

Opinion

Frivolous proposals

The Student Senate rejected Wednesday a proposal to include an equal opportunity statement in its constitution, judicial board bylaws, election regulations, public printed or written statements and recruiting advertisements. It's good to see the senate voting down the kind of meaningless internal legislation that has become its trademark.

The equality statement is unnecessary and redundant. The University regulations state that: "Admission to Texas A&M University and any of its sponsored programs is open to qualified individuals regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin or educationally unrelated handicaps."

Student Government is a University sponsored program, and therefore falls under the equality statement in the regulations. A separate equality clause for Student Government — or for any other University sponsored organization — is unnecessary.

Pointless proposals like the equality statement frequently clog the legislative process of the senate. It's the same kind of legislation that all five of the recent student body presidential candidates said needs to be eliminated.

If senators could learn to think before they propose, maybe the Student Senate could stop wasting its time on such frivolities and start working on better representation for their constituents.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Adult worries become childhood anxieties

I give a lot of thought to time capsules. I think of things to put in them: items that if found a thousand years from now would say something about our culture. I have one of those items now. It's a newspaper story about fourth-grade girls. About 80 percent of them are dieting.



Richard Cohen

The story ran in the *Wall Street Journal* a little while back and was based on a study of San Francisco kids by the University of California. The *Journal* was dismayed by the study's findings. So it went far from the trendy West Coast to the Chicago suburbs and asked nine-year-old girls there if they were dieting

too. More than half said they were.

They were dieting even though they were not overweight, even though they were just kids and their bodies consumed calories like a seal does fish — even though, to tell the truth, if they were a bit fat it would be no big deal. They don't date. They don't get asked out. If there is a time in your life when you ought to be able to be a bit overweight, it's the fourth grade.

No more. Now the concerns of adults are the anxieties of young children and the neuroses of older ones. (A different story reports that 13 percent of high-school sophomores diet by purging themselves.) They worry about divorce because there is so much of it around. They worry about nuclear war because you don't have to be old or fighting at the front to be killed. And now, at the age of nine, they worry about their

weight.

The dieting craze is just another example of kids being robbed of their most valuable possession — childhood. After all, that's the one time you ought to be able to drink lots of milk and eat all the ice cream that can fit and not worry about calories. If you're a kid, you can eat like that and still look okay — or, if you don't, what does it matter?

The dieting of children is a pathetic example of form without function. They want to look sexy but, for the moment at least, it is physiologically beyond them. In fact, they're parodying adult life. If you want to see what we look like to our kids, look at what our kids are doing. They're counting calories. They know the names of all the fad diets. They can talk about bulk and fats, good calories and bad calories and some of them exercise, the *Journal* reports, to

the Jane Fonda workout video. These kids are a mirror, showing us what we look like to them. The girl who reports that her mother uses pliers to zip her jeans is, naturally, on a diet herself.

In "A Distant Mirror," Barbara Tuchman wrote about the 14th century, the epoch of the Black Death, when one-third of Europe's population perished. The century was marked by the extreme youthfulness of the population, maybe half under the age of 21. There was an absence of adult leadership and mature values. Society in general was childish.

The dieting craze is an example of childishness in our own era. Adults not only want to look youthful, but they look to youth for approval. Take the commercial for a dieting aid in which one little girl asks another how her mother stays so pretty. The girls are French, suggesting sophistication and worldliness. They both admire the mother's beauty. One envies her friend for it while the other, the daughter, is proud as could be. The commercial may be pretty, but its message is not. It says that if you want the admiration of your children, you had better stay slim.

This completes the circle. Children want to be like adults and adults want to be like children. That neither can be other ought to be obvious, but it is not. The kids of America are dieting because the adults of America are dieting. We need be, we will risk our health to be healthy. And for women especially, standards are becoming more and more difficult to meet. One researcher says that from 1958 to 1978, the *Playboy* centerfold girls got thinner and thinner until now they are some 16 percent thinner than the average women their age — staple not included.

Libya is important, Central America too. But if there is a story of our time the *Wall Street Journal* has chronicled — a candidate for a time capsule that future generations should read, assuming of course, they can read. As for me, the sake of our children, I'm going to show some leadership.

I'm off to lunch.

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

Contra aid could force stronger Nicaraguan-Soviet agreement

President Reagan's plan to send \$100 million in aid to the Contras is based on two beliefs: the belief that the Sandinista government is communist, and the belief that every country that receives aid from the Soviet Union must automatically be an agent and subversive ally of Russia.

Mary McWhorter
Guest Columnist

In an interview printed in *Time*, Reagan said that the Sandinista guerrilla leader and hero Ajusto Cesar Sandino was a communist, thus Nicaragua is communist. Sandino, who was assassinated in 1934 by Anastasio Somoza Garcia's fellow revolutionaries, was not a communist but a nationalist who opposed both American and Soviet intervention.

Somoza and his two sons gained control of Nicaragua in 1937, when they were finally able to dominate other opponents with U.S. support. The Somozas milked Nicaragua and amassed an estimated \$60 million. Somoza's son, a West Point graduate, was the latest in

the Somoza line. Revolutionaries ousted him in 1979.

The present Nicaraguan leader, President Daniel Ortega Saavedra, has set up a government of reconstruction (an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 people died in the overthrow and Somoza left the country with a huge debt) in which large agricultural estates, banks and some factories were nationalized but the private business sector that had opposed Somoza was left alone.

The Sandinistas reject such labels as Communism and Leninism, saying that "Sandinismo" is a hybrid ideology unique to Nicaragua. In fact, the Sandinistas receive their most stinging criticism from the Nicaraguan Communist party, which charges that "the Sandinistas are ideologically promiscuous. They have priests, nuns, evangelicals and bourgeois in their government. It has nothing to do with Marxism-Leninism."

Reagan assumes that Nicaragua is a communist regime and believes the aid that country receives from Russia makes it an agent of the Soviet Union. The president said in a speech on Mar. 3 that the failure of Congress to back the Contras with military aid "could well deliver Nicaragua permanently to the communist bloc."

Quite to the contrary, it's Reagan's plan that could well deliver Nicaragua to the communist bloc.

Nothing is ever permanent in the world of foreign affairs. The myth that once a country takes aid from the Soviet Union that it is forever in the Soviet orbit has been disproved by historical facts.

China, the most populous country on earth, is still a self-styled communist country even though they were once an ally of the Soviet Union. But China is now the Soviet Union's most threatening enemy and a military associate of the United States.

Yugoslavia is another communist country, but it is officially nonaligned in the East-West issue and is protected by the NATO alliance.

Ethiopia was once part of the U.S. bloc and is now a client of Moscow. Somalia did the same in reverse, as did Egypt. Neither were officially communist.

At this point, Nicaragua is receiving aid from the Soviet Union and Cuba. But it also receives aid from several members of the NATO alliance in Western Europe. The amount of aid from the Soviet bloc was negligible before 1981.

However, with the CIA's confessed mining of Nicaraguan harbors and their involvement with the Contras, plus the U.S.-imposed trade embargo, Nicaragua has no alternative but to view the United States' actions and statements as an act of war and to seek military aid (helicopter gunships to fight the Contras) and non-military aid (oil) from the Soviet Union.

Finally, Reagan stresses the fear that Nicaragua will give the Soviets military bases on "our continent."

But Nicaragua's U.S. Ambassador, Carlos Tunnermann, has said "we are ready to negotiate all national-security concerns the U.S. has with us. We will allow no Soviet or American bases. We have said this repeatedly. But we will never negotiate the revolution."

We already have decided the issue of a Soviet base in North America with the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. In the agreement we made, we promised to tolerate Fidel Castro's brand of communism in exchange for Moscow's pledge not to place offensive weapons in Cuba or maintain bases there. Clearly, Moscow understands that the United States will not tolerate their presence in Nicaragua either.

Unfortunately, Congress does not understand. It probably will approve Reagan's aid package in some form. The House turned down the aid request, but the Senate passed it and, most likely, a compromise will be worked out.

It is ironic that the United States' misperception of the situation in Nicaragua might actually force that country to form an alliance with the Soviet Union.

What Reagan is proposing with his Contra aid package is the overthrow of an independent and sovereign country. Isn't that what the Soviet Union often is accused of doing?

Mary McWhorter is a senior journalism major.

Mail Call

Learn it or leave

EDITOR:

Why do you attend Silver Taps? Is it to walk out during the 21-gun salute? Is it to converse? Is it to laugh at the end? For me, it is one of the finest traditions at Texas A&M.

"Silver Taps is that final tribute paid to an Aggie who at the time of his death was enrolled in undergraduate or graduate classes at Texas A&M." The notice is posted at the base of the flagpole in front of the Academic Building. This is found in *The Standard* and memorized verbatim by Corps members.

Also, they are required to know the names of the Aggies being mourned. Non-regs are not required to do this, but it sure would be nice if they had respect for the tradition and what it stands for. To the Aggies who do not know, learn it or leave.

Chris Rudesill
Class of '87

Shabby performance by RVs

EDITOR:

I went to Tuesday night's Silver Taps and what I saw brought tears to my eyes — not for the loss of a friend, but the loss of excellence that once belonged to the Ross Volunteers.

I was in the Corps of Cadets my freshman year but got out after that due to some family problems. I've kept in touch with my old unit, D-1, and have always regretted having to get out. That is, until Tuesday night.

The RVs are supposed to be the cream of the crop of the Corps. What they did Tuesday night could best be described as watching second-week freshmen trying to march. The RVs were all off on their marching. So far off in fact, that by the time the last rank had started their step, the first rank was already finished. That's pathetic. When they shoot the 21-gun salute, it should sound like three loud shots, not three groups of shots, as it sounded Tuesday night.

If the RVs represent the best of the Corps of Cadets, then there is definitely something wrong with the Corps. I am actually glad I'm not still in it. If I were, I would be ashamed of the RVs.

What's wrong with them? It seems to me that their unity is gone. Whether that's caused by women being in the RVs or not, I don't care. All I do know is that if the next Silver Taps has as bad a performance from the RVs as this one, I won't go to any more. My way of showing respect for the dead is not by attending a shabby, non-uniform performance.

Logan F. Woodard
Class of '88

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.

The Battalion

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