

**OPINION**

# Battalion Ed Board endorses candidate

Student Government elections will be held this week and five hopefuls are running. After interviewing Mike Cook, Sean Royall, Brett Shine, Bob Stephan and Madelon Yanta, The Battalion Editorial Board has decided to endorse Mike Cook for student body president.

This is an important election. Many people feel it doesn't matter who is elected student body president, that it won't make any difference. We disagree. The student body president can make a difference, and Cook is the candidate we feel is capable and dedicated enough to make that difference; we feel Cook can best stand up for the interests of the students.

Cook's financial knowledge and background is important. He served as MSC Director of Budgets and Planning and created the Long-Term Financial Planning Committee, a joint committee of the Student Senate and the MSC.

He advocates user fees for the A.P. Beutel Health Center, low intramural entry fees, improved shuttle bus service and alternative funding for MSC services, in order to lessen the MSC's dependence on student service fees.

He emphasizes communication — communication between the Student Government and the student body, communication between the administration and the student body. He believes students should have more input in student services. And he says Student Government should act as a "lawyer" for students, representing them to the administration.

Cook says all students and all student organizations deserve representation by Student Government — not just the least controversial ones.

Cook answered our questions directly and honestly — without avoiding the direct issues. He is personable, and it seems he would have a good rapport with students.

His knowledge of the issues Texas A&M will face in 1985-86 and his familiarity and willingness to work with other student organizations, such as the MSC Council, is promising.

He is straightforward in admitting the weaknesses, as well as the strengths, of Student Government, and he is willing and ready to make the necessary changes.

Therefore, on the basis of our interview with him, The Battalion Editorial Board endorses Mike Cook for the A&M's 1985-86 student body president.

The Battalion Editorial Board

# Death penalty advocates need to reevaluate system

Last week I watched "Hill Street Blues" and I witnessed the closest thing I've ever seen to a real-life execution. The final moments of the episode depicted a death row inmate being strapped into the electric chair and getting crispy-crispered before a small group of spectators.



Loren Steffy

In Texas, we don't barbeque our recipients of capital punishment anymore, we inject them with nasty corpse-generating substances.

But this is done in the name of justice. Criminals who commit certain heinous crimes are deprived of all rights, including the right to human existence. The capital punishment controversy has plagued this country for years. Defenders of this policy of killing for justice frequently tell me that taxpayers shouldn't have to support capital criminals, and, thus, justify the death penalty in the name of tax dollars.

A closer look at the Texas Department of Corrections Death Row situation, however, demonstrates the futility

of this argument. Currently, Texas has 193 prisoners awaiting execution, but merely killing them and getting them out of the way isn't as easy as it sounds.

Assistant Attorney General F. Scott McCown said last week that the state attorney general defends all appeals of capital convictions, even to the Supreme Court if necessary. Here's where the taxpayers' money figures in.

"One attorney can handle four of these highly complex cases each year," McCown said March 18. We have 1.25 attorneys working on capital cases. The state of Texas can therefore accomplish no more than five executions each year. More executions require more attorneys. More attorneys require more dollars." Obviously, if the Criminal Law Enforcement Division budget is increased, the taxpayers will pay for it. If the budget remains unchanged, Texas will plod along at an execution rate of five per year. At that rate it will take 38.6 years to empty the Death Row cells — assuming there are no more capital convictions during that time.

Keeping a doomed prisoner alive already costs taxpayers \$7.17 per day per inmate, according to Larry Barnesworth of the TDC Research Department. We're talking \$505,095.65 this year to keep these people alive so we can kill them later.

Of course, this is still cheaper than keeping the prisoner behind bars the rest of his or her life, but if we're going to eliminate these undesirables, it would be less expensive to hire some extra lawyers now than it would be to try to keep up with the rising cost-of-living expenses for inmates for the next 30 years, plus.

Besides, with the lack of room in TDC units, a smooth, continual execution flow would make a lot more available for the new arrivals.

Advocates of capital punishment seem to have assumed the bizarre theory that lethally injected inmates are effective and financially sound means of justice, and perhaps they are. But these guys have to rot in prison before they rot in the ground, the purpose of the death penalty is defeated.

The taxpayers lose money accumulating these doomed prisoners. But real losers, of course, are the families of the corpses themselves, who have to wait years before finally being killed.

Capital punishment is not called the slow death penalty. If these guys are going to get the needle, the least we can do is stick them quickly.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and a weekly columnist for The Battalion.

## President letting Congress do dirty work

# Reagan playing Tom Sawyer

WASHINGTON — A wit once defined a barometer as an ingenious instrument that reveals the kind of weather we are experiencing. If you have no barometer, you can consult the Senate Budget Committee. It, like a barometer, measures climatic pressure.



George Will

The committee has rejected the President's budget. That is "rejected" as in: Russia rejected Napoleon. The vote was 17-4 and reflected the fact that among the 535 members of Congress there probably are not 35 who would vote for the President's program of continuing the defense buildup at the pace he prefers, avoiding all tax increases and significantly cutting middle-class domestic programs.

Less than six months ago the President got a mandate to keep on keeping on — to continue the policies of the first term. That is not surprising. The public rather enjoys getting a dollar of government spending and being charged only 75 cents in taxes. Last week there was a languorous White House discussion about sending the Great Communicator back onto the campaign trail to communicate (as he forgot to do before the election) his zest for all those specific program cuts. But his aides then thought: He would be campaigning against most Senate Republicans, 40 percent of whom face re-election in 19 months. Reagan would not be able to campaign for a "live legislative vehicle." (Sorry. They talk like that.)

What the budget committee approved might bring a blush to the presidential cheeks. It would have cut the deficit by more than the President's budget would have done. Furthermore, the committee plan would confound skeptics by freezing Social Security benefits for a year. Of course all this is in the subjunctive tense because the committee action binds no one. The only thing mandatory is that we pay the interest on the national debt.

The debt, without major policy changes (the likelihood of which has gone from "not very" to "are you kidding?") will increase about \$1 trillion in the next four years. If so, every year for the rest of the history of the Republic taxpayers will pay about \$100 billion in interest just on this four-year addition to the debt.

Ronald Reagan is playing Tom Sawyer, who was the quintessential American, which means he was something of a sharpie. Tom, a cunning rascal, grew up about 185 miles west of Dixon, Illinois. Cunning rascals sprout like corn out there.

Not since Tom tricked the other boys into whitewashing Aunt Polly's fence for him has there been anything as nifty as Reagan's way of getting others to do his disagreeable chores. He says to Congress: Here is the division of labor: I'll look after the Marine band, Air Force One and Camp David. You folks cut the social programs.

Sen. Pat Moynihan has a modest proposal for a one-shot cash infusion to trim the deficit without cutting any programs. His idea for slicing a substantial piece off the government's debt is: Sell it. Part of the debt, that is.

By the end of fiscal 1986, the government will have outstanding loans valued at (which does not mean "worth") \$280 billion. That is three times the size of the loan portfolio of Citicorp, one of the nation's largest banks. This federal portfolio is scattered around the government and managed by bureaucrats paid less than a Citicorp branch manager.

Many loans are at far less than today's interest rates. Under Moynihan's plan, they would be sold at a discount reflecting their real market value today. Even assuming that the value of the \$280 billion in paper is now just, say, \$75 billion, that is the real value, no matter who holds the paper, and the government would get a cash infusion of \$75 billion.

The loans were made to students, small businesses, large corporations, farmers and many other groups including foreign governments. The point was to let Congress spare those groups the torture of paying market rates for money. But selling the loans to private institutions would not change the terms. The people owing the money would just send their checks to a different address.

Moynihan's plan has an international dimension because of the doctrine of "comparative advantage." According to that, different nations do different things well and each nation should prosper by swapping goods and services according to its comparative advantage.

Japan, for example, is good at making cars and cameras and television sets and many other things. The United States, too, is gifted at making many things, but it is especially, even incomparably, gifted at making debts.

The Japanese save 20 percent of their wages, about triple the American rate.

That is one reason why Japan has between \$50 billion and \$100 billion showing around the world, looking for things to buy. America has debt to sell at a discount. Call that the American advantage, comparatively speaking.

George Will is a columnist for the Washington Post.

# LETTERS:

## Tuition increases will hurt Texas A&M

EDITOR:

As out-of-state students at this University, the proposed tuition increase is beginning to concern us greatly. At \$40 per hour, tuition for a year was around \$1,200. However this will be \$3,600 per year, \$5,400, and finally whatever 100% of educational costs arrive at. We realize that money is needed for state revenues, but the projected \$200 million is not going to materialize when very few out-of-state students are likely to consider Texas for their education. For \$5,400 in tuition, we could attend many of the more expensive private schools, also often beyond our reach.

Admittedly Texas A&M is an excellent school with a good educational and placement record. This fact combined with an affordable fee range is why most of us are here. Scholarships were often a decisive factor. With tuition approaching \$6,000 per year, however, this University will lose much of its appeal to the rest of the nation. Students will seek comparable schools within financial reach. This will be unfortunate for both students and a fine University seeking a broader base.

Whatever happens though, we are all Aggies, and A&M has been and will be an important part of our education and future.

Tom Stephenson, '86 accompanied by 13 signatures

## 'S.B.' stands for more than 'sorority bitch'

EDITOR:

Dear Trent Leopold, Thank you so much for writing such an in-depth, informative, well-researched article on SBs. Since I have been an "SB" for several years now, I immediately felt the urge to run out and buy a drop necklace, several chains of lapis and gold beads, and a Gucci purse. (I own none of these). How happy I am that you showed me the light! At last, I feel complete.

Actually, all sarcasm aside, I'm mad, hurt, angry, and resentful of you for writing such an overgeneralized and

one-sided report of sorority life. I could go on and on like this but I hear my mother's voice in the back of my mind saying, "Barbie, don't fly off the handle" and my father's voice saying, "Judge not, lest you be judged."

Trent, I wish that I could make you a Tri-Delt for a week. (I'd promise not to steal your underwear). But since I can't do that, I want to tell you about some of the aspects of sorority life that were mistakenly left out of your article.

Sorority girls are all unique: Some of us wear make-up, some of us don't, some of us carry Gucci purses, some of us carry backpacks, some of us like movies, some of us like to go to the park and fly kites, some of us go to Zephyrs, some of us share fellowship in our bible studies.

Believe me, there are many differences between us, and when we make decisions, as a group, it takes a long, long time because there are so many views.

Now I'm going to employ the one journalism rule I know, "Know your subject before you speak (or write)." In doing this I cannot speak for the Greek system, I cannot speak for the ten sororities at our school, I cannot even speak for the other members of my chapter, I can only speak for what I know of first hand, me!

I didn't see myself in your article. Part of me loves mixers and formals, but part of me likes going to the lake and having some quiet time to myself. I see myself, short and terse at times when provoked, but I strive to be filled with compassion. I see girls hurt going through rush, but there are more tears and pain behind the scenes I promise. I have learned, through sorority life, not to judge people too quickly because I have been judged so many times just for being in a sorority.

Trent, I'm sure you are a nice guy. I want you to see me and my sisters for what we really are, and you are cordially invited to share a meal with us whenever it is convenient for you.

Maybe then you'll see that SB does not have to stand for sorority bitches; it can stand for sorority beauty — the kind of beauty that is more beautiful on the inside than the outside.

Barbie Johnson, '85 Delta Delta Delta

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

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