

Opinion

The Battalion

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A loan or alone?

Congress has been dragging its feet on passing a higher-education bill, and the delay may cause students in need of government loans to look elsewhere for financial support.

The joint House-Senate conference committee on higher education had hoped to extend the existing Higher Education Act before the three-week Labor Day recess, but it failed.

The committee must reach a decision before Oct. 3, when Congress adjourns, or the bill will have to be reintroduced when the new Congress takes over in January. The current bill has been in the works for nearly two years. The longer the delay, the less chance higher education's budget has of surviving deficit-cutting measures.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has developed its fiscal 1987 spending around the existing higher education budget. But the committee also approved a 4.3 percent spending increase for higher education, which means the bill may have to be rewritten.

The House's appropriations bill contains no provisions for higher education because the House is prohibited from allocating funds for programs that have not been approved or extended.

In addition, Congress has agreed to cut \$395 million from Guaranteed Student Loans over the next three years as a means of reducing the deficit. But the committee has yet to determine how the cuts should be implemented. The reductions could have a devastating impact on students who receive federally financed aid.

Students who receive loans after the Higher Education Act runs out may find that loans they applied for at 8 percent interest actually are financed at 10 percent. Also, students may wind up receiving less money than they were originally promised.

Grumblings within the Office of Management and Budget and the Education Department is that the bill, which would allocate \$10 billion for higher education next year, is too expensive.

Uncertainties and disagreements abound within the committee. But Congress has dragged its legislative feet long enough. It's time to work out the kinks in the extension for the Higher Education Act now, before vital student aid is forfeited to bureaucratic stagnation.

Many students' educational futures are at stake — and uncertainty over financial aid could cause many would-be students not to attend college. Congress has a job to do and less than a month to complete it.

Get to work, congressmen. Students need federal education funds to be loaned, not left alone.

Tune in the mind

Action for Children's Television, a group that for years has tried to get networks to improve children's programming, has found an effective method for achieving their goal, which could assist adults as well as children.

ACT is producing "The TV-Smart Book for Kids" which advises parents and children about wise-viewing decisions. It also enlightens young viewers of the tactics and deceptions of advertisers, how much television is too much and how to differentiate between TV and reality.

The book has advantages over protests directed at network programmers. It promotes education among parents as well as children. The book makes both parents and children aware of how much television is consumed in the home and what effect it's having on the family.

The long-term effects of the self-help publication could achieve ACT's other goal of improving children's programming. The networks, after all, respond to ratings. If young viewers and their parents become more selective about what they view, networks will be forced to improve quality or drop in the ratings.

We could all learn a few lessons from "The TV-Smart Book." Television can be beneficial, but too often viewers turn off their brains when they turn on the set. Through the book's tactics, maybe we can teach our children — and adults — to tune in their minds.



Promoting ignorance won't solve problems of American families

"I think I could be pregnant," a teen-age girl wrote to an advice columnist. "Someone told me that I couldn't get pregnant if my boyfriend and I did it with our underwear on, but I think I am. Is that possible?"



Cathie Anderson

After reading this in Ask Beth, a column giving advice to teen-agers, I was dumbfounded. I didn't really think it was possible that any of today's hip teen-agers could be so naive and ignorant.

But after reading comments by Gary Bauer, chairman of a White House task force evaluating the effects of federal programs on American families, I realized that such naivete and ignorance was not solely reserved for today's teens.

In the Sept. 1 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, Bauer, who said he would reserve the specifics of his study for his Nov. 1 report to President Reagan, discussed the generalities.

"In general, we advocate that teen-

agers abstain from premarital sex. If that succeeds, the problem is solved."

"I'm not willing to go to other steps like setting up clinics in schools that dispense contraceptives without parental knowledge."

"Our goal should be to tell children this conduct is wrong and explain why it's bad for them — not to teach them so much about sex that they can engage in it in early adolescence."

After reading this interview, I'd had enough of generalities and couldn't wait until Nov. 1 or thereafter to get down to specifics — specifically that if Bauer expects to lower the number of teen-age pregnancies by keeping youngsters ignorant of sex or by limiting their ability to protect themselves with contraceptives, no government policy could be the best government policy.

Certainly, Americans should not teach their children that sex is "wrong" or "bad for them," something to be whispered about in darkness and not to be enjoyed.

Such Victorian thoughts and attitudes fell by the wayside, I believed, just as I thought today's teens knew pregnancy could not occur without sexual contact, but it seems I also am naive and ignorant.

I am naive enough to believe children will experiment with sex if they don't know all the facts about sex. I am ignorant enough to believe more damage could be done there if more advantage taken of them if they don't know what actually happens.

The problem then is not that "wrong" or "bad" for teen-agers but adolescents often are not taught a sex. They don't know it is used as a means of reproduction, not to mention its use for physical gratification, expression of love, substitution for love, etc.

Bauer says the task force "do away with social programs that serve unwed teen-agers with children." But it's not willing to set up clinics in schools that dispense contraceptives without parental knowledge.

"I can't think of a worse message sent to children," he says.

The worst message, however, already has been sent. The message that ignorance is OK.

All the task force has to do now is send cigars.

Cathie Anderson is a senior journalism major and editor for The Battalion.

Long lines help A&M prosper

Yesterday I stood in a line so long it crossed two time zones, the equator and the 99th Parallel.

Jeff L. Brady

Guest Columnist

Twice. It originated at the Pavilion and spiraled backward alongside the Sterling C. Evans Library, backing up against another line winding out the back doors of the Coke Building. The two lines swirled together creating a formless mob of disoriented freshmen, disgruntled seniors and disillusioned grad students. No one avoids lines around here, folks.

The human mass had eddies and currents all its own, attracting two pavement preachers, a junkfood vendor with cart and three stray pups. I kept looking for Monty Hall to ask me what I'd give for the prize behind door number three.

All I had to do was drop P.E. 199. The human ribbon inched forward at a dizzying 10 feet per hour. I clocked it. The heat was sweltering, my feet ached and I had about 29 other errands to run before five that afternoon.

Welcome Back, Ags. Standing in line is what students learn best at Texas A&M. We stand in line for football tickets, parking stickers, paying fees, lunch, plastic money machines, movies, concert tickets, books, drop-add, paying traffic tickets, groceries, mail, paying fees, senior rings, grades, paying fees, football games, bus passes and finding out we're blocked in that line and have to go stand in line somewhere else.

After four years most seniors have it down to an art.

The guy next to me set up a folding lawn chair and umbrella, two ice chests and a jam box for the duration.

Visions of Cotton Bowl ticket lines swept before my eyes.

"How long you been here?" I asked. "Just two hours," he shot back. "I figure we'll make it inside about Friday."

By now he had a calendar out and was putting a big black 'X' through Tuesday.

Two girls ahead of us had a card table set up with phones at their faces and long extension cords disappearing un-

der nearby shrubbery.

"Gosh, I don't know, P.J.," one said, smacking her strawberry Bubblicious gum. "We've been here since 10 already, and I've painted my nails twice. Burgundy and hot pink."

"If that's the way you feel," the other one winces, "Go ahead without me, Jim. But I've GOT to get this class or Dad will have a cow right there on the living room rug."

Dad must have been an Ag major. Labor Day lines at A&M are generally as long as the horizon and as dependable as the simmering August heat, but they serve a purpose.

They are bona fide social events. Beyond the heat and humidity, confusion aside and entropy beside the point, Ags generally see swarms of old friends and meet plenty of new ones standing in line. Conversations are struck, plans made and Southwest Conference football evaluated. World problems are

solved. People mature, grow old and in line at A&M. Couples meet, couples are wed. Families prosper. Aggies prosper. And the world of Aggies keeps spinning placidly on its main and white axis.

In addition: Lines allow computers to slow down and cool off in air-conditioned comfort while students evaporate in the heat.

Lines allow professors to throw together those last minute book reports and syllabuses before classes really underway.

Lines cross roadways through campus, allowing traffic to bog and campus police write more tickets. So cheer up and bring an ice chest to the next line you enter, happy in the notion that you are helping Aggies prosper.

Jeff L. Brady is a senior journalism major.

Mail Call

Find your own truths

EDITOR:

Hooray for Karl Pallmeyer! For several months I have wanted to write a letter praising this student who is not afraid to go against the prevailing thought at this University. Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to be different and not made in a mold. After seeing all of the letters in "Mail Call" criticizing his columns, I decided I had to write.

As I see it, opinion columns are supposed to provoke thinking, and from the response he got it looks like he has achieved that. Four letters, most accompanied by many signatures, show at least that many people took time to think and write a letter.

Education cannot be only learning a given subject by rote without also knowing how to read, spell, write and think. Far better if a university turns out "world class" graduates than just be a "world class" university. The reputations of its graduates would make it "world class."

I have been associated with this University for a long time as a wife, mother, grandmother and aunt of Aggies and employees of the University, and I have always maintained there is not a better university anywhere. I don't believe, however, that because father, mother, teacher, minister, senator or president state that a fact is true or a way of doing things is the only way should make it true. They are only human and each person should find his own truths for himself.

Jacquelyne Karney

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.