

Opinion

Million dollar boo boo

Gov. Mark White thought he was rescuing the state from the rising tide of financial shortfall when he ordered 13 percent budget cuts for higher education. But the governor's life-preserver policy floats as well as a brick.

White planned to save us from an anticipated \$1.3 billion dollar shortfall in state revenue created by the recent decline of oil prices. But his budget-cutting remedy is in for some unexpected cuts itself.

The governor's plan ran into its first snag when Texas A&M announced it would cut only 7 percent from next year's budget. Now White's staff has discovered community colleges are exempt from executive and legislative orders.

White assumed that community colleges were under state jurisdiction because they receive 65 percent of their funding from the state. But community colleges are considered local agencies that are controlled by local governing boards — not the State Legislature. Neither state universities nor community colleges have to conform to White's executive order. But while the Legislature can mandate a budget cut for state schools, community colleges are exempt.

The governor's shortsightedness means a \$115 million shortfall in his plan to rescue the state from the revenue shortfall. It's ridiculous that White didn't research his shortfall protection plan more thoroughly before submitting the state's universities and colleges to the budget ax.

Before the governor pulls out his scissors, he should know whereof he cuts.

The Battalion Editorial Board

No startling secrets in Stockman's book

A short quiz. Who wrote the following?

"I was appalled by the false promises of the 1984 campaign. Ronald Reagan had been induced by his advisers and his own illusions to embrace one of the more irresponsible platforms of modern times. He had promised, as it were, to alter the laws of arithmetic . . . After four years in office, the Reaganites had no more sense that governance involved facing facts and making palatable choices than they had at the beginning."

(a) Walter Mondale in his book, *Where's the Beef?* (b) Tip O'Neill in an offhand remark to his caddy (c) Gary Hart in his book, *My Favorite New Jersey Jokes* (d) Jesse Jackson in his book, *If I Can Make It Rhyme, I Can Make It Shine*, or (e) David Stockman in *The Triumph of Politics*.

Logic says that the correct answer is anything but (e). After all, Stockman is the self-styled conservative ideologue, the man the *Washington Post* described in a headline as "zealot." That man would not have waited until now to have written such a statement. In all good conscience, he would have spoken out during the campaign itself. He would have told the American people that he — a Reagan administration insider — knew the president was spouting hogwash.

But, alas, it is Stockman who now confesses that he was, by his own characterization, the Albert Speer of the Reagan administration — the technocrat who knew better. There he was, surrounded by dummies, PR men and bootlickers who served a president who only dimly understood his own economic program, and he said nothing. Aside from his pe-



Richard Cohen

riodic indiscretions to William Greider, published in *Atlantic Monthly*, for which he was sent to the woodshed, Stockman clammed up. The 1984 election came and went with nary a word from the man. He had other obligations. He was writing a \$2.3 million book.

What is the obligation of the public man? Should Stockman have resigned for policy, rather than personal, reasons and made his differences clear? Did he have a responsibility to a public that in 1984 was going about the dismal business of choosing a president? After all, he couches his policy differences with the Reagan administration in gravest terms: "If we stay the course we are now on, the decade will end with a worse hyperinflation than the one with which it began." To Stockman, at least, this is no trivial matter.

The trouble with asking about the obligation of the public man is that the question is posed in a vacuum. In Stockman's case, the answer is complicated by money. In other words, the question becomes something like, "Should I enter the debate now (probably to no avail) or should I keep my mouth shut and put it all in a book?" The \$2.3 million answer will be in bookstores by the end of the month.

In some sense, the money Stockman received for his book represents a kind of bribe. Of course, we don't see it that way — and that word would never be used to describe a book advance. But what is it, if as seems to be the case it induces a public official to serve himself first, a publisher second and the, last, the public that paid his government salary? In other words, would Stockman have kept mum all this time if there had been no book contract?

Only Stockman can provide that answer. And it may not be fair to come down too hard on him. After all, it was his candor that got him into trouble in the first place (and probably accounts for his whopping book advance). But Stockman personifies what money is doing in Washington, how the very sound of vast amounts of it washing around gets the attention of most government officials — and not a few journalists. Government service, like graduate school, is seen as a rite of passage — something you do before making lots of money. Prudence says you keep one eye on a potential employer while, with the other, you do the public's business. In Stockman's case it means holding your indignation until it can be sold.

In the end, Stockman's book will amount to nothing. We already know Reagan is disengaged, that he is allergic to facts, in love with anecdotes and, by afternoon, in need of a nap. Indeed, Stockman comes across as yet another Reagan child, petulantly trying to get the old man's attention by hurting him just a bit. But Stockman has hurt himself instead. He wrote a book that's already been written. It's called "Looking Out For Number One."

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



We're not the N.R.A.

We just happened to be living our lives in peace when we were shot by nuts and criminals who were able to easily buy guns.

That's all we wanted to say.

John F. Kennedy Robert Kennedy Martin Luther King James Earl Ray

The price of tough-guy image

President Reagan says that by bombing Libya and demonstrating that we will respond to violence with more violence, the United States has raised the price of terrorism. Unfortunately, the United States also has raised the probability of more terrorist attacks against Americans.



Michelle Powe

The air attack on Libya won't stop terrorism — Libyan or otherwise. All it has accomplished is uniting Arab nations with Khadafy against the United States; straining U.S. relations with other nations, including the Soviet bloc; killing innocent people; and sustaining U.S. casualties. Two U.S. pilots are missing after the air attack and presumed dead.

Is the likely loss of these pilots, the cancelation of a meeting next month between the Soviet foreign minister and President Reagan and worldwide condemnation worth the price of relieving Reagan's trigger finger?

There is no doubt that Moammar Khadafy is a madman and a threat to world security. He must be stopped or contained somehow. But when we use his own tactics against him, are we any better than he? The United States has

attacked a city and killed innocent civilians. Our bombs took a 15-month-old baby's life. I guess that makes us one-for-one with the terrorists now.

Even if the injured and killed people were bombed accidentally by us, we are still responsible. Even if all the damage caused to our non-targets, including the French embassy, actually was caused by Libyan anti-aircraft missiles (which is doubtful), we are still responsible because the Libyans were trying to protect themselves from our attack.

But what is the real message we have sent to terrorists? Have we shown them that the United States will not tolerate any more anti-American aggression? No. We don't respond to terrorist acts unless we know we can win.

Reagan did nothing when 248 marines were killed in Lebanon in 1983. He did nothing when an American soldier was shot and killed by a Soviet sentry in East Germany in 1985.

Lebanon, Iran and Syria all are havens for terrorists. Most experts believe that Iran and Syria are much more responsible for terrorism than Libya. But their ties with the Soviet Union make them hands-off to the United States. A confrontation with one of these nations might lead to a showdown with the Soviet Union.

So instead the United States picks on the little guys. Instead of sending a tough message to terrorists inclined to attack Americans, the United States has

sent quite a different message to cowardly enemies: Be sure to ally self strongly with the Soviet Union. The United States will leave you alone.

If Reagan is going to establish a strong anti-terrorism policy, he must make it clear to all terrorizing nations that the United States will respond to all acts of terrorism, not just when it's convenient.

Reagan also must remember that his country he represents is the United States — a country which is supposed to value the sanctity of human life. We abhor terrorism because its cowardice and senselessness mostly because its victims usually innocent bystanders. Yet who has been killed? Innocent people. People who did nothing to justify having homes bombed.

Terrorism is a worldwide problem which will require the nations of the world banding together to solve it. Reagan, by his actions, has further destabilized a ready unstable situation. He has made the nations of the world more distant and more antagonistic toward the United States. He has made a bad problem worse.

How many bombs will have been dropped before Reagan gets his my-day attitude out of his system? We start making real progress toward world peace?

Michelle Powe is a senior journalist and editor for *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

Obvious liberal bias?

EDITOR:

I am becoming more and more convinced that a banner should be hung over Reed McDonald building that reads, "Objectivity Ends Here." I can count right off the top of my head at least six incidences this semester where *The Battalion's* staff reporters have taken pot shots at either religious leaders, moral stands on issues or conservative views. Loren Steffy's article attacking Pat Robertson is just another classic example of *The Battalion's* obvious liberal bias.

It is more than obvious that Steffy does not have the foggiest idea about what the Bible says about how to deal with unrighteous immoral men. This is not surprising because, as is the case with many of your staff reporters, he has never examined the scripture to figure out what God says about some of the issues. Pat Robertson, of course, has, but Steffy naturally considers himself a better theologian.

You would think that if the journalism department was at all interested in objectivity you would allow someone to express an opposite opinion. I understand that the University of Maryland allows one of the campus preachers to have his own column in their newspaper. They obviously have enough integrity to allow both sides of the issues to be expressed in their newspaper. Does *The Battalion* have this sort of backbone?

Michael Foarde '87

EDITOR'S NOTE: Loren Steffy is not, and never has been, a staff reporter. He is *Opinion Page* editor and a columnist, meaning it is his job to express his opinions. Naturally, an opinion is not objective. *Opinion* in *The Battalion* is expressed only on this page and in analyses labeled as such. The journalism department and *The Battalion* are separate entities, so the department could do little to control the expression of opposite opinion.

Furthermore, *The Battalion* is always open to other opinions from students, faculty or residents of the surrounding area. However, such expression requires effort on the part of the individual.

One for the Gipper

EDITOR:

I rejoice with many Americans across the country at what seems a yeoman gesture by President Reagan to inflict a blow on what the United States calls the terrorist capital of the world — Libya.

Pictures do not lie. U.S. F-111 bombers attacked Libyans in the black of the night, shelling and killing innocent civilians, including children.

As I ponder over this action, I come up with mixed feelings. First, the U.S. has violated international law by invading another country in a time of peace (yes, it is a time of peace). Although I do realize the right of Americans to protect themselves, I wonder if the best method has been selected.

European diplomats unanimously agree that other Arab nations, such as Lebanon, Syria and Iran are equally guilty of conducting terrorist attacks against the United States. Why Libya was selected as an example needs to be explained to the rest of the world when allies start turning their backs.

The British have strong evidence of support for the Irish Republican Army from the United States. The U.S. has conducted terrorist activities against the British for years. Would it not be logical then to assume that the United States supports terrorist activities?

What do you think the U.S. government is doing in Nicaragua? Supporting a rebel regime to overthrow a legitimate government is against international politics. Americans do so and will continue to do so because they carry a "big stick."

The reactions from the major allies accurately measure the effects of this seemingly unpopular act. Germany, Italy, Greece, France, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Egypt and Japan all opposed the action for a more civilized approach.

Not surprisingly, Israel, Canada and the United Kingdom support the move, but British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is under intense criticism for her decision to allow take-off and landing of those 32 F-111 bombers.

Frankly, only time will tell the effects of this action on the whole world hissing.

This sure is one for the Gipper, eh?

Gabriel Elliott

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. Editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Please make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the author.

The Battalion
(USPS 045 360)
Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board
Michelle Powe, Editor
Kay Mallett, Managing Editor
Loren Steffy, Opinion Page Editor
Jerry Oslin, City Editor
Cathie Anderson, News Editor
Travis Tingle, Sports Editor

Editorial Policy
The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan College Station.
Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.
The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.
United Press International is entitled exclusively to the use for reproduction of all news dispatches credited to it. Rights of reproduction of all other matter herein reserved.
The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.
Our address: *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.
Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.