



Atheist: Government is consumed with rhetoric

By LINDA SCARMARDO
Reporter

There is no separation of church and state in the United States today, Gerald Tholen, vice president of American Atheists said to an audience of about 200 Thursday at Rudder Fountain.

"I have come to realize one tragic oversight," Tholen said. "In regards to separation of state and church there never has been separation of government and religion in this nation, let alone complete separation. I probably will not live to see it and neither will you."

"Government is consumed with religious rhetoric. They (politicians) waste their time drowning in trivia while environmental problems take second place to arguments for and against public mandated prayer. We need to decide whether to allow emotions of religion interfere with government or to keep them locked in the mind where they belong."

The audience was allowed to ask questions and voice opinions. Scott Swearingen, one member of the audience, argued that "there are not just conservative Christians in government. Participation in government is available for all groups, particularly minorities, even though it may be difficult."

Swearingen said he believes in separation of church and state, but he doesn't think it is possible.

"Legislation is basically a legalizing system of beliefs," he said. "If your system of beliefs rests on religion they will be reflected in your legislation."

While Tholen wanted to concentrate on the issue of church and state, most audience members wanted to discuss other issues.

"I didn't come here to convert anybody, nor am I here to engage in religions vs. atheism," Tholen said. "I'm here simply because I've developed an outlook as to what it is to be an American citizen."

When the audience asked about abortion, Tholen said, "There are instances where it is necessary and those instances are not to be decided by the government or by a minister. They should be decided by a family and a physician. Those instances should not even be made public let alone be discussed in the laws of our nation."

Several audience members said decisions such as abortion were moral decisions that the government needs to make. They compared it to the slavery issue that the government made a decision on.

Tholen said laws should be based on ethics rather than morals.

"Ethics come from within yourself not from others' influence," he said. "Did you really come prepared to listen to anything I've had to say, or are you hiding in a crowd of followers because it's the American way?"

Swearingen replied that some audience members did come to listen.

"I think that's evident by the fact that there's a lot of wrapped attention," he said. "Many of the points were well taken. I think we agree that we have a religious government."

Tholen said intrusions of religion into our government are numerous and, "People should not continue to imagine that there is a separation."

SWAMP, Students Working Against Many Problems, is sponsoring speakers to encourage open discussions, SWAMP representative Richard Ellis said.

Today a representative from Gay Student Services will speak, and Monday, a talk on freedom of speech will be followed by a period of free microphone use for anyone who wants to speak. Both talks will be from noon to 2 p.m. at Rudder Fountain.

Gerald Tholen, left, vice president of American Atheists, and audience member Scott Swearingen debate the issue of separation of church and state.

Photo by PETER ROCHA

Social security numbers replace student I.D. numbers

August switch to streamline system

By KIM JENSEN
Reporter

Texas A&M student identification numbers will be two digits longer next fall. But if you can remember your social security number, you won't have anything new to learn, Bill G. Lay, director of admissions, said this week.

Beginning in August 1985 the University will use social security numbers as student identification numbers.

Lay said the switch to social security numbers is necessary because A&M is changing from a primarily hand-operated records system to a computerized, integrated records system.

"With a modern system like the

one we are converting to, we need to have one absolute fact to categorize students with," Lay said. "You wouldn't believe how many John Smiths there are, but everyone has just one social security number."

Integrated systems compile all data on a student into one file with separate listings for admissions and testing, grades, student accounting and financial aid. Lay said students currently have different files in each department which increases the possibility of making mistakes while handling records for more than 37,000 students.

Lay said the only change students will notice next fall is the different number on their identification card.

"The changes happening as a result of this switch-over are all inter-

nal ones," Lay said. "Computer files and various record gathering programs will have to be altered to fit the new system."

"In essence, students will just have one less number to remember. All other changes are office problems."

He said the main goal of the integrated system is to help identify students and match credentials with the proper people. Lay stressed that access to the student data files will be highly restricted.

"We will have more safeguards and security measures for protecting student records with the new system than we currently have," Lay said.

He said it would not be possible to type in a student's name and receive their entire data file," he said. "The files are separated into different

blocks of information and employees will only have access to data pertaining to their department."

For example, Lay said, the financial aid office will have access only to a student's financial aid history.

"Our only interest is to identify data and get it to the proper file, not to make student records public information," Lay said.

The computer assigns dummy numbers to students who do not have social security numbers, Lay said.

He said students can sign release forms making it illegal for the University to release any information without prior approval.

Lay said no additional costs will be generated by the system changes.

Sunday debate to be Reagan's 'high noon'

United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan must win Sunday night's debate or be in such "deep trouble" that he may lose his re-election bid, pollster Louis Harris said Thursday.

"I can't think of an event like this in modern political history," Harris said at a breakfast for reporters. "It's really high noon."

Harris added, "Sure, Reagan's ahead and if he wins it he has probably won the election. But if he doesn't, this election could be up for grabs, and it comes down to one 90-minute period."

Sixty-one percent of those surveyed by Harris believe Mondale won the first debate, while only 19 percent believe Reagan won. But 46

percent expect Reagan to win the second debate while only 33 percent believe Mondale will win.

"People believe Reagan had an off night," Harris said.

Harris said the first debate was like a cold bath for people who expected Reagan to win easily.

Of the second encounter with Walter Mondale, the Democratic nominee for president, Harris said, Reagan "has to win that debate to regain momentum."

That, Harris said, could discourage Reagan supporters and keep them away from the polls.

Mondale does better in the Harris poll than in surveys by most other pollsters.

Something's Brewing...

IT'S AN UNBELIEVABLE HALLOWEEN RENT SPECIAL!!

696-9771

Attention:

All past and present Alpha Lambda Delta members!

Initiation and award certificates from 1978 to Spring 1984 are located in the A Λ Δ cubicle in the pavilion. If you have never picked up your certificate, you may do so now.

CarBoe's RESTAURANT

"Homestyle Cooking at its Best" "Served with Southern Hospitality"

Open before midnight yell practice

Stop by for breakfast before the game or come by for dinner after the game.

Some selections starting at \$3⁹⁵

775-7642

2025 Texas Ave. Townshire Center

6 a.m.-10 p.m. Sun.-Thurs. 6 a.m.-11 p.m. Fri. & Sat.

Banquet facilities available

class pictures at the PAVILION

from 8:30 to 12 and 1 to 4:30 through 10/26/84

NOW ON CAMPUS

The 1985 Aggieland is now taking FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE