

Opinion

Pull the plug

While Bryan residents will be basking in the glow of cheaper electrical power, College Station may be forced to weather yet another increase in utility rates. College Station's troubles stem from its electrical supplier, Gulf States Utilities, which expects its customers to pay for the obsolete River Bend nuclear power plant it built in Louisiana. It's time to pull the plug on Gulf States' continual rate increases.

The city of Bryan announced Monday that its customers won't have to pay fuel charges in August and September because of the cheaper cost of fuel and increased efficiency of the Bryan Utilities power plant.

Bryan lowered its fuel costs last year when it sold some of its megawatts to other electric companies, and Bryan Utilities is ahead of budget by \$900,000.

Meanwhile, GSU is proposing another substantial rate hike. The company's president, E. Linn Draper, says GSU is in an economic crisis and needs \$150 million to \$175 million more each year to dig itself out of its hole.

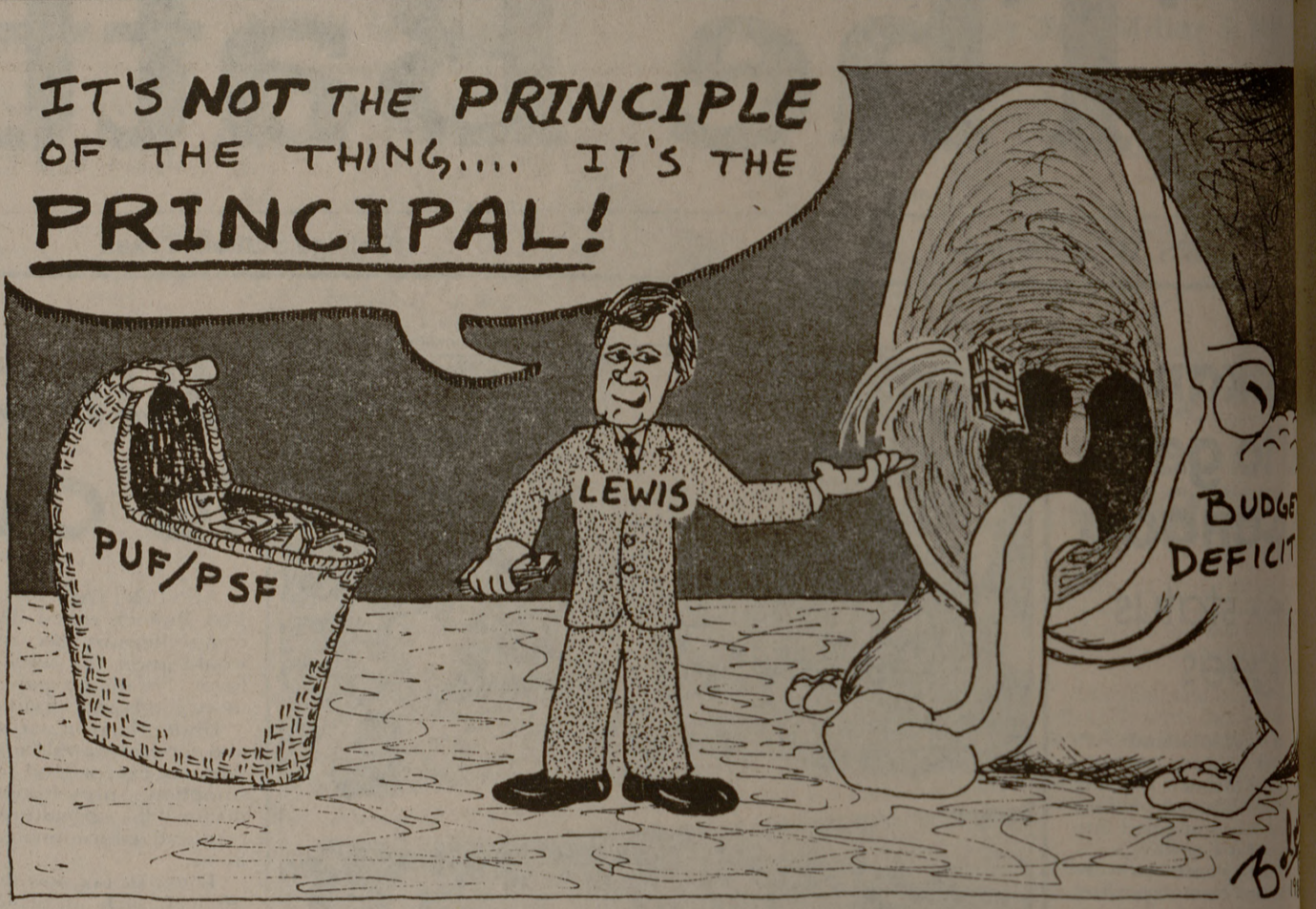
Draper proposes that customers pay more of the utility's costs, including the cost of River Bend, now operating near Baton Rouge, La.

College Station residents already have been paying for the power plant, and until recently were providing more funding than the Louisiana residents who were supposed to benefit from its construction. But GSU admits that the demand for power generated from River Bend is almost non-existent.

While it's unfortunate that GSU is facing financial difficulty because of a bad investment in River Bend, College Station and other customers should not be subjected to incessant power cost adjustments just to help the company fend off the throes of bankruptcy.

GSU built the River Bend plant, and it should absorb the losses for its fiasco. College Station residents shouldn't be expected to pay for services they don't receive — they're paying enough already for the services they do receive. They will only tolerate so many rate hikes before they really blow a fuse.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Rehnquist's peculiar brilliance lacks wisdom, compassion

You must know the story about the city slicker who stops on a country road to ask a farmer directions. To each question, the farmer replies, "Don't know," until the city slicker says, "You don't know much, do you?" "Maybe so," the farmer replies, "but I ain't lost."



Richard Cohen

Well, pardon me if I play the part of the farmer in the on-going confirmation hearings of William Rehnquist to be chief justice of the Supreme Court. I have heard Rehnquist described as "brilliant," an intellectual whiz, learned and, of course distinguished. If he's so smart, the farmer in me asks, how come he's so often wrong?

Take civil rights. From the memos he wrote as a Supreme Court law clerk, indications are that Rehnquist did not agree with the decision that found school segregation unconstitutional. That does not mean that Rehnquist favored segregation. It only means that after peering real hard into the Constitution, he could find nothing that could serve to strike down school segregation.

"I think *Plessy v. Ferguson* was right and should be affirmed," Rehnquist wrote, referring to the separate-but-equal doctrine that prevailed until 1954.

This was the conventional conservative opinion of the time and some conservatives still hold it. As legal theories go, it's not the silliest you are likely to encounter, but neither is it particularly profound. Had the Supreme Court accepted it, some states might still have school segregation and other aspects of Jim Crow as well. In short, the nation would be divided more racially than it is now and further from the goal of a just society. History rebukes Rehnquist on

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this one issue alone — and vindicates the wisdom and the tactics of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Unfortunately for Rehnquist, what was true for school desegregation remains true for other issues — such as affirmative action — that affect minorities or women. As their spokesmen have testified, Rehnquist seems to be against them. He seems almost always to side with authority, with the government and against the individual. Each and every Rehnquist opinion, lawyers will tell you, is witty and scholarly — an intellectual tour de force. Maybe. But they are almost always historically irrelevant, too.

In Rehnquist we have a most peculiar brilliance. It is one that seems to have no relevance to results. It rights no wrongs, expands no rights, champions no oppressed and seems to accept things the way they are. As a school of thought, it has been on the sidelines or opposed to the movements — civil rights, feminism — whose achievements have been historic and beyond debate. (Do we anymore question whether married stewardesses have to quit work or whether schools can be racially segregated?)

At the Rehnquist confirmation hearings, Sen. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., called the likely chief justice an "extremist." Kennedy is entitled to his views, but extremism, as Barry Goldwater once maintained in a different context, is hardly a vice. Indeed, if over the years either the court or society had moved Rehnquist's way, his "extremism" would be laudatory. After all, abolitionists were once extremists, but today there

would be nothing extreme about his views — unless, of course, you happen to think slavery is a good idea.

But Rehnquist's extremism, if that's what it is, does not foreshadow the future, but instead reiterates the past. For his brilliance, it seems to be unrelated to his memory and when it comes to embarrassing incidents, he has been an observer, not a participant in his own life. He can not account for the successes who allege he once harassed minorities at the polls. He allows he may have seen a restrictive covenant on his own house, but memory fails him there, too. He does, though, remember the house.

Just as history rebukes Rehnquist for his *Plessy v. Ferguson* opinion, it makes him seem small and mean when it comes to the executions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for espionage. Rehnquist was so much in favor of their executions he rued in a memo the absence of drawing and quartering (oh, what brilliance!). Years later, though, when reason to question whether the punishment fit the crime and whether Ethel's case, the actual crime was not his own execution. Rehnquist, it seems, never met a death penalty he didn't like.

The brilliance of William Rehnquist is a cold thing. It shimmers without warmth of wisdom and compassion, therefore serves no purpose. Like the city slicker who mocks the farmer, Rehnquist knows everything but he happens to be at the moment, brilliant people could provide him an answer: It's the 20th century.

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Nuclear confrontation a worldwide concern

Last week (Aug. 6 and Aug. 9) marked the 41st anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The usual wire service articles recounted the incident for the people who have been brain dead for the past 20 years. The United States, during World War II, dropped its two remaining nuclear weapons on the Japanese cities. Being the first, and so far only, nuclear warheads used against a civilian population, these two bombings have become the leading argument for nuclear disarmament.



Mark Ude

The peace movements have flocked to these sites as if they were holy shrines, and staged assorted protests against the superpowers and their apparent disregard for human survival. Such goals are worthy of attention, and need to be stressed, especially in these days of potential annihilation by just one country.

Thousands gathered in Japan, marking the historical event with songs, discussion and silent prayer. The proposal for nuclear disarmament to be held in these cities could be a motivating incentive to the hesitant powers.

South African Bishop Desmond Tutu flew to Japan to milk the event for all the publicity he could. Instead of encouraging talks between the superpowers, the Anglican bishop denounced the United States and warned that unless sanctions are imposed upon South Africa, the blacks there will face a potential Armageddon. That really encourages me to start chanting "no nukes, no nukes."

Tutu even went so far as to express wonder and amazement at the people of Hiroshima who have no trace of bitterness at the United States — as if we were at fault in declaring war against the Imperial Japanese Empire.

Americans are too quick to forget what caused the dropping of the bombs which devastated the two cities. The United States was just starting to finish the fourth year of a bloody global war. The conflict in Europe was over, and American troops were ready to go home. We had just lost one of our most popular presidents, and the future of the Pacific War was in question.

Not withstanding the Japanese war on China started 1939, the surprise air raid on Pearl Harbor and the Bataan Death March, the Japanese were defending their home island of Okinawa with kamikaze tactics, extolling a high casualty rate among American servicemen.

With concrete evidence that the Japanese would continue to defend the main island with continued ferocity, then-President Harry S. Truman had to decide which lives were more valuable. The encroaching Soviet Army was another factor which forced the issue. To avoid a divided and occupied Japan, the U.S. would have to beat the Japanese by themselves.

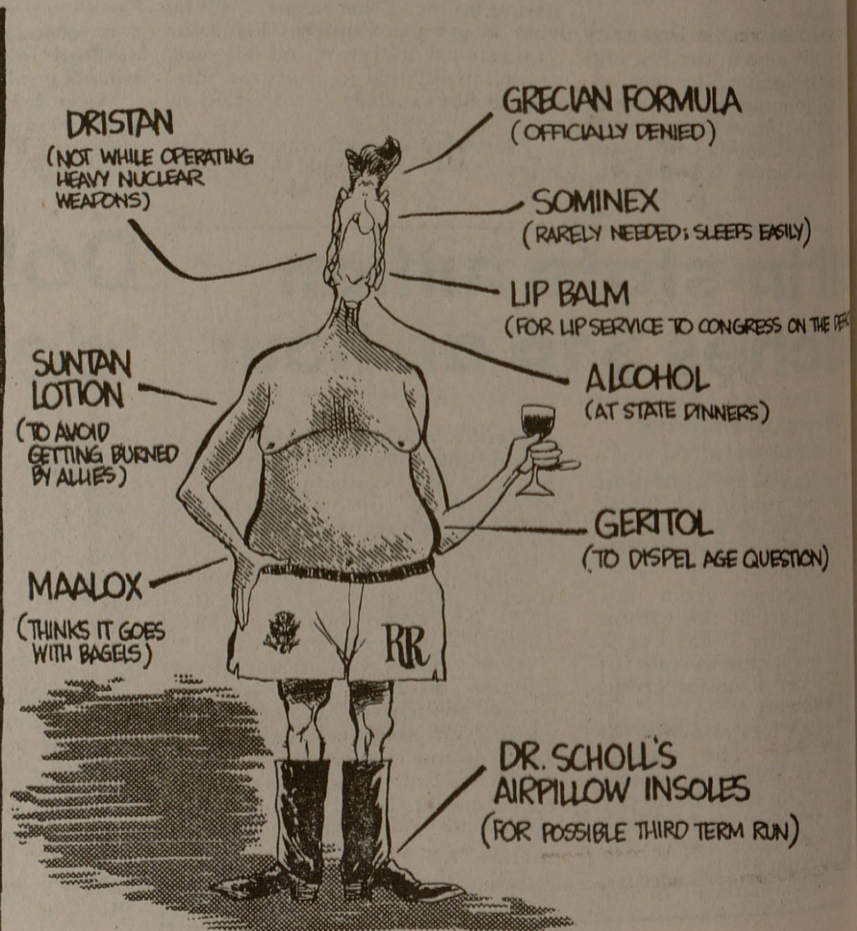
The most formidable problem facing nuclear disarmament now is the abundant number of nations with nuclear capability. Until France and Great Britain include their arsenals, and therefore their offensive ability, with the United States, the Soviet Union will not negotiate. But on the other hand, the Soviet Union will disarm only enough to ensure their ability to deter a nuclear attack from both the United States and the People's Republic of China.

The potential for nuclear confrontation is no longer a one-on-one with the Soviets. It now concerns a great many of other countries who are not willing to entrust their defense to one of the superpowers.

Mark Ude is a senior geography major and a columnist for The Battalion.

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