

Opinion



"ANOTHER BIG LEAGUE TRADE TODAY... THE WEST SENT TWO KGB OPERATIVES AND A GERMAN DOUBLE AGENT TO THE EAST... GETTING IN EXCHANGE ONE DEFECTOR, TWO COUNTERSPIES—AND A MOLE TO BE NAMED LATER..."

Dealing with firm foundations

(Whilst Art Buchwald is on vacation we reprint some columns from the past.)



Art Buchwald

An esteemed doctor friend told me the other day that he needed \$50,000 for a research project.

I was honest and told him I didn't have it. "Why don't you go to a foundation?" I said.

"That's why I need the money," he replied, "to prove to the foundation that my research is worthy of getting a grant."

"That's stupid," I said.

"You think that because you don't have to deal with the foundation. Originally, the purpose of foundations was to give money for projects which might or might not work. But now the people handing out grants have to prove to their boards they are giving money to successful, as opposed to unsuccessful, research. No foundation wants to be associated with experiments that don't pan out."

"Wait a minute. I thought that was what research was all about. If it was guaranteed to work, it couldn't be called research."

"That's the way people treated research in the past," my doctor friend said, "but this country is now very performance-oriented. It wants winners

from the start. Even the government won't give you research funds unless you can prove the results will be positive."

"Give me an example," I said, still not believing him.

"Let us say I have a theory that the lack of a protein in a cell causes the cell to feed off the proteins in other cells. It's a theory, it has basis in fact. While studying cells, we discovered weak ones were cannibalizing healthy ones."

"Because it's only a theory, we must devise an experiment to see if it can be proven or not. Last week I went to a foundation and asked for a grant to do this. The man in charge replied, 'How do you propose to prove it?'"

"I told him I honestly had no idea. I would have to start from scratch."

"I'll bet he didn't like that," I said.

"You bet he didn't," my doctor friend told me. "He said, 'What kind of foundation do you think this is to give you money to experiment on a project that you have no idea how to attack?'"

"I told him, 'If I knew how to attack the problem I wouldn't need the money from the grant.' And he said, 'You're going to have to do better than that. Suppose your theory about the cells doesn't fly? How do I explain that to the board?'"

The doctor continued. "I said, 'Not all experiments come out the way you want them to. The only ones that do are on television or in the movies. I have a team ready to risk three years of their

lives on this, win or lose. If we're wrong, it could be just as important to science as if we're right.'

"The foundation man said, 'It may be important to science to be wrong, but my foundation people would rather have something with more Nobel Prize potential. Now if you get the seed money to prove to us your theory has a 9-to-1 chance of holding up, we'll give you the grant money. But we're not going to throw away our dollars if we can't see a light at the end of the tunnel.'"

"I guess that was a blow to you," I said.

"No," the doctor replied, "I've been through it before. Even the government wants results before they'll give you grant money to study something. I know one doctor at the National Institutes of Health who was cut off because, by eliminating one problem, he created three others. He was told that government scientists could no longer create new problems in research. While there was still money for old problems, the word is out that if they lead to new problems, NIH doesn't want to hear about them."

"Do you believe," I asked my friend, "that with \$50,000 you can prove your theory?'"

"It's hard to say. Why do you ask?'"

"Well, how can I ask my friends for seed money for you if what you're trying to do turns out to be a flop?'"

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

One hand doesn't know what the other is leaking

White House efforts to control the information that flows from President Reagan and his staff backfired this week when officials tried to leak information with one hand and shut off the spigot with another.



Micheal Putzel AP News Analyst

Monday, presidential spokesman

Larry Speakes referred reporters to news reports of the terms of the latest Soviet arms control offer. He said he "wouldn't steer you off" accounts attributed to unidentified U.S. officials who described the Soviet plan as calling for a 50 percent reduction in nuclear weapons arsenals.

In Speakes parlance, that served as essential confirmation of the leaked reports, although he cautioned that the 50 percent figure should be examined closely to determine whether it called for an across-the-board cut or "50 percent of something."

He refused to be more specific, leaving reporters to examine the leaked reports in hopes of gleaming some truth from them about the Soviet offer.

The next day, the spokesman was even more circumspect.

"The president is very serious about these negotiations, and if we're to make progress in them, the right way to proceed is for both sides to discuss the Soviet ideas — and our own — in the privacy of the negotiating forum in Geneva," Speakes said, referring to the ongoing U.S.-Soviet arms control talks in Switzerland.

But when asked if he himself hadn't referred reporters to leaked accounts that disclosed the general terms of the offer, Speakes said he was only trying to head off stories suggesting the offer was more comprehensive than U.S. analysts said it was.

"It was not a public U.S. official" who leaked the information in the first place, the spokesman insisted.

"The facts are that someone had discussed — not an official authorized to do so — the 50 percent figure, which the American press corps might have been inclined to swallow, lock, stock and barrel," Speakes said. "I wanted to caution you that there was more to it than what you saw there."

"If we had had it the way we preferred it, there would have been no discussion whatsoever about it," he added. "We did not think the leak of information to the press was helpful at all."

Speakes' claim is hardly supported, however, by reliable information that at least one source for the Soviet terms was none other than White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan.

Several sources, both inside and outside the White House, acknowledged when promised anonymity that Regan privately furnished information about the proposal to several reporters.

The White House often provides information for reporters "background," which means it may only be attributed to a "White House official," "senior administration official," or some similar agreed-upon identifier that gives the information some authority while cloaking the actual source in anonymity and letting the government pretend the information isn't official.

But when an administration leaks information from one side of its mouth while criticizing the leaks from the other, it does so at its own peril.

Michael Putzel is a White House correspondent for The Associated Press.

Mail Call

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 500 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

Look out for mopeds

EDITOR:
An open letter to Robert E. Wiatt, Director of University Police Department:

A serious safety problem has arisen on the Texas A&M campus. Increased use of sidewalks by motorcycles, motor scooters and mopeds poses a dangerous threat to people on foot. Motorized and pedestrian traffic are incompatible. Campus sidewalks were designed for the latter and not the former. It is only a matter of time before someone is hurt.

If my interpretation of Article 5, Section D, of the Motor Vehicle Regulations is correct, it is unlawful to operate a motor vehicle on any campus sidewalk, mall, or lawn. This includes motorcycles, motor scooters, and mopeds. Why is this regulation not enforced?

It would be reassuring to have officers patrolling heavily used areas and stopping this dangerous and unlawful practice. As director of the University Police Department, you can take steps to make the campus sidewalks once again safe for pedestrians. The increased safety, not to mention revenues from citations, would easily justify your efforts.

Should you, however, choose to ignore this problem, some innocent pedestrians are likely to be hit from behind, feel assaulted by a "close call" or startled by blips of a roaring throttle, resulting in injuries, legal conflicts or displays of hostilities. One thing is clear: if the unchallenged and widespread riding and parking upon sidewalks by motorized vehicles continue, this otherwise delightful campus will sadly earn the reputation of being one of the most dangerous major university campuses for pedestrians in the United States.

Please respond to these concerns, which are shared by others besides myself, with appropriate action. Thank you.

Dale Baum
Department of History

The other viewpoint

EDITOR:
Dr. Baum:
I am so pleased that you have articulated this problem and I concur wholeheartedly with your letter except for your query of "Why is this regulation not enforced?" and your concern that it may be "ignored."

Within the limitation of our manpower constraint we do, and have been, enforcing the policy you quote. In a course of a year we have issued several hundred citations of the Peace citations for these violations wherein the offender usually pays a \$26 fine and \$13 court costs. We also issue University citations costing \$20 for each offense.

Undoubtedly your perception of non-enforcement is enhanced by viewing the sheer number of people who disregard the above admonition, routinely violate it and give not a tinker's dam about the consequences to themselves or others. On a campus where higher intellect is presumed to abound, it is distressing that this behavior is prevalent.

On the other hand, the higher intellect is quite evident when these offenders realize that our officers cannot and will not follow them over sidewalks, malls and dewy knolls in a frenzied chase scene a la "Starsky and Hutch," scattering all pedestrians except those former citizens who failed to avoid the escaping cycle or the 4,000 pound pursuing patrol car. Our officers do catch these unthinking souls as they emerge from a sidewalk, mall or lawn area onto a street but, for every one who stops for the officer, a dozen more do a "U" turn and flee where the officer cannot proceed in "hot pursuit."

In the past we have stationed officers on the malls who then attempt to flag down the errant. Unfortunately, few will stop while the majority merely speed up, zip

around the officer and roar off. We have been unable to employ any officer possessing sufficient horsepower to overtake one of these maniacs. We do catch some when other patrol units have been in the area to "trap" him/her when they slip out onto a street. It is then "up to them" as appropriate criminal charges are filed and that blip of spirit goes to jail.

Only a certified officer can perform a traffic stop, not one of the many non-certified parking patrol officers you might observe in the vicinity of an infraction who "do nothing about it." The violator may be cited while operating the vehicle and unless a credible witness can be cited who can testify that that person is the operator, the obtaining of a license plate is valueless. You cannot cite or arrest a vehicle.

There is one solution to this horrendous practice and that is an annual revision on the part of those who offend. Their acumen should certainly signal to them that this front would never be tolerated much less engaged in by them. Houston's Tranquility Park or anywhere else in the civilized world, alas, to many the A&M campus is not a part of the planet Earth and their conduct becomes Neanderthal and illegal.

I pledge to you and all other survivors that we are doing our damndest to enforce these regulations but behavior modification is the only answer to this problem. I challenge, I guess, is will it ever be acquired?

Robert E. Wiatt
Director of Security and Traffic

What gives A&M 'world class' status

EDITOR:
As a parent of two Aggies, I subscribe to The Battalion to keep abreast of what and how my sons are being influenced at the University. The paper has been coming two years and I have grown to look forward to reading it each day.

It is good to see the optimism, the positive ideas and opinions expressed by its young columnists and readers. It makes an old man proud and excited about the next generation that will be running this great country.

Additionally, I am impressed with a University that has such a fine program of guest speakers as presented regularly through the MSC Political Forum and MSC Great Issues. As young adults who will soon assume responsible leadership roles, I hope you are taking advantage of these programs. For while the main goal of college is your career, it should include opportunities to ask questions, to question ideas and challenge the opinions we parents have been cramming down your throats for 18 plus years.

In the past couple of years you could have heard of many interesting personalities, including Jesse Jackson, Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, Jerry Falwell, Madalyn O'Hair and, most recently, Timothy Leary. These speakers have definite and different ideas. Most of us just read about these people or see a quick news clip on TV. You have an opportunity to see them, listen to their views and objectively judge their ideas. That is a wonderful opportunity and a measure of an educated person.

There has been a lot of print about The Battalion about "world class universities." Programs like Political Forum and Great Issues are a measure of a "World Class University." They are elements of university life that attracts and holds the best students and faculty. The Texas A&M students who support these programs, the faculty and leaders who direct them and the administrators who provide their support are to be commended.

As an Aggie parent, as a Texan as a tax payer, I am proud of this great institution.
W. Paul Martin