

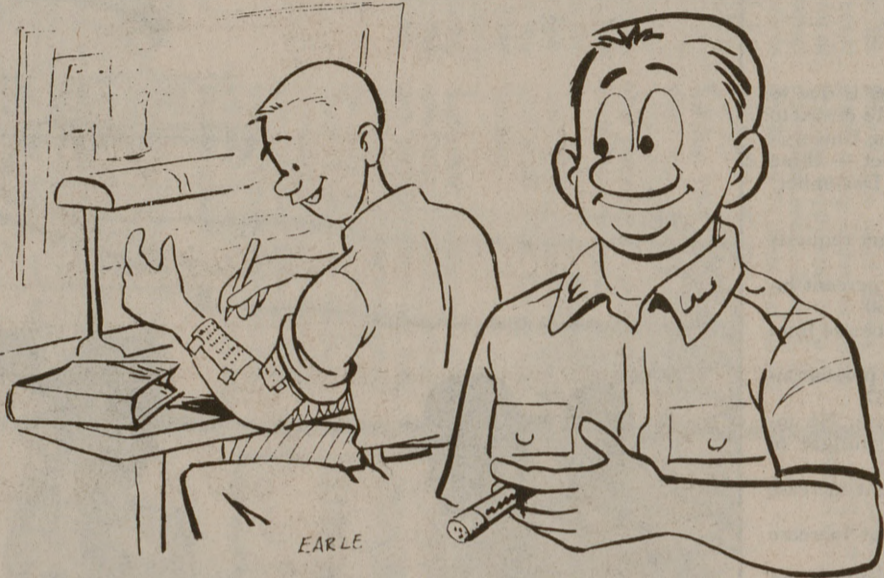
VIEWPOINT

THE BATTALION
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

FRIDAY
FEBRUARY 20, 1981

Slouch

By Jim Earle



The strangest thing just happened to me! By the time I finished writing my cheat notes, I realized that I had learned what I was supposed to know."

Other subjects aren't being taught 'write'

By PATRICIA McCORMACK

United Press International

"All children can learn," the Council on Basic Education's A. Graham Down told the U.S. Department of Education transition team a little while back.

And then Down, executive director of CBE, a non-profit group of educators and others which advocates improvement in basic education, stressed the Council's main theme:

"Public schooling has been too much centered on special groups, not all children; on rights, not learning; on management, not knowledge; the relevant, not the enduring."

Here's what Down said the Reagan administration should aim for in order to put education back on track:

— Make leadership more important than maintaining highly regulated programs that disburse federal dollars to states and school districts. Dismantle or at least reduce the incentives for becoming dependent on federal largesse.

— Establish incentives for improving teaching and learning.

— Relate federal activities to school effectiveness. The marks of effective schools include instructional leadership by the principal, emphasis on academic achievement, assessment of student progress and academic programs expectation that all will learn, a climate conducive to learning, and community support.

— Support school effectiveness by providing resources that local districts ordinarily lack — information, consulting services and technical assistance, research and development leading to classroom application.

Down gave the following as examples of options for federal assistance to local districts:

1. Support programs (like the National Writing Project) that improve teachers' and students' writing across all subjects.
2. Support programs for academically talented students.
3. Support summer institutes to strengthen teachers' general education and their preparation in the subjects they teach.
4. Give special attention to support for foreign languages, science and mathematics.
5. Concentrate programs for low-income youth on mastery of basic learning skills as preparation for more education.

The Council's current booklet "Basic Education" defines "writing across the curriculum" and gives an example of how it

relates to a biology class.

"Writing across the curriculum is probably the widest and most unyielding front in the struggle for literacy," the report says.

"Sentences, paragraphs, and compositions are the stuff of which English is made, and teachers of other subjects presume or protest that writing is 'not my department.'"

"A high school teacher of history we encountered last year is representative. At one time, he told us, he was concerned about his students' writing but he had long since left 'grammar and all that' to the English teachers.

"It is heartening, therefore, to turn up teachers of subjects other than English who recognize that writing is not just 'grammar and all that' but a means of learning the subjects they teach — the means by which a student can (literally) compose fragments of knowledge and understand them.

"Such teachers cannot devote much of their time to grammar, spelling and the mechanics of writing, but they can insist that their students demonstrate understanding in prose that is at least intelligible."

The report tells about Vincent Moragues, biology teacher at Westbrook Junior High in Omaha, Neb. Tests he gives seventh-graders include multiple-choice and matching questions — plus three or four questions that can be answered only in prose statements of a paragraph or more.

The booklet "Television Intelligence" published by CBE includes this one:

The 1981 catalogue of the Agency for Television Instruction lists a series of 15 programs under the title, "The Write Channel." Says the catalogue, "Although the programs show students a variety of syntactic devices, they never mention intimidating terms like 'prepositional phrase' or 'coordinating conjunction.'"

CBE comments: "Actually, the program descriptions are quite sensible. Program 12 may not mention the intimidating term, but it teaches the use of the subordinating conjunctions."

Another television note: A survey of 530,000 California sixth graders and high school seniors showed that television watching affected test scores across all social, economic and racial lines — for the worse.

The survey showed that only 27 percent of the sixth-graders and only 29 percent of the seniors watched less than one hour of television daily. Between two and four hours was the daily TV dose for most.

Hiding behind the law's letter

"It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right."

— Henry David Thoreau

It's not the letter of the law but the spirit that counts: We should remind the Student Government Finance Committee of that.

Finance Committee Chairman Tracy Cox, representing no one but his self-important committee, has decided to close Saturday's hearing at which next year's student service fee recommendations will be made.

Technically, the law is on his side. For all practical purposes, it shouldn't be. The Texas Open Meetings Act doesn't apply to advisory groups — the Finance Committee is technically a panel advising the administration on student service fee allocation.

Practically, the Finance Committee does allocate the student service fee. Though the student senate, vice president for student services, the president and the Board of Regents must approve the disbursement, the recommendation rarely changes once it leaves the committee; any changes are usually made in the senate, after which the approval is rubber-stamp.

Take last year as an example: The Finance Committee recommended \$2.123 million in student service fees. The senate concurred; the recommendation was

Sidebars

By Dillard Stone

approved without objection all the way up the chain.

It's not an isolated instance: Each year's recommendation receives the same treatment.

Even Cox admits the committee in effect makes the allocation: "In a closed hearing we can be more free to discuss the actual allocation of this money," he said. "Actual allocation": That's the key phrase. The committee has the allocation power, for the administration has delegated that responsibility. No one will make that delegation official, though, for the technicality is an effective screen behind which to cloak the secrecy of the proceedings.

There are two rationales for closing the meeting: Committee members want to preserve their rapport with administrators by not having their derogatory remarks about those officials reported. Again, Cox is the best source: "If a reporter (or, presumably,

any other student) was in our meeting would stifle our openness on each issue that we wouldn't be as cautious," he says.

They also want to exercise the little muscle they have, boost their egos — we've got some power; let's use it! — and remind the student body of the committee members' sense of self-importance.

The idea that students should be able to see how their money is being spent probably never entered their minds. Hiding behind the open meetings technicality the committee to be ignorant of the rights the students it's supposed to represent.

Cox's action violates the spirit, although the letter, of the open meetings law. However rooted in respect for the law, action may be, it does nothing to cultivate respect among committee members — what is right.

If the students aren't to be in a process of how their monies are allocated, word of warning is in order: Make decisions wisely, committee members, aware of what services will suffer when you make cuts, of how many students will be affected.

You won't keep our interests paramount by holding an open session; are you up to the challenge of protecting those interests behind closed doors?

It's your turn

MSC receptive to non-voting input

Editor:

As a voting member of the MSC Council, I would like to respond to your recent comments concerning non-voting members and their participation in council meetings.

The non-voting positions on the council were established to enable representatives of the other major student organizations at Texas A&M to provide input to the council and also to insure that they know about the major administrative decisions made by the largest programming body on campus.

While in some organizations where non-voting positions exist there may be an "air of inferiority," the Council has always been sincerely receptive to the input of our non-voting members. It is obvious that those who are not actually involved in the day to day operations of the council and directorate may not always be fully informed of the details of every item under consideration. However, adequate background information concerning the proposals we consider is usually given. It is the policy of the council to deliver agendas and meeting information on the Friday before the Monday council meetings.

The Corps of Cadets, RHA, OCA, Graduate Student Council, class councils, and, yes, even The Battalion, are provided seats on the Council. It is the prerogative of these representatives to decide whether or not they will utilize this seat and provide input into our discussions. I deeply regret the fact that you feel that it is a waste of your time to attend.

Paul Fisher
Director of Operations
MSC Council and Directorate

Apology appreciated

Editor:

I would like to express my sincere admiration for Mr. Mache's public apology concerning our "incident." Not only the fact that he publicly apologized, but also included his name.

However, I would like to point out, not only to him, but to the student body as a whole, that in the future we mustn't allow ourselves to get worked up into such a fervor at athletic events that we vent our frustrations on one another. I only suffered a busted lip, but what if I had fallen down? I could have easily hit my head on the concrete steps or gotten a tooth knocked out. In that case, what started out as an insignificant argument would have turned into a serious accident.

I am just as much to blame as he and offer my apologies. Evidently we were both already angry, he possibly at the outcome of

the game and I at the conduct of the crowd. Despite this, we, as two legal adults should have never allowed such a petty argument to get so out of hand. I do accept his apology, but the incident should have never happened.

Laura Furr

Greeks stereotyped

Editor:

Greeks — the word seems to evoke misconceptions of competition, elitism, and rivalry. Doesn't A&M challenge us all to be intelligent thinkers? How then can somebody fall back on outdated stereotypes of Greeks? It appalls me that a student, such as John Wagner in his Feb. 18 editorial, can so rapidly write off dedicated, viable organizations that pose no more threat to the A&M campus and community than Sbis's scrambled eggs.

I am sure (or I hope) you are simply misinformed and unaware of the many services the Greeks on our campus do for you as students as well as for the community. Every sorority and fraternity has a philanthropy. Alpha Phi's, for example, happens to be cardiac-aid and last year we donated hundreds of dollars to the A&M Medical School for heart research. Also last year the Greeks combined their efforts to raise thousands of dollars for the United Way program. Can you honestly say we would have been better off without these services? In addition, scholastic programs and incentives have encouraged the nine sororities here to achieve a higher overall GPA than that of the independent women's average. We are leaders in student senate, the MSC Directorate, numerous honorary societies, and many more campus clubs. We are not merely social organizations, there is much more to us than that.

We are asking for no "special" treatment in our efforts to become recognized, simply "fair" treatment. How detrimental can the right to put posters up on campus boards be to this university? If that is so threatening, I shiver to think of A&M as one "Big Fraternity" as Mr. Wagner suggests, for it will never survive.

Let us now in the fraternal spirit of Aggie traditions open our eyes and recognize this dynamic potential of continued service and dedication to the university and commu-

ity. I would like to close with the second line of that excellent song Mr. Wagner keenly quoted in his Feb. 18 editorial: "True to each other as Aggies can be."

Sandie Williams
President, Alpha Phi Sorority

To the thief: Why?

Editor:

It took a few minutes for the shock wear off, and when it did, all I could do cry in disbelief. The only question in my mind was WHY? Why would someone take out my jewelry and wallet? Why would they remove all of my jewelry and cash? Why were my most cherished possessions — my first ring that my father had given me, that my mother and stepfather had signed for my high school graduation, my Aggie ring. My Aggie ring — the one that symbolized to me the spirit and pride which make our school so unique. I was proud of that ring because wherever I went I was able to show that I was an Aggie. Now and always will be an Aggie, whether I have my ring or not, because it's what my heart and not on my finger that tells the story. Whoever you are who "courageously" stole my jewelry (and my \$4 in cash) while I was playing basketball within 10 feet of you, you must have needed the money more than I do. I feel sorry for you because you would never know what it's like to be a true Texas Aggie — if you were an Aggie you could have lowered yourself to pull such a stunt no matter how badly you needed the money. I won't sling any more words because they won't bring my rings back. I will ask one question — what's happened to the Aggies I've come to know and love? A&M going to lose its most cherished tradition — camaraderie? If acts such as this continue we can say goodbye to the "Cool Ag" spirit at Texas A&M.

Jan Rainey

Correction

A story in Thursday's Battalion incorrectly reported that a backup polling station spring elections would be at the bus stop outside Bizzell Hall. If there are election workers, the polling station will be at the bus stop south of Rudder Tower. The Battalion regrets the error.

Warped



By Scott McCullar

THE BATTALION

MEMBER U.S.P.S. 045-360

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications. Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 350 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed, show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

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