

Tax bill lunacy

The latest lunacy spawned by the state Legislature's special session is a proposal about the state sales tax.

The House's version of the tax bill doesn't include increasing the state sales tax. But the Senate — in Monday's session — altered the House's version by adding a quarter of a cent increase on the sales tax.

This addition jeopardizes the bill, which must be approved by both houses in the same form.

By raising it a quarter of a cent, the tax becomes extremely cumbersome to work with. Try figuring that sales tax out in your head.

Cities will probably even out the odd figure by raising or lowering their current sales tax.

A stiffer increase of liquor and cigarette taxes makes more sense than a sales tax of 4.25 cents.

— The Battalion Editorial Board



Letters:

'Bad Ag' photograph mocks Aggie land

Editor:

Who is this guy Peter Rocha and why is he such a bad Ag? What I'm referring to is his photograph of the distinguished Aggie Eternal Flame in the June 28 issue of the Battalion. What Mr. Rocha is doing is making a mockery of a generous gift by the Class of 1983, and by printing his photograph you are encouraging him.

It should be the duty of a school newspaper to show the good side of the University, not to make fun of things which don't happen to come out just right. You should leave that for the scum who publish the Battalion.

Before Mr. Rocha prints a full page of photos showing crippled people falling on their faces, may I remind him of one thing? Both Highway 21 and Highway 21 run both ways. Take your pick.

Frank Irwin

Flame keepers need a dictionary

Editor:

What is the meaning of eternal? Webster's Second College Edition New World Dictionary defines eternal as: "forever the same; always true or valid; unchanging; always going on; perpetual. Why is our flame not burning anymore? When the flame was lit in the fall of 1983 it was supposed to burn forever. What happened?"

Kenneth P. Thompson
Gregory A. Matthews

Families deserve abortion rights

Editor:

I'd like to commend the Battalion Editorial Board for its editorial, "Abortion is a private decision."

I'm a mother. I'm familiar with fetal development from embryo to birth because I read everything I could about the subject during my pregnancy, happily and healthily carried a fetus inside me for nine months and gave birth to a much-wanted child who is now thirteen years old. Furthermore, my profession as an artist has permitted me to stay home with my daughter all these years. I've taken motherhood seriously; I'm certainly qualified to comment about abortion.

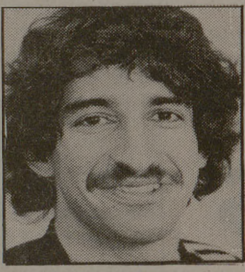
My husband of seventeen years and I value very highly our right to choose whether or not to carry an accidental or dangerous pregnancy to term. We resent anti-abortionists who presume to make our difficult family decisions for us. These folks wouldn't be around to pay the bills, bear the pain, and hold our hands if an unwanted or risky pregnancy went wrong in some way.

I noticed, by the way, that both anti-abortion rights letters in the Battalion June 26 were written by men. As a wise person once said, "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament."

Kristin Parsons

A Texan's pearls of wisdom

LUBBOCK — "You know why they tell Aggie jokes?" asked the man with West Texas sun-worn skin.



Donn Friedman

I climbed out of my car with the Texas A & M sticker on the side and readied myself for a jibe based on the Aggie stereotype.

Just get it over with, I thought. He'll make a stupid joke; I'll hold my tongue and we'll both be back on our way.

But he didn't have a collection of Aggie jokes. No, his question wasn't meant as rhetoric. As he urinated under the tailgate of his truck, he answered his question.

"They tell those jokes," he said, "because the Aggies are so smart. And don't forget it."

He zipped his fly, climbed into his truck and started to pull away.

The Double-Mountain Fork of the Brazos River rippled as ducks danced around the support poles of a deserted swing set. Jeff, my guide for this journey through MacKenzie State Park, chuckled.

"You always meet guys like that in West Texas," he said. "They're harmless, though."

Brakes squeaked. The backing lights of the red '83 Chevy glowed. The horn beckoned. Jeff and I curiously approached.

"Do you know," he asked, "the five things that will make people act?"

"No sir," Jeff and I barked out in the same non-committal tone we had used many times before with our high school coaches.

"Need, reward, rebuke, glory and expectations — take that back to A&M with you," he said.

"Tell your goddamn professors that. It takes patience."

"You think that this drunk old man doesn't know what the hell he's talking about, but I didn't get this Rolex for nothing," he said, pointing at his gold watch — a small diamond marking every hour.

Searching for an Aggie ring, I looked at his wrinkled, worn hands that gripped the steering wheel. On his ring finger he wore a gold band with diamonds encircling the band.

"What are the five things that will make people act?" he asked again. Jeff and I looked back and forth.

"Reward," I said.

"Need, rebuke," Jeff added.

"Glory," I said.

"Need," the man in the truck said.

"Reward, rebuke, glory and expectations. Take that down there," he repeated.

"A few years back a young man took this and went down there and made a 4.0."

"You're a dumb son of a bitch, if you don't do the same."
(Donn Friedman is a senior journalism major and The Battalion's roving columnist covering the plains of Texas this summer.)

Sacrificing all for liberty

On July 4, 1776, representatives from the American colonies gathered in Philadelphia and signed their names to a document that would become the foundation of a revolutionary new form of government. Sacrificing all, they pledged to each other their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor in their quest for rights they believed were unalienable to all people.



John Tower

These rights were not to be easily won. The 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence knew that by affixing their names to the document prepared by Thomas Jefferson they could be hanged for treason against King George III of England.

The signers of the Declaration were established citizens and had a great deal to lose in revolting under the oppressive rule of the British crown.

Over half were college graduates and among their ranks were teachers, lawyers, farmers, scholars and businessmen. One signer, Charles Carroll of Maryland, was one of the richest men in America. He wrote his hometown beside his name so there would be no mistaking his identity.

John Hancock boldly signed his name and declared, "Let them burn Boston and make John Hancock a pauper if it does good for the cause." Ben Franklin said, "If we don't hang together, we most assuredly will hang separately." No signers were executed, but they were chased and shot at; their homes were vandalized, and their families were abused.

Yet, all of this was the price of liberty and Americans across the colonies were willing to pay it. These patriots were true freedom fighters who wanted only to live in peace and freedom.

But freedom was not to be won by merely signing a document of declaration. It was secured only after years of struggle and hardship on the part of

all Americans. Civilian soldiers from across the colonies rallied with the Continental Army led by Gen. George Washington because they knew the value of freedom.

When the patriots finally did win their independence, the Spirit of '76 did not die.

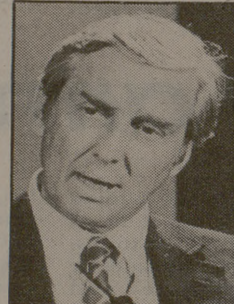
The ideals that our patriotic forefathers fought and died for now prosper in America. Ours was the first nation to hold dignity and equality of each individual as the foundation of government.

We have held to that course. In fact, we understand the true meaning of the concept of equality under the law much better now than then. We also are closer to that goal today than the signers of the Declaration of Independence could have envisioned.

This Independence Day, let us renew our commitment to freedom and liberty not only in America but around the world. We are the world's hope for the truths proclaimed by those men on July 4, 1776.

Freedom worth more than gold

In December 1941, after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, armed guards escorted a strong box to Fort Knox, Kentucky. In the box was a padlocked bronze container holding something of far greater value than all the gold at Fort Knox.



Lloyd Bentsen

The precious cargo was our Declaration of Independence. It was sheltered at Fort Knox until the fall of 1944, when authorities decided that the fragile parchment, yellowed by age, was no longer endangered by enemy attack.

This Fourth of July, as we celebrate the 208th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, it is good to reflect of the eloquent message of this document.

Later in his life, Thomas Jefferson recalled that when he sat down in 1776

to write the Declaration he intended it "to be an expression of the American mind..."

Today, the challenge for us is to never lose sight of the Declaration as "an expression of the American mind."

For the millions of people ruled under the doctrine laid down by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Communist Manifesto, the notions embodied in our Declaration do not exist.

The Manifesto maintains that such sentiments as "bourgeois freedom" and "bourgeois independence" and "bourgeois individuality" should be abolished.

The Manifesto also speaks of abolishing countries and nationalities. According to Marxist theory — especially as it later was interpreted by Lenin, Stalin and other communist leaders — if people will only suppress for the time being their desire for freedom, and persevere long enough, the state will eventually "wither away."

The fact is, instead of withering away, governments in communist countries have grown more dominant, more harsh in their rule. We have to look no further than to Poland or Afghanistan to see the truth of that.

Those people who signed our Declaration of Independence 208 years ago felt strongly enough about the concepts of equality and liberty and rights to "mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

Historians point out that the signers deliberately pledge first their lives, then their fortunes. That symbolizes the abiding value they placed on this revolutionary document.

The value of gold and other worldly fortunes fluctuates widely, but the priceless gift of the Declaration of Independence — underwritten by the lives of those who signed it and of generations of Americans who have followed — is undiminished.

Cracking down on bird crimes

By DICK WEST

Columnist for United Press International

WASHINGTON — When we think of the word "crime," our thoughts likely turn to holdups, burglaries and other common forms of pillage, or perhaps an illegal drug or two.

That federal authorities must be prepared to deal with many other types of criminal activity was impressed upon me the other day by an Agriculture Department news release.

"Bird smuggler to repay \$290,000 indemnity to government," it said.

The odds are that many of us muddle along for weeks at a time without giving so much as a passing thought to bird smuggling. I gather, however, that attempts to evade bird quarantine regulations are on the rise. So it is well to be aware of this sort of law violation.

You might think the little feathered friend you have caged at home is legit, but if you bought it on a street corner, rather than from a pet dealer, you may be harboring a hot canary.

Despite laws making it illegal to cage wild birds, a goodly number are sold under the counter, so to speak. So it is

good to know what you are doing before engaging in any bird transaction.

It is easy to become addicted to the chirping of birds.

Let's say you are walking down the street minding your own business. It may be an unsavory part of town, but a bright, sunny day withal and bird smuggling is about the furthest thing from your mind.

Then, from a dark alley, comes a melodious chirping. You stop for a moment to listen, enthralled. Perhaps the bird is trilling Bach's "Ode to Joy." Or it may be a chirping rendition of one of the Brandenburg Concertos.

Suddenly, a seedy-looking character emerges from the shadows and whispers, "Hey, mister, you wanna buy a duck?"

Unless your sales resistance is unusually high, you succumb to the pitch, which is usually an f-sharp minor. From that point on, you are a songbird junkie. Soon, a large percentage of your income is going to support your habit.

This is the sort of thing the U.S. government is up against in its drive to control bird smuggling. Education probably is the best preventive.

Just be aware that parrot fever can be dangerous to your health, not to mention the expense of ear surgery.

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