

Final exams vote lacking student input

Monday the Faculty Senate passed a resolution requiring graduating seniors to take final exams. Although the vote was 57 to 11, some faculty members argued against the resolution.

The Battalion Editorial Board applauds those who voted against the measure, for several reasons.

A primary reason is lack of student input. The academic standards committee invited leaders of major student organizations to discuss this, but with a relatively short response time.

Leaders had time to comment and the Student Senate had time to pass a resolution against the policy change, but constituents didn't really have time to make their views known.

The committee's report does state that discussions with those groups weren't intended to be representative. "The committee was most concerned with learning the strongest and most articulate arguments from the student's perspective," the report said.

And the leaders who argued against the proposed policy change — Student Body President Joe Jordan and Senate Speaker David Alders — presented articulate comments.

But the average student on the street was caught off-guard.

True, the Faculty Senate doesn't have to receive student input at all. But using comments from a basically non-representative sample of student leaders to help aid important decision making isn't fair.

The question of fairness must be raised in another aspect of the report. The committee's report relies heavily on a survey concerning the present final exam policy which was sent to "permanent" faculty members. But Alders and a few Senate members have commented on the negative bias which the questionnaire seems to contain. One question listed problems which may result from

the present policy, whereas the question asking about advantages to the system required the respondent to make a list.

Many faculty members seemed to feel finals are a necessary part of a student's education — every semester. They have every right to that opinion. But this opens up another question: Who says final exams really have academic value? That is a question that will probably never have an answer, and it has many individual considerations.

A common gripe from Faculty Senate members was inconvenience with having two different grade deadlines. As one member said, a main problem seems to be "inconvenience to the faculty." That's certainly not what you would call "a serious compromise with fair and equitable academic standards."

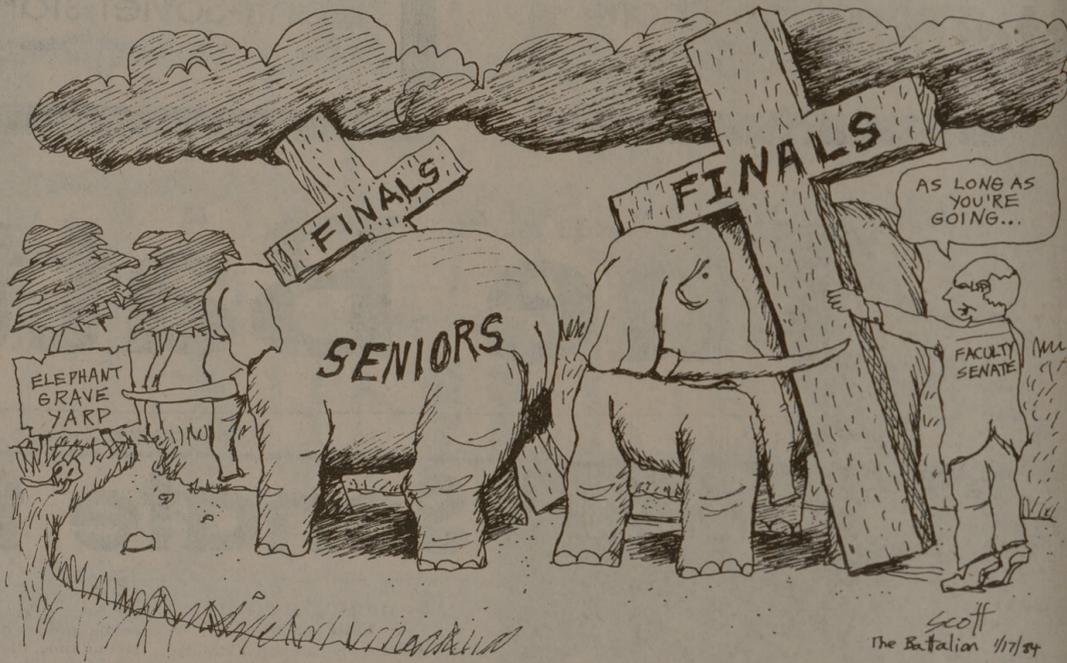
The Senate tried to avoid questions about how the proposed finals policy would affect commencement, saying that those considerations are administrative details. However, that has to be a consideration when 95 percent of a school's graduating seniors participate in the event.

And of course, the old "it's a tradition" argument was raised. That's not a valid reason. But a few senators gave that argument validity when they said "we're the only ones who do this." Same type of logic.

Thorough, unbiased research seems to be lacking in this resolution. The committee spent quite a bit of time on the report, but it already seemed to have its mind made up before soliciting any outside opinions. It isn't fair to base a resolution on a biased questionnaire, relatively little student input and arguments that "we're the only ones who do it this way."

Since when did we ever feel a need to be like everybody else?

— The Battalion Editorial Board



Smallest news items predicted

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

Here, in keeping with the New Year tradition, are my predictions of what will be the Smallest News Items of 1984:

MOUNT BALDERDASH, Mont. — The long-range weather forecast for Mount Balderdash and vicinity calls for average temperatures accompanied by normal amounts of precipitation.

BROKEN TREATY, Okla. — When his expectant wife began having labor pains at 2 a.m., Harvey Wallbeat called a taxi to take her to a hospital.

The cab made the trip in plenty of time. It was almost noon before Mrs. Wallbeat finally gave birth.

DOTSVILLE, N.Y. — Two days ago, en route to the corner grocery for a loaf of bread, Elrood Bangleshake stopped off at a neighborhood gambling hell and spent the bread money on a lottery ticket.

Today, the lottery drawing was held. Bangleshake didn't win.

OCEANDROP, Fla. — Last year, while fishing on Lake Bagatelle, Vernon Flicknagle dropped his watch into the water and never found it again.

Last week, while casting in almost the identical spot, Flicknagle hooked a 20-pound bass.

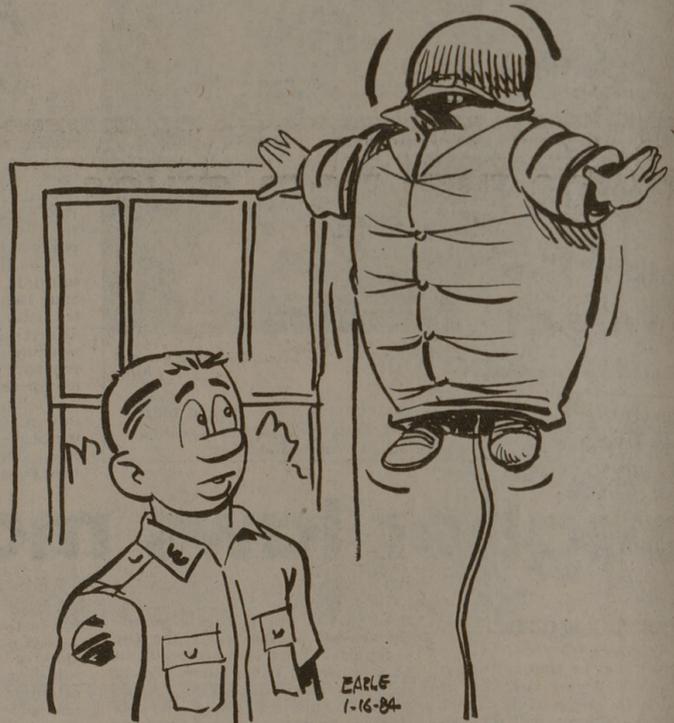
"Sure beats losing a watch," he commented.

WASHINGTON — The Senate today approved a 9.8 percent pay increase for House members.

The action came on an amendment to a House bill, which raised the pay of senators by 9.8 percent.

Slouch

by Jim Earle



Phone call taping addictive

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The news that Charles Z. Wick, the director of the United States Information Agency, was taping the telephone conversations of everyone from United States senators (Mark Hatfield) to movie stars (Kirk Douglas) to his most intimate friends (Walter Annenberg), without their knowledge, has left everyone in Washington with an uncomfortable feeling.

It's all right to read another person's mail (we do it all the time), but it is still considered bad manners to turn on a Dictaphone when your phone rings.

After Watergate it's also considered very, very dumb.

"What the hell got into Wick?" I asked one of my pals at the USIA.

"He caught the Potomac Tape Bug," the friend explained. "I've seen it happen time and time again. A guy comes to Washington to do a job, and slowly paranoia sets in. He's afraid something he says on the phone may be misinterpreted, so he decides to tape the conversations so he

can refer to the transcripts in case someone takes something he said out of context. At the beginning he only pushes the record button when he's talking to the press."

"Is that fair?"

"The government will never object to you recording conversations with the press," my friend said. "But when you start down that secret taping road, it's hard to stop. Pretty soon you automatically turn on the Dictaphone when you're talking to a subordinate on business."

"So far the official is keeping his secret taping within the bureaucratic ballpark," I said.

"Now this is where the guy goes off the track. He figures if he can tape his subordinates without their knowledge, there is no reason why he can't tape his equals in other departments of the government without telling them. Pretty soon he has a stack of taped conversations with White House staff, Cabinet members, senators and leading citizens in the country."

"They could have historical value," I said.

"That's what the official talks himself into believing every time he turns the machine on. He decides he's doing it for future generations of Americans who want to know how he arrived at so many momentous decisions."

"I can understand a person wanting to secretly tape his official calls. But why would he record his conversations with friends?"

"Because by now he has become a compulsive tapper. He has to tape whether he wants to or not. If the Dictaphone stops whirring, he can't talk on the phone."

"Couldn't he tell his friends that he was recording the telephone call?"

"If he did he wouldn't have friends for very long. The worst thing about having the Potomac Tape Bug is that even if you stop, no one will believe you. Once the secret is out that you have been taping people's conversations without their knowledge, no one will call you again. It will be pretty hard for someone like Wick to run the world's largest propaganda machine when everyone in and out of the country will now put him on HOLD."



The Battalion

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