

Opinion

In tests we trust

A few weeks ago President Reagan proposed that government officials take a lie-detector test to help combat the recent wave of espionage. Last week Gov. Mark White called for drug testing of public and private employees. While such tests may help prevent spying and drug abuse, they don't establish trust in public officials.

Drug and lie-detector tests send a clear message of distrust to employees. If an employee is justifiably under suspicion then some sort of test should be administered out of fairness for all involved. But indiscriminately administering such tests to all employees not only has negative psychological effects, it twists the concept of "innocent until proven guilty" into guilty until proven innocent.

In Reagan's case, many of the people he wants to test are his appointees. If he had questions about their loyalty, the president should not have placed them in positions of trust. Reagan should have confidence in his selections.

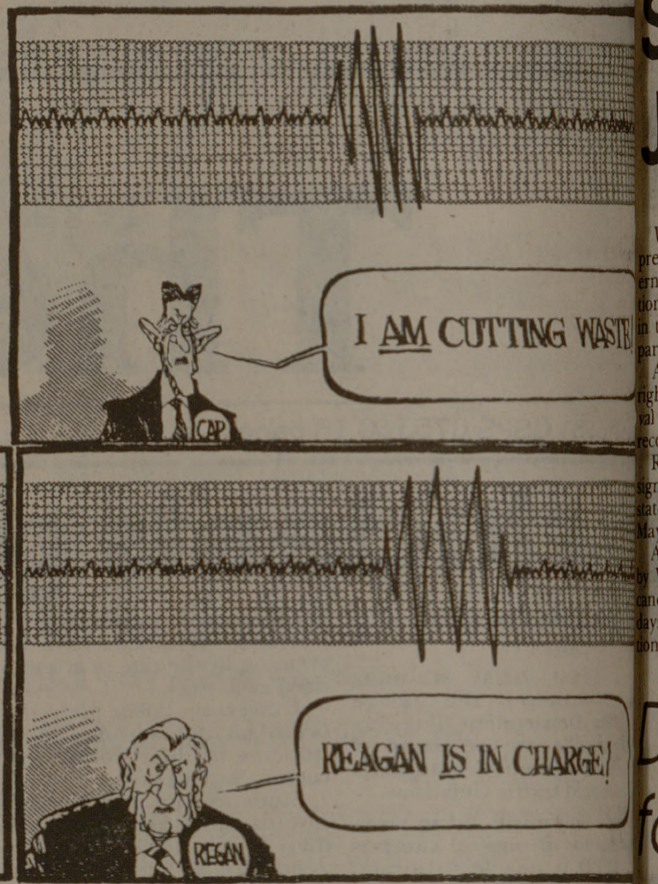
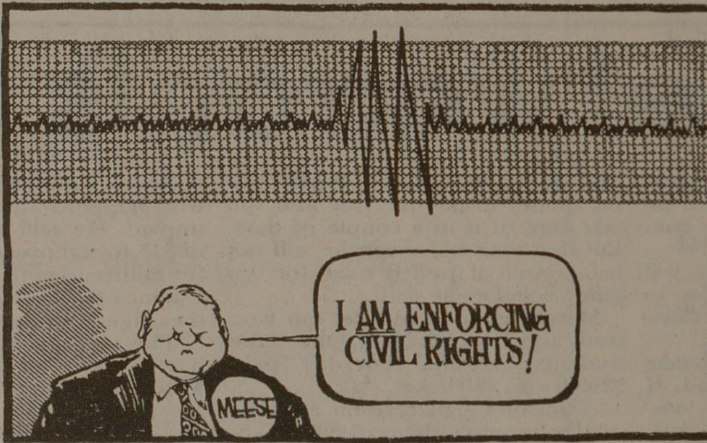
Distrust is like the plague. It may not be noticeable at first, but it spreads throughout the organization and even to the public. How can the public trust officials who don't have the confidence of their bosses?

Trust is essential to the smooth functioning of any business or government. Without it, cooperation is nearly impossible. An institution that lacks trust lacks stability.

The Battalion Editorial Board

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THE CABINET TAKES A LIE DETECTOR TEST...



Christmas vacation more enjoyable than usual

When I was in grade school I used to dread coming back to school after Christmas vacation. Not for the obvious reason of not wanting to go to school but because I didn't want to write that stupid essay on "What I Did for Christmas."



Karl Pallmeyer

I never had done much over the Christmas holidays and therefore didn't have much to write about. But this year was different. It would be a shame to have a good time and not be able to write about it, so, even though I don't have to, here it is:

Dec. 21 — I went to a Winter Solstice party. The Winter Solstice celebration is one of the oldest traditions known to man and is the original form of what we now celebrate as Christmas. The party was held out in the country at a professor's house. After spending half a tank of gas traveling through the wilds of Brazos County we finally found the place. It was probably the best party I've been to that I was able to leave under my own power.

Dec. 22 — I got up and drove 140 long miles to my hometown of Meridian. After about 20 minutes on the road I thought that maybe I should have left that party sooner.

Dec. 23 — My parents and I loaded up the car and drove to Amarillo to spend a few days with my brother and

sister. It's over 400 miles from Meridian to Amarillo; not much fun, but I finally got to read some of those books that I never find time for during the semester.

Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve. I volunteered to go to the grocery store in hopes that I could find some real beer so I wouldn't be forced to drink Coors Light. I was lucky enough to find lots of beer and none of it American. Christmas Eve everyone got together to open presents. Fifteen people: Mom, Dad, Paula (my sister), Ronnie (my brother-in-law), Susan (my niece), Scott (my nephew), Will (my brother), Deb (my sister-in-law), Amy (another niece), Dewayne (another nephew), Angela (yet another niece), Frank (my brother-in-law's brother), Renee (my brother-in-law's sister-in-law), Henry (my brother's father-in-law) and Bernice (my brother's mother-in-law). Needless to say I made a pretty good haul with that many people around.

Dec. 25 — Christmas Day. Will (my brother), Wayne (my brother's brother-in-law) and I went out for our traditional Christmas Day bowling game (we've done it for three years now so it must be a tradition). We got our traditionally low scores, too.

Dec. 26 — We went shopping. I'm not a big fan of shopping centers but I wanted to get out of the house so I tagged along. At one of the stores, Susan (my niece) bumped into a ceramic Santa Claus and knocked it to the floor — Santa broke into several dozen pieces.

Being the kind and understanding uncle that I am, I started to tease her

about it. I changed the words of the Christmas ditty "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" to "I Saw Susan Smashing Santa Claus." I changed the words of the Christmas poem "Twas the Night Before Christmas" to read: "Twas the day after Christmas and all through the store/I watched Susan throwing St. Nick to the floor." I had Wayne (my brother's brother-in-law) call her and pretend he was the manager of the store who wanted her to fess up to her crime of manslaughter.

Needless to say, Susan was not amused. I realize now it is possible that Santa, facing an upcoming 11 months of unemployment, became depressed and threw himself to a most untimely end. Some people just don't like the holiday season.

Dec. 27 — My parents and I loaded up the car and drove back to Meridian. Not an exciting trip but a lot of good reading time.

Dec. 28-30 — Home. I spent most of these three days driving up and down the street or playing Trivial Pursuit with my mother. When we played with the box of music questions I won pretty easily but she usually won when we played with the box of general questions. Meridian is not the fun capital of Texas but at least I got to eat my mother's home cooking. Cooking is not one of the skills I have mastered. (Watch for the Karl Pallmeyer Home Cook Book in this spot soon).

Dec. 31 — New Year's Eve. I drove to Dallas to meet my roommates and to stay with one of our old roommates. We had a New Year's Eve party that

couldn't be beat and I couldn't have left under my own power even if I had to.

Jan. 1 — New Year's Day. Those of us who could get up from the party went to the Cotton Bowl. I won't go in to any details about the game or gripe about the television coverage but I will tell you about my favorite moment of the day.

It was during the third quarter when I decided to go to the official men's restroom of the 50th Anniversary Cotton Bowl Classic. Lying in one of the troughs was someone's official Fightin' Texas Aggie Twelfth Man Towel. Since nobody obviously wanted that particular towel I committed an official act of desecration on the official Fightin' Texas Aggie Twelfth Man Towel. I'll never again be able to look at anyone waving their stupid towel and keep a straight face.

Jan. 2 — I decided to stay in Dallas for another day.

Jan. 3 — I went back to Meridian.

Jan. 4-5 — More fun in Meridian. More Trivial Pursuit with my mother. More driving up and down the street.

Jan. 6 — I drove to Lubbock to stay with an old friend. It's 300 miles from Meridian to Lubbock and the road for about 150 of those miles is as straight as a ruler — a very dull looking ruler.

Jan. 7-8 — My friend and I spent most of the time talking about old times and playing Trivial Pursuit with the box of music questions. My friend, who works at a radio station and is minoring in music at Texas Tech, was a formidable opponent.

Jan. 9 — I drove back to Meridian.

This time I took a more scenic route. I passed through Cross Plains, the place of Conan creator Robert E. Howard, I realized why he killed himself — not good for a writer to stay in a town for very long.

Jan. 10 — I drove back to College Station. Not long after I unloaded my car I got a call from a friend who wanted to go out drinking. It's good to be home.

Jan. 11 — I bought books. It's easier to buy books before the semester than after. The check-out girl recognized me and almost refused to sell me my books. The fact that I bought all the books and dumped the counter as she was checking didn't help matters much.

Jan. 12 — I finally got around to packing the boxes that had been sitting around the apartment all weekend.

Jan. 13-17 — I spent most of my days writing and running off newspaper salesmen. In one week five people came by wanting to sell me a Houston paper you just can't be nice to those guys.

Jan. 18-19 — One of my roommates got back in town, and we spent the weekend getting good and drunk. I would feel our best for classes Monday morning.

My Christmas vacation wasn't as good as I thought it would be. It was a few weeks without any hassles of real work. Now I'm all ready for the other semester. I hope you are too.

Karl Pallmeyer is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Excess federal spending won't just vanish

Though President Reagan says he won't let it happen, many people persist in talking of the possibility of a tax increase this year.

Chet Currier
AP News Analysis

They reason that raising taxes might well be the only way to resolve a series of confrontations over the federal budget.

The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill that was enacted late last year sets a schedule of deadlines for shrinking the annual federal deficit to zero by the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, 1990.

That law is being challenged in the courts as unconstitutional. But no matter how the court rules, the underlying problem — federal spending far in excess of federal revenues — won't go away easily.

Assuming that Gramm-Rudman stands, it mandates automatic cuts in spending by the government at intervals if the deficit exceeds specified levels. Analysts from Washington to Wall Street agree that these reductions would be increasingly noticeable and painful to the public.

As Raymond F. DeVoe Jr., an analyst at the investment firm of Legg Mason Wood Walker Inc., sees it, Gramm-Rudman "appears more and more like a leveraged device forcing some tax increases through a president who has promised to veto them."

The search for an alternative to an increase in income taxes has turned up

only a few questionable prospects.

One is a national sales tax or other form of tax on consumption. This idea has been noised around for years without attracting much of a fan club.

Taxes on consumption are widely criticized as regressive, putting a disproportionate burden on people with lower incomes. Furthermore, many skeptics say, a regressive tax might well create the demand for additional government service programs that would reduce or eliminate its benefits as a source of Treasury revenue.

A variation on the sales tax theme is the "value added tax," which is levied on businesses as they process raw materials into finished goods and move them through the distribution pipelines of the economy. Such taxes naturally tend to show up in the ultimate selling price to consumers.

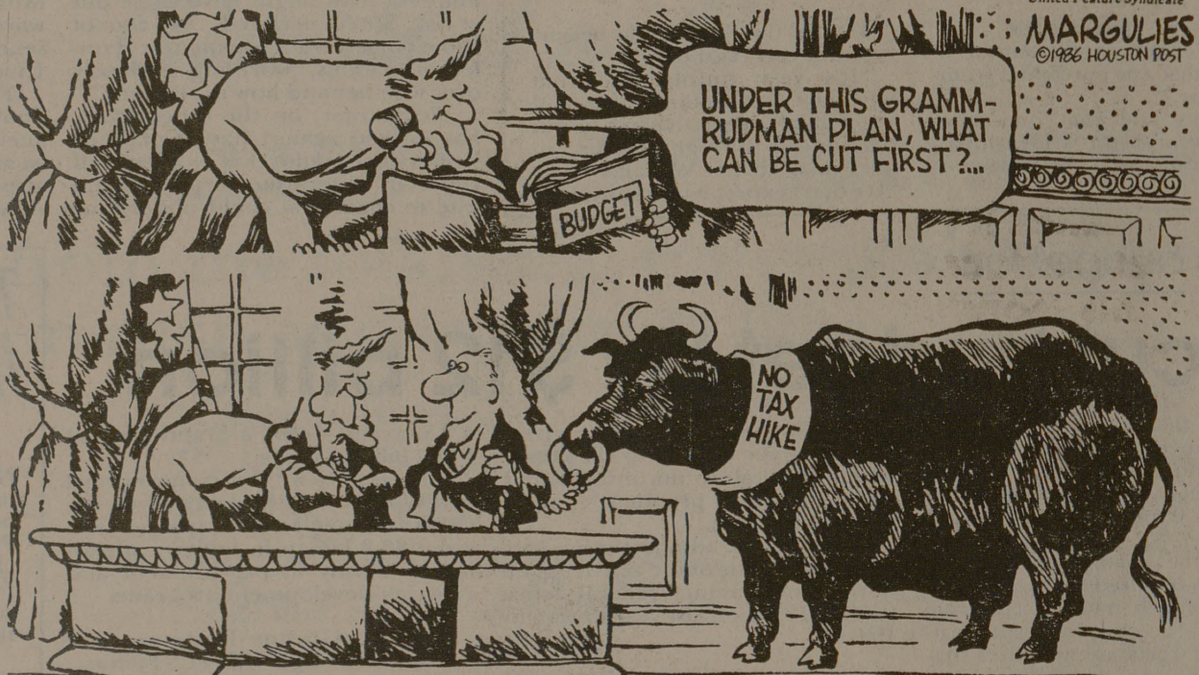
"We see abundant problems with a value-added tax," said Peter J. Davis Jr.,

a Washington-watcher at Prudential-Bache Securities Inc. "The regressivity is severe, and exemptions for food, housing and medical expense do precious little to moderate the impact on the poor."

Even if President Reagan, Congress and the public should manage to agree on an income tax increase, its effectiveness in shrinking the budget deficit might not live up to expectations.

As many analysts have pointed out, if you decide to increase tax rates by, say, 15 percent, you do not necessarily get a 15 percent increase in tax receipts. When tax rates change, people respond by changing their behavior.

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