places to hang pictures.

The College View apartments, the old barracks-type buildings which have housed married students, continue to come down as the new buildings are built. Since 1969 the number of those apartments has been reduced from 408 to 160. Half of the remaining units are unfurnished. As furnished apartments are vacated and torn down, their furniture will be used in the unfurnished ones, Nicolas said.

The barracks were moved from Texas air bases in 1946 and reassembled here to provide housing for veterans. A year later they were turned over to Texas A&M.

"Since then, those old barracks have put a heck of a bunch of folks through Texas A&M University," Nicolas said, "but they

have become a hazard and must go." He said at the present rate of removing four or more buildings a year, the last of the barracks should be gone sometime between 1983 and 1985.

For those who want to live at the student apartments, Nicolas recommends applying 10 to 12 months in advance. Students may apply for any one of the seven different types of apartments with the option of listing alternate choices. Applications are filled on the basis of earliest filing date and availability of the desired apartment.

Nicolas said there is a 75 percent annual turnover rate in the apartments. Teachers often move in for only the summer sessions, he said, and tenants also move from one type of apartment to another.

There were 460 applications for 136 apartment openings this semester.

Mobil sends gas masks to family complaining of poison fumes

United Press International

BIG PINEY, Wyo. — When two families in this rural Sublette County complained of deadly hydrogen sulfide emitted by a nearby Mobil Oil Corp. oil field, Mobil sent each of them a 35-pound gas mask and 30-minute oxygen bottle.

For the Fenns and the Haddock, whose homes are in the middle of the Tip Top oil field, the gas masks symbolize the absurdity as well as the danger of their predicament. The gas is emitted by venting operations in the oil field, and regularly drifts downwind to the homes.

"In the confusion, we never even think of those gas masks," Bill Fenn said. And besides, the families ask, how does one

make a 60-pound child wear a 35-pound gas mask?

The Fenns and Haddock, who have lived in the western Wyoming oil field four and five years respectively, are battling with Mobil about the gas with little success.

They fear the gas, which can be deadly in amounts of 1,000 parts per million (ppm), could come in doses that would be worse than the rotten egg-like stench.

"It's gotten to the point where we don't want to leave anyone up here alone," Fenn said. "It gets spooky. When we start to smell the gas, we immediately wonder what to do. Do we stay and hope it goes away, or do we pack up the kids and get

the hell out of here?"

Mobil officials, backed by state and federal officials, say the families have nothing to worry about. Monitors near the well site — 1.6 miles from Fenn's house — have never recorded the gas in excess of 9 ppm, they say. But in an operations manual, Mobil states that it expects to encounter concentrations of 10,000-60,000 ppm.

"They are safe down there," said Don Basko of the state Oil and Gas Commission. "There are 20 workers up on the rig; they don't have any problem."

Nonetheless, Mobil has the families on the list of people to call if there are ever any problems at the well site. And the firm has offered to pay motel expenses for them during periods when the gas is being vented.

The Fenns and the Haddock have hired lawyers who are preparing legal moves to examine safety considerations.

There have been no tests for the gas at the houses but the odor ranges from mildly unpleasant to "like we have a sewer running right outside our window," Fenn said.

Chris Haddock said the gas has been strong enough at times to irritate the eyes and noses of his family. He said his wife has nosebleeds when the gas is present.

"The odor of hydrogen sulfide is going to be a problem," said Woody Russell, a member of the state Department of Environmental Quality. The problem will increase as more sour gas wells are exploited, he said.

"The only answer is to have a national policy not allowing sour gas wells to be drilled," Fraher said. "And at present that isn't national policy."

Regents to meet, consider new dorm complex here

Consideration of five construction contracts, including one for another 500-student dormitory complex here, and possible sale of housing revenue bonds totaling \$5.5 million dominate the agenda for the Wednesday meeting of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents.

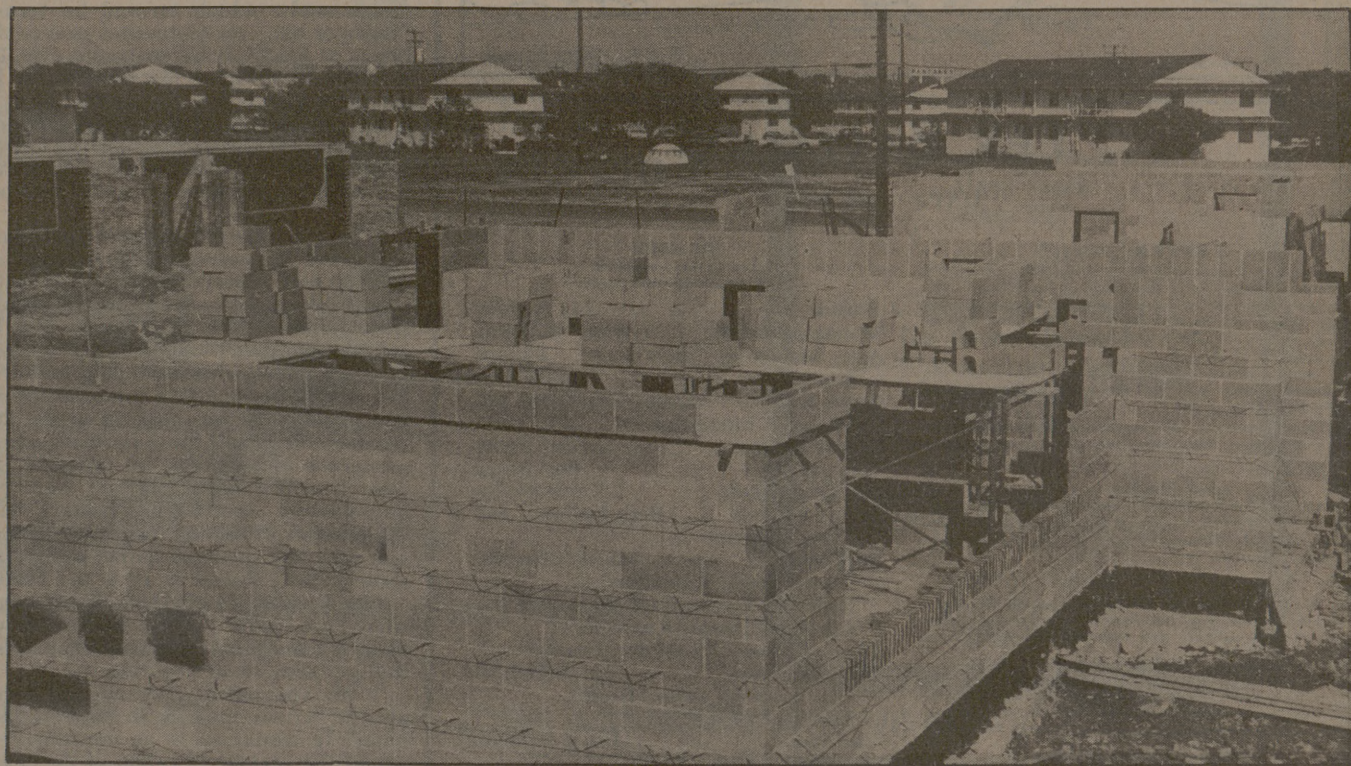
Texas A&M's proposed new dormitory complex is to be modular, similar to the facility opened this fall, University officials noted.

The proposed bond sale would provide

most of the funding for the new facility, the officials said.

Other Texas A&M contracts to be considered by the regents cover modifications to ventilation systems in the oceanography-meteorology building and roof repairs for five buildings.

Two contracts will be considered for Prairie View A&M University projects — installation of a new steam and hot water system and furnishings for the new engineering building.



Construction continues on new married student apartments that will replace some of the World War II-vintage barracks which have housed married Texas A&M students for over 30 years. F. Ken

Nicolas, manager of the Student Apartments Office, says four of the new buildings may be open this spring.

Battalion photo by Lee Roy Leschper