

Opinion

A balance of budget power

The regents' decision to cut the budget 7 percent is a good compromise in a no-win situation.

The cuts came in response to an executive order issued by White requesting state institutions slash revenue spending by 13 percent to avoid a \$1.3 billion shortfall in state spending this year.

The requested reduction meant a \$67 million chop for Texas A&M — a devastating blow to the University, which already cut its budget to the quick at the beginning of this fiscal year.

Being an arm of the state, A&M is subject to budget cuts just like any other state institution. But as an institution of higher learning, A&M also has a responsibility to its students to provide the best education possible.

The regents' decision to trim \$30 million less than White requested in system spending over the next 18 months effectively appeases both sides of this delicate balance.

The Battalion Editorial Board



MARGULIES
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Basement arsenals don't defend traditional values

Soldier of Fortune Magazine is no longer running personal classified ads that offer services for hire — services such as murder and breaking convicts out of jail.



Michelle Powe

Earlier, the magazine dropped ads "blatantly racist in nature," "advertising that might glorify the Third Reich" and ads for automatic weapon conversion kits, according to the magazine's associate editor, Jim Pate — even though these last ads are still legal.

What a great bunch of humanitarians. They certainly wouldn't want to be accused of running ads which solicit people to act illegally or immorally.

Of course anyone still can buy guns — guns of any kind — in these mercenary magazines. You can buy bullets that pierce bullet-proof vests. You can buy a tank if you so desire. You have the right to buy anything you need to kill that special someone in your life.

And that's what really matters — that the rights of Americans not be infringed upon. Of course my right not to be murdered by some maniac with a gun isn't as important as others' rights to bear arms. After all, as members of the National Rifle Association and other gun advocates say: "Guns don't kill people, people kill people."

Tell that to the loved ones of Sandra Black, whose husband was convicted last week in connection with her murder at their Bryan home. He hired another man — through an ad in *Soldier of Fortune* — to kill her.

The fact is that people *do* kill people, and with alarming ease. It is easier to buy a gun in this country than it is to buy a car or to get married. It is much easier to buy a gun than to get divorced. Anyone can walk into a gun shop or pick up a mercenary magazine and choose from a frighteningly large array of killing devices.

What is the purpose of bullets that pierce bullet-proof vests, except to kill people such as police officers? What is the purpose of automatic weapons, ex-

cept to kill people? I've never known anyone to go deer hunting with an M-16.

Those opposed to a national gun control law typically argue that people need guns for protection. Anyone who needs an M-16 or a tank for protection has serious troubles indeed.

This country has gone mercenary-happy. Everywhere there are magazines, movies, cartoons perpetuating false macho images of mercenaries as the good guys. Mercenaries' purpose isn't to defend our nation but to make money. They are professional killers, professional fighters. They will fight anyone's war — for a price.

But Americans have romanticized

these assassins-for-hire. And by allowing people to buy such handy household items as semi-automatic weapons and hand grenades, the government is condoning the actions of people who overstep the law and engage in their own private little wars.

How can Americans talk about returning to traditional values in a country where anyone's next door neighbor could have an arsenal in his basement? This soldier-of-fortune mentality doesn't encourage Americans to love thy neighbor, but rather to blow away their neighbor if he steps in their yard or if the price is right.

Michelle Powe is a senior journalism major and the editor for *The Battalion*.

Safety first? Not if there's a buck to be made

Aside from an inexplicable urge to apply for the Journalist in Space Program (I sat down until the feeling passed), there was never the slightest chance I would ever rocket out of this Earth to become weightless and babble Spacespeak — that clipped non-language in which the death of seven persons is being called an "anomaly." Given enough anomalies, you could have World War III.



Richard Cohen

But I do fly quite a bit. I used to do it mostly for fun, now do it almost entirely for business. And worry a lot that I will descend in a flaming anomaly. So, I see the investigation into the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger as something that applies not only to the space

program, but to all air transportation. The witnesses keep saying NASA, but I keep hearing TWA.

I choose TWA totally at random. I could have chosen Eastern or American, United or Pan Am. In fact, I could have chosen any of the airlines which, since deregulation, have been cutting fares, hammering their employees, offering bonus miles. All this suggests in the process that safety is not job one. Making a buck is.

Just recently, for instance, leaders of the airline pilots union said that United Airlines, the nation's largest, was cutting costs by observing only minimal safety standards. Maybe. Union leaders, for bargaining purposes, sometimes say things they can not substantiate. United responded by citing its safety record; not a single serious incident in 1985. Similar charges were leveled at Continental, Western and Eastern Airlines. And American Airlines paid a \$1.5 mil-

lion fine to the Federal Aviation Administration in settlement of charges that its maintenance program was not up to snuff. It denied any violations.

The NASA investigation is, of course, about the shuttle — the one that goes into space, not the steerage-class one that scurries between Boston, New York and Washington for Eastern Airlines. But even on the nonprofit space shuttle there were pressures. The program was behind schedule. There had been criticism. The president was going to refer to the shuttle in his State of the Union message. Morton Thiokol Inc., the maker of the rocket, was negotiating a \$1-billion NASA contract. A plucky and winning schoolteacher was being kept waiting. And of course space scientists like anyone else, like to get on with it. It's the reason, storm or no storm, we drive to grandma's for Christmas. A schedule has almost moral weight.

But even so, a moment of national

revelation — the instance when a light bulb of comprehension went on in our heads — occurred when we learned that an engineer who had been arguing against launch because of cold was given some haberdashery advice: "Take off your engineering hat and put on your management hat," Robert K. Lund, a Morton Thiokol vice president for engineering, was told. All of a sudden, the world looked different.

No enterprise, no company, can ever be totally shielded from financial pressures — nor, probably, should it be. But deregulation has put enormous pressure on U.S. airlines. Eastern, a wounded bird, fled into the wings of Texas Air to avoid bankruptcy. Continental went bust in one life, reorganized and returned sans its old unions. TWA is buying Ozark and mighty Pan Am, for decades an American presence in the Pacific and Manhattan, had to sell both its office building and its once-storied routes to the Orient. The curse of

Darwin is upon the airline industry; only the fittest are surviving.

There are many lessons to be drawn from the NASA tragedy. Pick what you want. But for me, the explosion of the shuttle proves once again that safety is always an orphan. When it comes to the airline industry, unless either profits are once again guaranteed or the government once again takes regulation seriously, the constant scratching for a buck is going to push aside safety concerns.

It is too much to ask that an airline industry scraping for every dollar — penalized financially for every plane in the shop and demoralized in the work force by union-busting tactics and the specter of bankruptcies — is not going to tell some pilot what Lund was told at NASA: Put on your management hat. When that happens, not even a helmet will help us.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for the *Washington Post Writers Group*.

Mail Call

A 'Warped' viewpoint

EDITOR:

Thanks to Scott McCullar for pointing out the regrettably true ranking of the Sterling C. Evans Library. We of the Library Development Council are working hard to improve the research facilities for Aggie students and professors. We have made great progress. However, continued awareness and support on the part of Aggie students and former students are vital to our efforts. Promoting our library is one of the most important ways to promote Texas A&M.

Helen L. Miller
Sterling C. Evans Library Development Council

More reason to celebrate

EDITOR:

As Texas A&M student organizations celebrate Texas' Sesquicentennial (All Night Fair, Saturday), those of us concerned with human rights have even more reason to celebrate. 1986 is one of the brightest years for human rights and American foreign relations.

Although the American public has always been altruistic in their world concern, the translating medium of political machinery and major American international corporations has often delivered a message that seemed to conflict with the best interests of other indigenous nations, hence, resulting in anti-American sentiments.

The Duvalier, Marcos and Botha tragedies have a common pattern. They are all repressive dictatorships without democratic or popular support. They recognize that they are doomed in the long run and start making excuses such as "We need more time to solve our problems and should not be expected to change overnight" (or in 300 years for South Africa). Then the police brutality and daily death tolls reach the threshold of revolution, magnified bloodshed and nationwide destruction. Fortunately, through international moral support (or U.S. transport planes), a peaceful transfer to democracy and a restoration of human rights occurs.

Tremendous international economic pressure is being applied by organizations (like Students Against Apartheid) for divestment by institutions of their holdings in companies that do business in South Af-

rica (like the holdings A&M has). A total of 71 universities, four counties, 36 cities and 11 states have divested their holdings in the apartheid state. Furthermore, a total of \$14 billion in loans to South Africa have been called in.

Recent events have put Americans in the role of heroes and liberators in the Americas, Asia and soon (hopefully), in Africa.

This is a pleasant contrast to previous long, bloody and controversial interventions in Vietnam, Central America, Angola, etc. It is high time that we send a military transport plane to fly Botha out of South Africa.

Norman Muraya
President
Students Against Apartheid

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.

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