

# Opinion

## The buck revisited

The Texas A&M Board of Regents' feeble attempt to pass the divestment buck has been passed right back.

The regents refused to meet with Students Against Apartheid to discuss the University's holdings in companies that do business with South Africa, claiming that the board doesn't make investments based on moral decisions. The regents claim such decisions are up to the Texas Legislature.

"That's a ridiculous argument," says Rep. Wilhelmina Delco, chairwoman of the Committee on Higher Education. "I would certainly hope they'd have some moral sense of integrity in their investments."

Delco pointed out that governing bodies of institutions should be conscious of their investments' implications.

Board Secretary Bill Presnel says the board has a responsibility to maximize its investments.

But if done without moral consideration, the University could invest in prostitution rings, pornography and drug trafficking — all of which could be profitable investments.

The regents' last-ditch effort to skirt the divestment issue has failed. The Legislature is not going to answer for the board's attempt to shirk its responsibility.

Texas A&M has almost \$3 million invested in companies that deal with the racist government in South Africa.

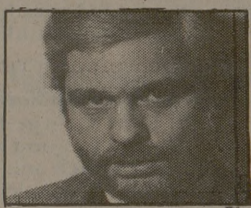
The board seems more concerned with monetary returns on the University's investments than with the fact that those investments support an administration that violates basic human rights.

The buck that the regents tried to pass to the Legislature has wound up back in their laps. It's time for the board to assume the responsibility for their "immoral" monetary decisions.

The Battalion Editorial Board

## Ford's ethical antics overshadow Deaver's

It is early morning and the Secret Service detail for former presidents is assembling in an undisclosed Washington location. The supervisor steps forward, clipboard in hand, and calls out some names: "You agents will be traveling with former President Gerald Ford. You will go to Vail, Aspen, Palm Beach, Palm Springs and Saratoga Springs, N.Y., where Mr. Ford will address the annual convention of periodontists and play in their golf tournament. First-class accommodation all the way, as usual."



Richard Cohen

Then the supervisor looks at his clipboard and calls out three more names: "You three will be traveling with former President Carter. You will go by Trailways bus from Plains, Ga., to the South Bronx. There, Mr. Carter will help rehabilitate some slum housing and make a speech to a group of orphans. As usual, some of you will sleep on the floor in the slum housing while others will be housed at an Eight Days Motel in Hoboken, N.J. Any questions?"

Yes. Did anything like this ever happen? Answer: Not that I know. But given the way Ford and Carter have conducted themselves since leaving office, I can not be far off. Aside from writing books and making an occasional speech, Carter — the liberal — has conducted his retirement conservatively. Like most of his predecessors, he has shunned commercialization of the presidency. Not so, Ford. The longtime legislative conservative has virtually franchised the Oval Office. In retirement, he has become a multimillionaire.

When it comes to money, Ford's government career was mere prelude to what followed. The man, whose various government pensions and allowances earn him \$417,000 a year, nevertheless makes speeches, works as a consultant and will write a letter to an official (such as Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole) on behalf of a firm (such as Flying Tiger Line) that paid him a fee (\$100,000) to consult on momentous issues like U.S. landing rights and why a competitor (Nippon Cargo Airlines) should not get them. He may even do bar mitzvahs.

He does do corporate boards. He sits on several for fees as high as \$30,000 a year. He earns consulting fees of as much as \$100,000 a year. He is available as a speaker, but his fee can be a rather steep \$20,000. For firms like American Express he is both a consultant and a member of the board (Do you know me? I used to be president).

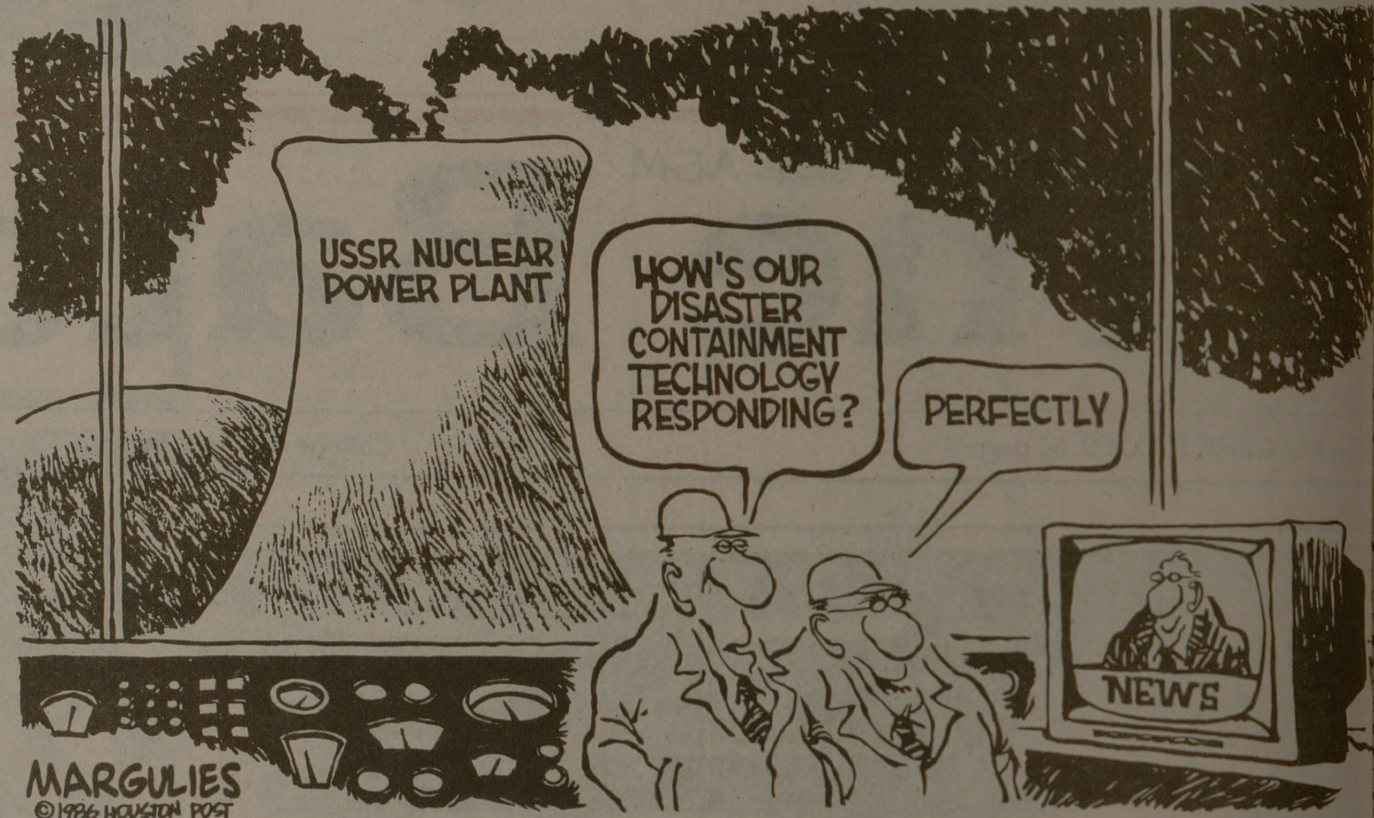
Ford's spokesmen point out that the former president also raises vast amounts of money for charities (true) and that his flourishing business career is yet another expression of his conservative ethic. The man believes in business, free enterprise and all of that. His defenders say he is only practicing what he always believed. His retirement is vindication of his politics.

Maybe. But there is also no question that Ford is selling the presidency and that until he did it, no one even attempted such a thing. In fact, the modern ethic for the presidential retirement probably was set by Harry S. Truman, no man of independent means. In his memoirs, he wrote that he rejected all commercial offers after leaving the White House: "I could never lend myself to any transaction, however respectable, that would commercialize on the prestige and dignity of the office of the presidency."

Truman seems hopelessly quaint now. All Ford does is "commercialize on the prestige and dignity of the office of the presidency," and he does it to a fair amount of boardroom applause and precious little opprobrium. He is the darling of the executive suite, the denizen of the ninth hole, of first-class plane trips and exclusive airport lounges — the presidential version of Joe Louis who ended his days a greeter for Las Vegas hotels.

With Ford blazing the way, it's almost silly to raise an objection to Michael Deaver who was, after all, a mere presidential assistant. The same goes with all the other former White House aides who, little by little, sell what the public once gave them. What they all need to do is assemble in my imaginary Secret Service squad room and see the contrast between Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter. It's the difference between right and wrong.

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



## Soviet nuke accident a lesson, not chance for taunting failure

The accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Soviet Union clearly is the worst nuclear disaster in history. It is not just a national crisis; it is an international crisis. Clouds of radioactive fallout can't be stopped by border patrols.



Michelle Powe

The Soviets further endangered the people of other nations by not immediately announcing the disaster. The accident wasn't even discovered until radiation was detected on a Swedish worker going to work at nuclear power plant north of Stockholm, Sweden. Secrecy, as evidenced by this latest crisis, has no place in the nuclear power game.

The Soviet Union has the fastest growing nuclear power industry in the world. Yet it appears that nuclear safety may not be the top priority in the building of Soviet nuclear reactors. The Chernobyl plant apparently doesn't have a steel-reinforced concrete containment structure.

The rest of the world has a right to know — a need to know — how a disaster of this magnitude could have happened, and how it could have been avoided. We need to know exactly what the magnitude of the disaster is — how many people have died? Are the Soviet claims of two deaths accurate, or are the western claims of 2,000 closer to the truth? How many people — in and outside the Soviet Union — have been permanently harmed? Will future generations be affected?

Nuclear programs without adequate

safeguards pose an immense threat to the entire world. Dealing with nuclear power is a global, not a national, responsibility.

Nuclear reactors in all countries should be open to international inspection — not so that nations can learn their adversaries "trade secrets" — already know how to build nuclear reactors — but so that all nations can learn how to build better, safer reactors.

We should use this disaster, not gloat about U.S. superiority in the clear power race or to criticize the Soviets for being uncaring about the well-being of their own people, but to learn from it and to work toward more effective global security.

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

## Mail Call

### Suburban preparation

EDITOR:

In Cynthia Gay's column "On student values, A&M beats UT hands down" she claims that Texas A&M is better than the University of Texas when education extends beyond the classroom. Having been conferred a liberal arts degree from UT as well as seeing an engineering degree on the horizon from A&M, I feel compelled to share my modest opinion.

I realize that going from a liberal arts education to an engineering education is like comparing pomegranates to parquat, especially when they involve two different universities. Yet, I think that I have had broad enough exposure that I have a good grasp of what each university is all about.

There is no question in my mind that A&M is friendlier than UT. Smiles and salutations fill any walk across campus. This friendliness, however, does not extend to the realm of thought. Ideas that are even a wee bit liberal are many times rejected before they can be completely expressed.

In *The Battalion* time and time again we see the expression "Highway 6 runs both ways". This trite myopic remark has no place in any university (I never came across anything about Interstate 35 during my days at *The Daily Texan*). The fact that this intellectual atrocity appears time and time again is evidence enough that Gay's statement "... Aggies are more able — because of our base of oneness and friendliness — to discuss where we differ and learn more in the process" is patently false.

Gay maternally warns us that there is a danger in hearing only one side that leans left. How true! There is, however, an equal danger in hearing only one side that leans right.

UT, because of its west mall and general global consciousness, prepares the student for the world. A&M, because of its trade embargo on free thought, prepares the student for the suburbs.

Michael Bolton

### For that special professor

EDITOR:

Texas A&M is a university filled with proud traditions. As graduation approaches, it is a time to look back and reflect upon the college experience.

It seems as though everyone has had at least one professor who has really influenced their lives. Perhaps, in some small way, we can return the favor. In a time of budget cutbacks and salary freezes, many faculty members find themselves in a frustrating environment.

Think of what a positive effect it would have for the graduating seniors to convey their appreciation to those

faculty members who helped them achieve their current status. It would take very little effort to visit their office or leave a note in a mailbox and express gratitude.

Similarly, if it can be done in a professional manner, why not inform professors who were a hindrance or general disappointment of this fact? Perhaps it would enlighten them to problems with their teaching approach or cause them to re-examine their attitudes about their positions.

Rick Slavens '86  
Ken Stavinoha '86  
Engineering Technology

### Ring dance disaster

EDITOR:

I have a definition for you. SENIOR RING DANCE, the totally perfect ending to an absolutely peachy four, five or six years at the illustriously-world-class Texas A&M University — or is it?

Energy conservation is a swell idea, but I think 85 degrees was a tad warm for a formal dance, i.e., thousands of tuxedos and dresses with petticoats playing human pinball on a broom-closet-size dance floor. The only resort to the heat was a nice stroll outside, if you can call wrenching your high heels out of the cracks on the second floor walk from Rudder to the Memorial Student Center a stroll. Was the Hilton booked solid after Senior Dinner?? At least they could have served alcohol at the Hilton and I wouldn't have noticed how much fun I wasn't having.

Photos? With the extensive professional equipment my five-year-old niece could've taken sharper pictures with adequate lighting — but wait — is it black on black or black is back? My date and I both have dark hair, but our pictures have these two shiny faces fading into black oblivion. Of course, his black tux adequately enhanced the beautiful black background.

Who made that larger-than-King Kong size ring? I have a senior ring on my right hand, as do most seniors; we know what they look like. Thank God for that since you couldn't see mine in our pictures.

All this, and less, for the nominal fee of \$35 for a Senior Ring Dance ticket — which wasn't asked for once during the entire evening and no senior identification was asked for upon purchase of the ticket.

I'm truly sorry I turned down the invitation to "Senior Ring Dance" as a freshman — maybe my expectations this year would have been proportional to the amount of fun I had.

Dawn Miller '86

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.