

Opinion

No one-man job

In Thursday's editorial we incorrectly chastised the Texas Legislature for not going into special session to come up with alternatives to Gov. Mark White's 13 percent spending cuts. Obviously, the Legislature has to be called into session by the governor — which is what he should have done, instead of trying to slay the fiscal dragon himself.

White's intentions are well-founded. The Texas economy is in grave danger, and spending must be cut more than it has been. But White's plan excludes public schools, highways, parks, prisons and pensions and comes with a promise not to raise taxes.

Institutions and agencies hit by the spending reduction order are expected to make up for those that have been side-stepped. The \$68 million that Texas A&M has been asked to slash is an exceedingly deep wound, given that most of the fat already had been trimmed out of the budget at the beginning of this fiscal year.

Solving Texas' financial woes can't be accomplished with one executive order. Gov. White (not the Legislature) should call a special session to enable our representatives to help choose the course of financial action.

A viable solution may not be pretty. Some of White's sacred cows may have to be slaughtered. Taxes may have to be raised. Texas has enjoyed a healthier economy in past years than many states, and giving up our luxuries won't be easy.

The Battalion Editorial Board



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The nerds were right — the values were wrong

In Texas, high school athletes are being asked to pass their courses before suiting up for games. In Georgia, a one-time teacher won a \$2.6 million award from the University of Georgia after being fired for opposing favored treatment for athletes, and the NCAA has raised eligibility requirements for athletes. Something is happening. Call it the "Revenge of the Nerds."



Richard Cohen

to read play books. At the University of Georgia, the now-celebrated Jan Kemp says that athletes were admitted who received a flat 400 score on their college boards — what you get for merely having a pulse.

Cynics can celebrate. America can claim to have abolished sexism in the exploitation of young people. Now both men and women are exploited for their bodies — catching passes in their own distinctive ways. But pardon me for suspecting that the effort to reform school sports had little to do with exploitation of men, women or — in particular — blacks. It has to do, instead, with the nagging sense that the nerds were right all along: that we have been celebrating the wrong values.

The thing about excellence in sports is that it seems, and often is, a gift. You either have it or you don't. And if you have it, and if you're young, you don't have to work hard at it. Certainly that is the message conveyed by, say, Jim Mc-

Mahon, the quarterback for the Chicago Bears. He drinks, he parties — and he hits his receiver the next morning.

That sort of thing makes sports a target. The American celebration of the extemporaneous, of the carefree — of all things associated with youth — has cost us. Japan, to us a nation of nerds, is beating us all over the place. The Japanese may play baseball well and ski like champs, but in this country they are seen as the antithesis of what youth culture stands for. They work hard. They study. An American student gets an average of a half-hour a day in homework; in Japan it's two hours. In the United States, 32 percent of 4-year-olds attend school. In Japan the figure is 63 percent. The typical American student has one year of high school math; in Japan it's three.

The figures don't necessarily speak for themselves, but the results do: The average American student is spoiled. That is the popular judgment, too, of

the American worker, especially the blue-collar worker — the ones who made all the shoddy cars. It hardly matters that both the worker and the student are scapegoats for awful decisions made by others (management, school boards). The fact remains that the judgement is in: America has to work harder. Japan, for one says so.

The result is that sports has become something of a scapegoat. As Georgetown's basketball coach, John Thompson, has pointed out, the real problem is not the occasional athlete who enters college an illiterate and exits the same way — but all the kids who can neither play ball nor read. The real problem is not the student athlete who is allowed to play even though his grades are lousy, but the rest of the kids whose grades are just as bad and never study, either.

There are many reasons for the criticism being leveled at school sports. Some of it stems from jealousy: the envy of the school-boy athlete who, seemingly

without effort, got the girls and glory. (May his day at the Post Office long and boring.)

Some of it stems from a genuine concern for the well-being of the student, and, even, a sense of outrage that change for filling a stadium they even learn to read. And some stems from the corruption of what is supposed to be amateur athletics, everything from the paying of salaries to the awarding of bonuses. There is a lot to object to.

But the most telling criticism is from the nerds. It is they who abuse of school sports as representative of what's bad about American education in general: its emphasis on fun, extraneous activity and instant gratification. When these become paramount when they finally come to corrupt institutions, then it is clear that wrong values are being celebrated. Nerds have been saying that all along. Now they have their revenge.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for Washington Post Writers Group.

Mail Call

More than one statement

EDITOR:

I'm writing in response to the article in The Battalion about the speech given by Dr. Charles King on "Racism in America."

I attended the speech and felt the article was very good because it made me remember the feelings that I had that night. I felt that way until I got in class the next day and heard some of my fellow students laughing and saying they felt that Dr. King was wrong when he said that "all white people are to blame for racism and that they are the only ones that could solve the problem."

At the first of the program I felt the same way, but at the end of the night I could feel my attitude changing. I sincerely believe that anyone there would have felt very similar and at least understood the comment and what Dr. King meant by this statement.

The writer of this article did a good job for those of us who were there, but for those that weren't, which is most of the readers of The Battalion, the article made Dr. King seem like some kind of irate black man that blamed all white people for everything and had nothing to support what he was saying.

I felt that what he said made a lot of sense because I heard more than that one statement. He made some very good points. I would suggest to whites and blacks alike, to attend one of Dr. King's seminars whether you think you're prejudice or not. You'll be surprised what you learn.

Brent McCoy
Class of '88

Prejudice lies in the individuals

EDITOR:

I would like to dissent from a statement of Dr. Charles King in Wednesday's Battalion. In the article Dr. King was reported as saying that the cause of racism in America is white people and that they are the only ones who can stop it. I disagree with this. I admit that whenever I talk to a person, I notice their color or race. However, I also try to reserve judgment of the person until I know the individual.

I have been the victim of a so-called "reverse" discrimination from a variety of individuals of many races. Prejudice resides in the individual, not the race. Therefore, the solution to the banality of prejudice lies in the enlightenment of individuals, not a race.

Michael Moran '88

That's the ticket?

EDITOR:

I would like to express my dissatisfaction with the 1987 Class Ball ticket.

I have been to several class balls and the tickets were always nicely printed and worthy of keeping in a scrapbook.

This year's Junior Ball tickets are not worth presenting at the door.

They were chicken scratched (handwritten would be too nice a word) and the quality of printing was such that all of it did not print in each ticket. I will overlook the fact that the date was yellowed-out and written over with a ball point pen, but as for the rest, there is no excuse.

It is extremely clear that no time or effort was spent on something everyone going to the Ball will see.

I am embarrassed for the Class of '87. Maybe next year they can at least move up to the quality of theater tickets.

Gwen McNeal

With a gleam in their eyes

EDITOR:

In reference to Cynthia Gay's column in the Feb. 17 Battalion: I have real problems believing that the space agency is serving no purpose by sending men and women into space. Her main argument seems to be that the two fatal accidents wasted the lives of the astronauts we lost.

Most of the astronauts involved went on record as saying that if something were to happen to them they would want the program to continue. The families also, even after the deaths of their loved ones, have said that manned space flight must go on. Who is Cynthia Gay to contradict these people and say the loss of these pioneers should end the dream they lived for?

Manned exploration, at the risk of death, has been an integral part of discovery. I wonder how many sailors were lost trying to find the New World. How many frontiersmen never made it across the mountains of Colorado? The astronauts knew nothing was fail-safe. They knew the dangers involved, took them at face value, and went on with a gleam in their eyes.

Scot Jenkins
Aerospace Engineering '89
(and future astronaut)

Time will tell

EDITOR:

This letter is written as a reflection of Dr. Charles King's highly impressive presentation on racism in America.

Dr. King's roudy, aggressive tactics that offended some blacks and whites at first were implemented in a very effective manner. His booming, intimidating voice projected throughout the theater caused many of us to feel his powerful words as they were spoken. (Being accustomed to a black, Southern Baptist preacher, as many of us who attended are, it was a familiar feeling).

Most might have called King's tactics "scare tactics" — they were. He scared the audience into examining this monumental crisis of prejudice in our society honestly and openly. The points King raised caused us to think in different ways about the reasons and re-

sults from acting upon prejudice.

This highly informative presentation was a much needed exception not enough people showed up to grow from the information presented. Roughly, 75 percent who attended were black. So much more progress could have been made had the ratio of black whites been closer.

Fear was presented as one of the top reasons for lack of interaction with blacks. We all take risks in our day to day struggle. Why not take the risk of meeting and getting to know someone who is not of your own ethnic group? A storehouse of information and understanding of others can be found this way. Drop all the facades and let people meet the real you!

My old lady is white and I am black. We have become friends and have learned much from each other — each rubbing on each other making us a step closer to fully understanding each other. As a matter of fact, all of my buddies have taken the same path that my old lady has, and we are all one step closer to getting a rounded education from one friendship.

Drop the facades and take the risk. I have faith that once the racism crisis will be resolved, but only time will tell. Time is the equalizer, you know.

Kyle Miller
Class of '88

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