

Opinion

'Liability crisis' out of control

Most often it is called the liability crisis, but it also has been described as a moral, business, legal and financial dilemma that, if not resolved, can only become more bizarre and costly.

Stripped to its essentials, the problem is this: Too many Americans look for opportunities to sue. Too many lawyers encourage them to do so. Too many judges and juries make it profitable for both of them.

As a consequence, surveys show that almost one in five businesses cannot obtain liability insurance, and that many of those with coverage are paying premiums up to five times more expensive than a few years ago.

Testifying before a Senate committee, Richard Berman, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce official, referred to "a judicial system gone berserk." He termed litigation "America's equivalent of a national lottery."

Berman, who is also senior vice president for S&A Restaurant Corp. in Dallas said that unless judicial reform is enacted, workers will lose jobs, obstetricians will discontinue services, manufacturers will limit their sales to foreign markets, and vaccines and drugs will become "endangered prod-

John Cunniff
AP News Analysis

ucts." Before the same Senate Commerce Committee, Robert Moore, president of the National Association of Insurance Brokers, testified that only when Americans recognize the extent of the economic fallout will reform be possible.

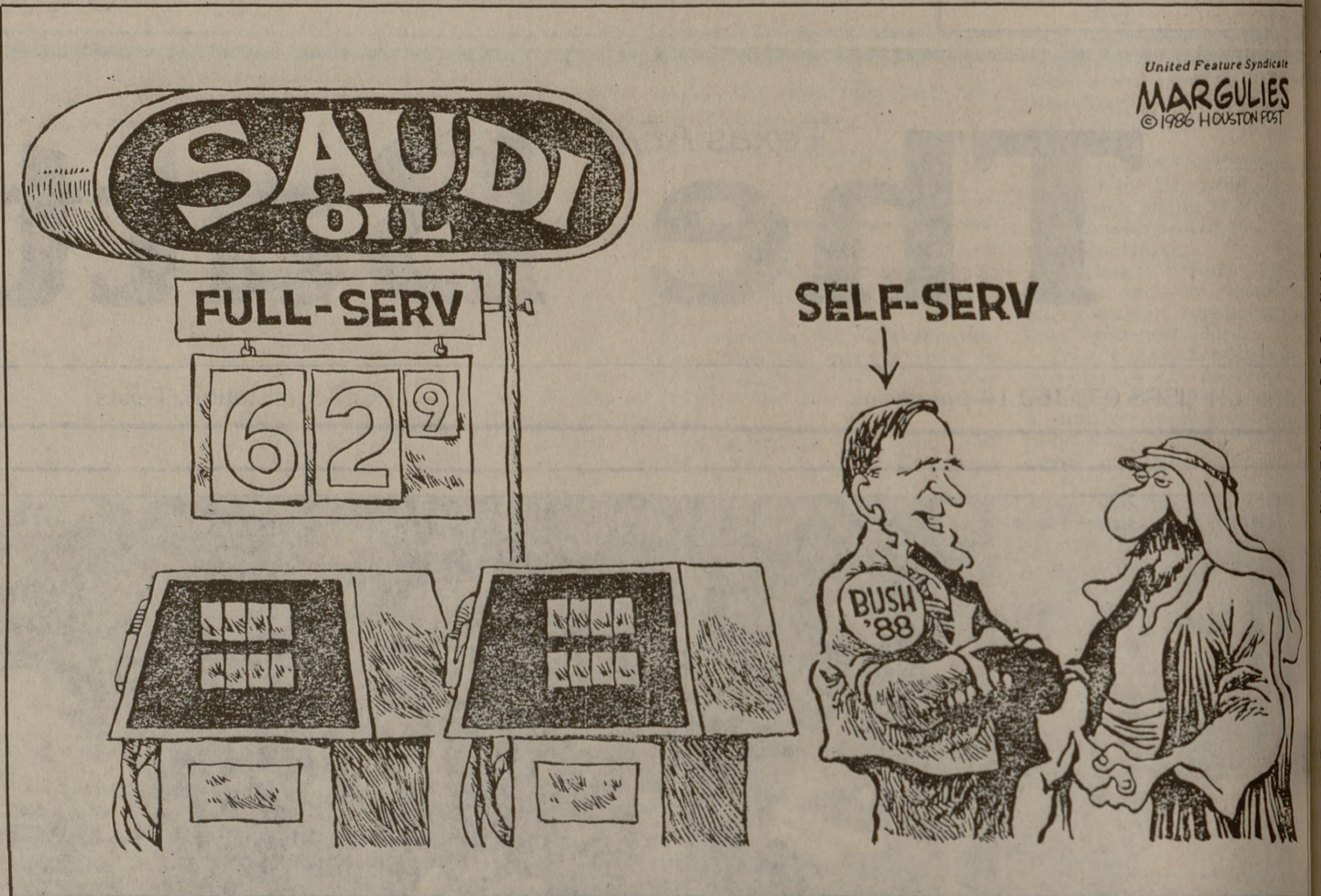
That fallout is pervasive. Jeffrey Joseph, a chamber vice president, observes that directors are finding it too risky to serve not just on corporate boards but on the boards of operas, symphonies and other cultural institutions.

It will hit home to mothers and fathers, he predicted, when the liability threat forces discontinuance of school activities and perhaps even school bus service.

The chamber has formed a Liability Crisis Project that is serving as a clearinghouse of information and advice for businesses and is publishing a Liability Crisis Newsletter containing information on national and state actions and legislative reform.

"There are no disincentives to sue," said Joseph. But, he added, with 600,000 or 700,000 lawyers, and with law schools "flushing out" thousands more each year, there is positive pressure toward litigation.

John Cunniff is a business analyst for The Associated Press.



Commonly asked questions about homosexuality

Last week, according to Gay Student Services, was Gay Week at Texas A&M. As a tribute to this new tradition, I decided to conduct a little research and do my part to help answer some basic questions concerning homosexuality.



Glenn Murtha

What is homosexuality? In psychiatric terms, homosexuality is defined as a strong erotic attraction to members of the same sex. Such homosexual tendencies generally lead to homosexual activity, but not in all cases. A fair number of homosexuals fail to act upon these tendencies because of social fears or prohibitions.

As social tolerance increases, many homosexuals become less inhibited, act upon their impulses and more readily

discuss their sexual orientation. Thus, though it may seem that the number of persons predisposed toward homosexuality is increasing, it has remained relatively constant.

What is the incidence of homosexuality? Sex researcher Alfred Kinsey and his associates theorized in their publication *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) that sexuality exists on a continuum ranging from "0" to "6." A "0" represents exclusive heterosexuality, a "6" represents exclusive homosexuality and a "3" represents balanced bisexuality.

Kinsey estimates that 10 percent of males are exclusively homosexual, but accurate statistics are hard to measure because of prevailing hostility toward homosexuality in western culture.

Homosexual behavior has been documented in many species, including all animal species, though exclusive homosexuality as well as exclusive heterosexuality is unique to the human species.

Homosexual activity was common in ancient Greek and other earlier cultures and has probably existed to some degree in all human cultures, regardless of cultural toleration or condemnation.

What are the causes of homosexuality? The specific causes of homosexuality remains undetermined, though various predisposing factors have been examined. No convincing evidence exists to indicate that homosexuality is a genetic trait, though inclination toward homosexuality could be genetically oriented. Homosexual activity can occur when little or no heterosexual outlets are available. This accounts for the high incidence of homosexuality in prisons.

Many homosexual men claim to come from a family background with a dominant or possessive mother and a weak or distant father and vice versa for homosexual women, though many heterosexuals come from similar backgrounds and many homosexuals come from different backgrounds. Thus, though fam-

ily background may play a role in the development of homosexuality, it is not the sole factor. Most likely, a variety of factors as yet undetermined coincide early in an individual's life to determine sexual orientation.

Can sexual orientation be changed? Some success has been achieved in changing the sexual preference of a minority of homosexuals who were unhappy with their sexual orientation and chose to seek treatment. Masters and Johnson reported in *Homosexuality in Perspective* (1979) that for the 20 percent of homosexuals who are unhappy with their homosexual tendencies, psychotherapy could be effective in "converting" them to heterosexuality. The therapeutic failure rate for these persons was determined to be 28 percent after five years. Yet this data tells nothing of the 80 percent who are satisfied with their homosexuality and do not seek to change.

How should society react to homosexuality? No single stereotypical homosexual exists. Homosexuals are found in all

professions and at all socioeconomic levels. Though some homosexuals may fall into the stereotypical categories of femininity and promiscuity, most do not. Homosexuals are as varied and diverse as heterosexuals, though many remain closeted and invisible leaving the more stereotypical homosexuals to receive most of the public exposure.

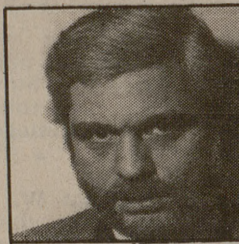
Tolerance toward homosexuality continues to expand. It is no longer considered an illness in western culture and laws prohibiting homosexual activity continue to fall. Illinois became the first state to legalize homosexual activity in 1961. Many cities now have ordinances prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals.

It is inevitable that tolerance of homosexuals will continue to increase as ignorance decreases and more people learn to understand and accept others who are different from themselves.

Glenn Murtha is a senior political science major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Deaver's questionable ethics will raise his salary

Years ago, a Washington journalist wrote an expose of a southern senator, saying he was a racist (or, worse, that he was not), corrupt and willing to sell his vote wholesale as well as retail. To all this, the senator in question smiled a



Richard Cohen

porter. He said he would use the story when he ran for re-election to prove that he had the right enemies.

In the same vein, we should not be surprised if Mike Deaver, the former presidential valet turned influence peddler, carries with him a clipping of the *Washington Post* story saying he skirted the law by lobbying the director of the Office of Management and Budget. The import of the story was to question Deaver's ethics. The effect of the story will be to raise his hourly rate.

The law — the silly little law — forbids a senior official who leaves government from lobbying his former department or agency for a year. Deaver's former agency is the White House to which, in everyone's thinking, the Office of Management and Budget is an adjunct. Officially, though, Deaver was just this side of the angels. OMB, according to the White House, is not part of the White House. It merely reports to it.

Deaver is nothing if not cute. White House aides, apparently seeking to protect the president from the worst intentions of his best friends, leaked the story about Deaver. Their probable intention is to ensure that Deaver stays away from the White House where, from time to time, he is invited as a guest of the Reagans. These aides may have sensed that in Deaver they are dealing with something more than just a presidential assistant turned lobbyist, but the very personification of the ideological corruption of the Reagan administration itself — its loss of purpose.

It was Ronald Reagan, after all, who came to Washington the way the Visigoths came to Rome — to sack it. His intention was to leave it a smaller, weaker city. His foes were the entrenched bureaucrats, his allies the gifted amateurs from the private sector who would be the gentleman farmer of government. In fact, when Robert McFarlane either was pushed or jumped from the position of National Security Advisor, the president used the occasion to restate his creed that government service, like a hospital stay, should be as brief as possible. Washington, to him, is just a place to visit.

But the Visigoths have not only stayed, they have become corrupted and besotted by the wines of Georgetown. *Time* magazine recently listed 15 former Reagan administration aides, some of them once quite high-up, who are now Washington lobbyists. Deaver, the First Friend of the First Family, is just the best-connected of them. He is actually the person the president cam-

paigned against, the stereotype of the Washington insider that Reagan hung, like a horse collar, first around the neck of Gerald Ford and then Jimmy Carter. But the bogeyman from the old campaigns is through the gates. The representative of special interests now has special access to the White House.

It is probably for that reason that Deaver's brush with federal conflict-of-interest regulations, alleged or otherwise, is being pushed by the *Washington Times*, the movement conservative newspaper. Ever alert of apostasy, it sees Deaver as a lapsed Reaganite or, worse yet, never a true one. He — along with Treasury Secretary James Baker and his aide Richard Darman — were always under suspicion by the right-wing thought police. They were deemed to be infected with pragmatism — a Washington disease that comes from eating canapes.

Whatever the sins of Deaver, they are characteristic of the end-stage of the Reagan administration. The life has

gone out of the beast; lobbyists circle overhead. The president, oblivious to all, continues to attack Washington, not realizing, apparently, that he has been captured from the rear. And so unsuspecting have special interests become that few notice that it took a former oil man, George Bush, to declare that when it comes to oil, the free market leaves something to be desired. Golly, someone ought to raise the price!

In the end, all revolutions get betrayed and the Reagan Revolution is no exception. One by one the former Visigoths have become limousine executives. At least in Washington, it's no longer morning again. The clock has moved. It's time for lunch. Let's make a deal.

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

Mail Call

Case in point

EDITOR:
I parked my car on Sunday night at 7 p.m. in the freshman parking lot. Like a typical "fish," I am a bit forgetful and I left my cassette tape case on top of my black 1981 Ford Mustang. When I went back to get my case — no more than five minutes later — it was gone. Now, I am sure that some good Samaritan took the case to keep some thief from stealing it. I thank you for your generosity, but I need my tapes and the case back.

George Gaytan '89
260-5275

Not a streetgang

EDITOR:
I would like to offer my congratulations to the apparent literary major who wrote "D.G. Zips '86" in

three-foot tall red letters on the side of our dorm, of our home for that matter. None of us here particularly liked the name Moses anyway, and we would appreciate if the rest of the campus would call us the "Men of D.G. Zips '86" from now on.

Come on guys, this is a society, not a streetgang. It seems to me that when a person has matured and is ready to face the world, he should see the writing on the wall . . . not put it there.

Jeffrey Martin

The purpose of Silver Taps

EDITOR:
I would just like to say that I thought the Ross Volunteers did an excellent job at Silver Taps Apr. 1 regardless of what Logan F. Woodard may think. I am proud to say that since I came to Texas A&M three years ago I have never missed a Silver Taps or an Aggie Muster, and the RV's have always done an

excellent job.

When I go to Silver Taps, I do not push my way to the front of the crowd so that I can closely inspect and criticize the RV's as they conduct the ceremony. I do not go to be entertained by precision marching. I go to Silver Taps to honor my fellow students who have met untimely deaths. I hope that the ceremony in some way helps to comfort the grief-stricken families of those being honored. For this reason, I will continue to support one of the best traditions at A&M.

Mike Thomas
Class of '87

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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