

Opinion

The agony of default

Unless Congress decides to increase the federal debt ceiling by more than \$1 trillion, the United States will run out of money by midnight Thursday. But should Congress bail the federal fat out of the fire? We can't keep passing the bucks of deficit from one generation to another. Someone has to take the responsibility of paying our debts.

If Congress doesn't raise the debt ceiling, Friday will be a bleak day. Social Security checks will be worthless. Payroll checks to members of the armed services — 2.1 million of them — will be uncashable. A \$16 billion interest payment on Treasury securities will be unpayable. The exact effect on government-financed student loans is unclear, but obviously, if the government runs out of money, it can't do a lot of loaning.

The Gramm-Rudman Bill, the alleged savior of our budget woes, will do little more than put off current problems until 1991.

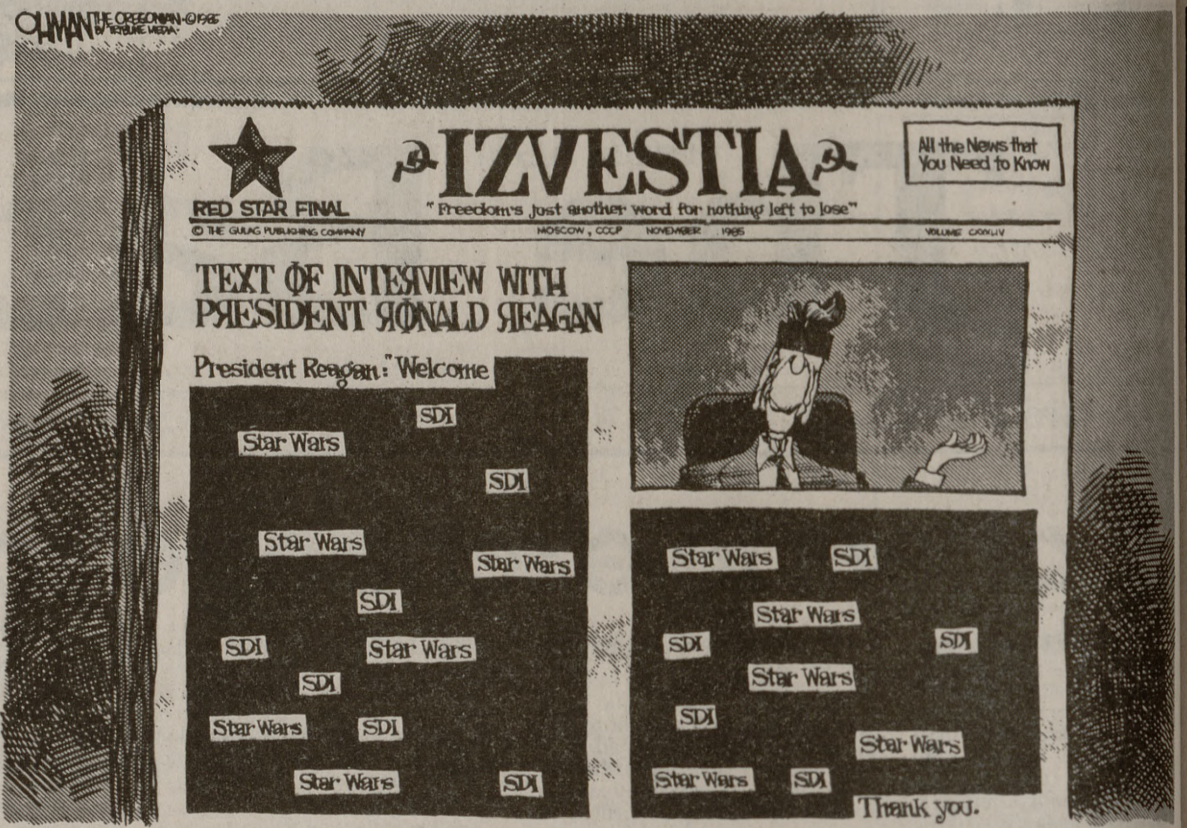
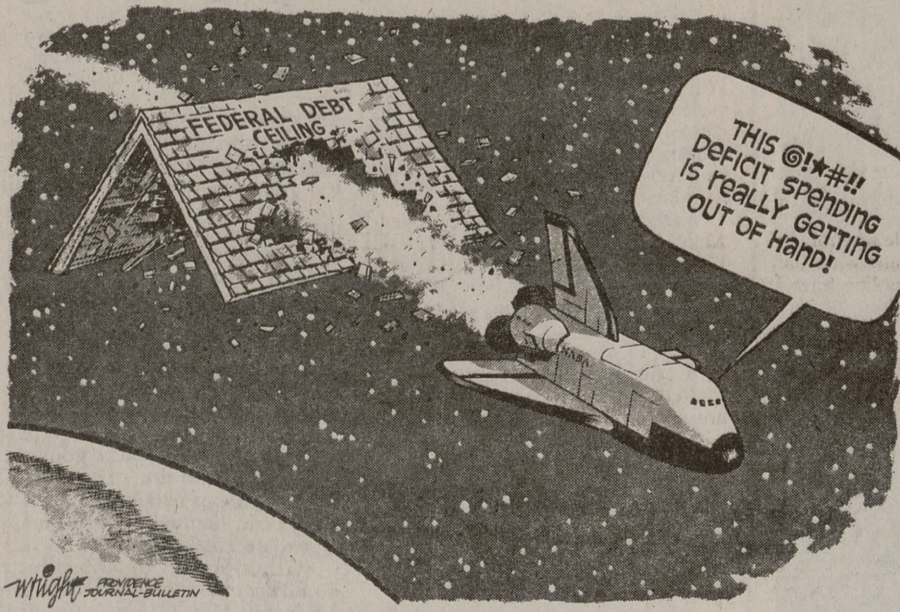
The United States is in the position of an overzealous credit card user who finds getting into debt is easier than getting out of it. You can delay the payments only so long before the company comes looking for you. If you don't pay, sooner or later you lose everything.

Our national debt is more than \$2 trillion. Allowing it to increase to \$3 trillion won't solve the problem. If you have money problems, getting further in debt doesn't help you pay up. Defaulting will not be pretty, but we can't prolong the inevitable forever.

It's time to take responsibility for our debts and stop trying to push our problems off on future generations. Living up to this responsibility will mean making sacrifices, and it will mean discomfort. But what better cause for sacrifice than ensuring a more stable financial situation for our children?

We ran up the bill, and now we must face the agony of default.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Threat of the bomb clouds vision of a peaceful world

I was sitting in my car on Texas Avenue last week when I saw a mushroom-shaped cloud of black smoke rising into the air near Eastwood Airport.



Camille Brown

"My God, we've been bombed!" I thought to myself.

Of course I knew we hadn't been bombed, but it was a good trick to play on my mind to relieve the boredom. I was parked at a stop light that was taking a million years to turn green.

The black cloud on the horizon was really the smoke from practice fires set at the Firemen's Training School, but it could just as easily have been bomb smoke.

Scenes from the television screen popped into my mind. Old war movies. Film footage from Vietnam. News clips from battles in the Middle East. All of them show what it's like during an air raid. And after.

People running. Bombs dropping. Cars exploding. Tanks moving in. Machine guns. Crashes. Dead people. Devastation.

If that smoke at the Fireman's Train-

ing Center was from a bomb, what would Aggies be doing? What would happen if College Station was bombed?

Probably nothing. There's nothing we could do except try to hide and hope the good guys would stop the bad guys before the city was flattened.

As I was going through this traumatic scenario in my mind, a realization hit me. The importance of the upcoming Geneva summit hit home. Five days from now, President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev will meet in Geneva for two days and talk about arms control. The ultimate goal: world peace.

The magic answer to world peace will not miraculously be discovered in a two-day meeting. If they can overcome the language gap, philosophical differences alone will slow the negotiations.

The two heads of state will not have time to agree on worldwide disarmament, or agree to cease all involvement in the internal affairs of other nations or agree to initiate a U.S./Soviet sponsored plan to abolish hunger and disease.

But the mere existence of the summit will do some good.

The face-to-face meeting of Reagan and Gorbachev Nov. 19-20 will get people thinking about a threat that seems far removed from College Station.

The threat of war.

And when people think about war, they don't take long for them to decide they don't want it. On this campus, that needs emphasizing. I've talked to many cadets who want the chance to fight, kill and destroy.

After all, that's what they are trained to do.

But maybe the conference will bring some attention on the seriousness of war. And how close we are to actual having one.

War is hell, as General Sherman said. When you think about it happening in your own back yard the danger is magnified. When I realized how close that plume of smoke near Eastwood Airport could have been the alternative of an air raid, I realized how horrible war must be.

What if that was bomb smoke? Now I have more riding on the success of that meeting in Geneva. Now know what's at stake.

The light finally turned green. My concentration shifted to dodging cars on Texas Avenue.

My little world goes on, but I thought twice about what it would be like if it didn't.

Camille Brown is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

'Anti-grodes' a minority

EDITOR:

I am writing in defense of Thomas Buford. I read the letter in The Battalion from the girl who was offended by the grode stories at yell practice.

I am a firm believer in tradition, but also in the right to express one's opinion. The girls who complained to Buford about the grode stories have the right to say they were offended. However, they must realize that Buford has to take the opinions of the majority of the students when he chooses which stories to tell. The individuals who want the grode toned down are probably in the minority. If a majority of students complained, I'm sure Buford would tone down the grode.

Get Grodey.

Neal Maranto '88

A dollar well spent

EDITOR:

In response to Brian Koontz' letter criticizing MSC Great Issues for charging a fee to hear Auschwitz survivor Marc Berkowitz speak, I can only say that for my part it was a dollar well spent.

Berkowitz neither spoke nor acted "with feelings of vengeance." Instead, he related a series of tragic experiences in a simple, straightforward manner. His voice held no rancor. There was no call for revenge, just the promise that it would never happen again. His message was one of hope and faith in mankind. After he finished speaking, a German fellow approached him. I don't know what was said, but Berkowitz listened, then shook his hand, then hugged and kissed the man.

I left that night feeling small and humbled, thinking about how I let my trivial problems and and grudges cloud my outlook, when before me had stood this remarkable man who had lived through hell on earth, yet who had survived free of hate and full of hope and dignity.

We can all learn from such a man.

Les P. Beard
Geophysics Graduate

A few suggestions for Pallmeyer

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Karl Pallmeyer's editorial "A&M Should Offer Degrees For Followers of Tradition." While I respect Pallmeyer's right as an individual to have his own opinion, I would like to offer a few suggestions for him to entertain.

Traditions are not only what have made Texas A&M different from any other school, traditions have made Texas A&M into the great University that it is today. These beliefs and attitudes have emerged and grown through all of the

former classes of A&M and are still with us today.

Silver Taps is a prime example of the greatness of spirit that binds all Aggies to one another. At no other university are deceased friends and peers honored more than those honored in front of Sully's statue on the first Tuesday night of each month.

Another great tradition is the friendliness of our campus. I have often been told by friends and relatives who have visited A&M of the warmth they felt from the students and faculty here and many of these friends left with a new phrase added to their vocabulary: "Howdy."

Many other traditions, both old and new, are an integral part of our lives here. From supporting our football team by standing at the games to the academic excellence encouraged by the administration and faculty, our institution has been built on great traditions.

One of the greatest aspects of attending a university like Texas A&M with its history of traditions is the common bond that is developed between the oldest of former students and the youngest of first-year freshmen. Aggies are just that, Aggies, and they should be proud of their school and of each other, and this includes pride in Aggie tradition.

Therefore, Pallmeyer, before you sarcastically attack another issue concerning Aggie traditions, I suggest you study both sides of the argument and formulate your opinion with fairness and with an open mind.

Don Fancher '86

Hypocrisy as tradition

EDITOR:

It seems that many of the Ags who are so pro-tradition and anti-change use the argument that adherence to tradition is "good" since it makes Texas A&M "different" from other universities. Yet these traditionalists are usually the ones who claim that students who are "different," those who want to change — for example, liberals, gays, women, fraternity and sorority members, etc. — are "not good" and should "go to t.u."

When did hypocrisy become a tradition?

Glenn Murtha '86

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 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.

Clarification

The fictional Billy Bob McCaskill referred to in Tuesday's satirical column by John Hallett is not in any way related or affiliated with Bill McCaskill, the Student Senator. The Battalion regrets any inconvenience or misconceptions this may have caused.

The Battalion

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.
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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