

# Opinion

## The Battalion

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## Lottery not a winner

Like pari-mutuel betting, a state lottery is being lauded as a miracle cure for Texas' financial ills. Also like pari-mutuel betting, the lottery is nothing more than a legislative placebo.

A state lottery would be a timely solution to the budget shortfall — Comptroller Bob Bullock says he could begin selling tickets by March 1, 1987 — but it is a costly one.

Government costs generally absorb from one to two cents of every dollar collected in taxes. For money brought in by a lottery, those costs rise to between seven and 25 cents on the dollar. In addition, the state must put up "seed money" to get the prizes started.

While the lottery is less inviting to organized crime than horse racing (forged tickets are the most common illegal activity), other ethical considerations are not as easily dismissed.

It is unsettling that Texas would support a gambling practice in which participants must lose so the state can "win." Although some psychologists have found that lotteries are unattractive to compulsive gamblers, Gamblers Anonymous says all gambling is potentially addictive.

The lottery's impact on low-income families also is questionable. Texans for the Lottery claim the average ticket-buyer is in the \$15,000 to \$30,000 income bracket. But other studies have found that at least one-third of lottery participants are under the \$15,000 bracket. The danger is that families may buy tickets before they buy food.

The most disturbing aspect of a state lottery as a cure-all revenue is its inconsistent income. Texas needs a stable financial savior, which can best be found through belt-tightening and tax hikes, as unappealing as those solutions might seem.

Placing all our eggs in one financial basket — oil — got Texas into its current jam, and only practical solutions can get it out. It's time for the Legislature to stop chasing rainbows and get to work.

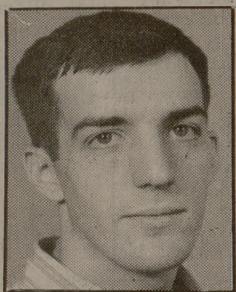
A lottery may bring in additional revenues and might even lessen the inevitable tax increase, but it is financially uncertain and morally unstable.

Texas needs dependable solutions to its fiscal troubles. A state lottery is not the ticket.

## Aggies' loss to LSU

*"We have met the enemy, and they are us"*

I was up in Aspen, Colo., this weekend, showing my newly acquired senior ring the sights. I had taken it to the movies last week (and yes, "Top Gun" is just as good the third time). So, for the cultural benefit of my ring, I decided to give it a glimpse of the Rocky Mountains, the pine trees and the snow.



Mark Ude

Of course, Saturday afternoon the Aggies were playing, so I made it a point to find a bar which had decent prices and a TV tuned to ESPN. Ski resorts have a common desire to rob tourists blind, so my hopes were not high. The best I could find was Dutch beer for \$1.50, so I settled back for what I thought would be a most enjoyable evening.

I enjoyed the scores of other games. Texas Tech was being overrun by Miami, and the University of Texas was losing to Stanford. Even the Baylor stats were to be expected. Unfortunately, LSU was not going to be as cooperative.

Now don't get me wrong. Not only do I bleed maroon, but I consider myself a staunch Aggie who does not falter at the first sign of problems. This is my fifth football season with the Twelfth Man, and I intend to make it our best. But the sad showing of our football team against the Tigers made me wonder.

The game started off well enough, but our defense was not the same quality defense that saved our fair behinds last year. The number of interceptions was another shock. If we insist on giving the other team the football, why can't we at least score with it first?

Why? What did we do or not do to de-

serve such a game? I tried to think of what I, as a good Ag, had neglected to do during the past year since the Cotton Bowl. Perhaps I didn't teach last year's freshmen the right things. Or worse, maybe I didn't say "howdy" to enough Aggies.

That I was the only reason the team had fared poorly in Louisiana ate at my mind. My lack of effort that prevented a win also meant that maybe I wasn't the good Ag I thought I was.

But as I pondered it, I decided perhaps it wasn't my fault — or anyone else's. The dreaded tradition of the insurmountable TV jinx could have been the source of our demise.

While many may not remember, the score of a football game had a nasty tendency to swing in the opposition's favor whenever the game was televised. The locations didn't matter, even Kyle Field was not sacred enough to be spared the consequences. But the jinx had disappeared a few years back, wonderfully dispelled by the arrival of Jackie Sherrill.

Which brings us to the real reason we Aggies did not do as well as hoped. While everybody had visions of another Southwest Conference victory, we lost sight of prior experience — specifically, the first game of last year, against Alabama. The lesson learned in both the 'bama game and the game with LSU is clear: "We have met the enemy, and they are us."

Why is it that Texas A&M must start the season with a game against a rated team? Why do the Aggies play that rated team in a foreign state? The consequences of such actions always will outweigh any penalties from being a bad Ag and not saying "Howdy."

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

## GORBACHEV KEEPS THE KGB ON A SHORT LEASH



## News media primary catalyst in spread of 'drug epidemic'

If the news media, especially television, should ever find itself in an introspective mood, it might examine its performance when it comes to the drug crisis. It could ask what ever happened to skepticism, to its obligation to ask hard questions and put news into perspective. If by any chance it had the guts to do that, it would have to go back to one of those storied press bars for a cathartic drunk. Its performance has been shameful.



Richard Cohen

Without exception, all the major networks and news magazines, not to mention oodles of newspapers, have reported on a drug epidemic. The current issue of *Time* magazine has a cover story on the subject. After some gripping examples of drug use and citizen outrage, *Time* mentions that the problem is abating. The magazine says that the National Institute on Drug Abuse will soon report "rather surprisingly that the current cocaine epidemic has already peaked, and the use of other drugs is declining significantly."

"Rather surprising?" To whom? Not to experts who have been saying this all along. And not to careful readers of some newspapers and magazines who — if they have the patience to wade into lengthy stories — would discover the same fact. It is safe to say, however, that the news would be surprising to a public that has the impression that we are in the midst of an unprecedented drug ep-

idemic — and that things are getting worse. In fact, the *Time* story is an example of how American journalism has packaged the truth about the so-called drug epidemic as protectively as a pearl within an oyster. The statistics are not allowed to intrude on its message that there is a worsening crisis. The paragraph that follows the one saying that drug use is abating, begins, "Even so, the fear that has seized the nation is hardly unwarranted." Hogwash. Fear certainly is unwarranted. Concern, though, is a different matter.

Unfortunately, we are not talking about concern. Fear is the right word — a panic so great that Americans seem willing to surrender cherished civil liberties to fight a battle they already are winning. They will line up, bottles in hand, for urine tests, voice no outrage when a child turns in a parent to the police for possessing marijuana and support opportunistic politicians who propose programs that are proven failures — such as life sentences or death penalties for dealers. For evidence of the panic, just look at the numbers. This year a *Washington Post* poll found that 17 percent of its respondents volunteered drugs as the greatest health problem facing the nation. A year before, they never even brought the subject up.

Of course there is a drug problem. And of course, drugs are addictive and, occasionally, lethal. The public's concern is justified. But it would have been more justified two years ago when the problem was worse. It might even have questioned the Reagan administration, which talked a hard line against drugs

but, in fact, reduced funds for treatment centers (\$200 million in 1984, \$126 million in 1985). All across the nation, addicts, if they seek treatment, are being told to wait. In the meantime they are buying, selling and using drugs.

As for the press, whatever politicians assert, it too often uncritically repeats. If politicians, like the Roman emperors of old, want the circus of a drug epidemic to distract voters, the media must oblige. It has become a soap opera for dubious assertions and right exaggerations, so that drug addicts crowded out other important news. Whatever happened to the deficit trade imbalance or even the energy standby, alcohol abuse? Instead of asking questions, television in particular responded with gripping pictures that suggest a worsening situation but in context. Was the situation worse a year? Could you have taken similar pictures 10 years ago?

In an interview with *Newsweek* magazine, Bill Moyers faulted CBS for pandering to its audience, with a promotional campaign: "That's what happens when you decide not to define your culture, but to flatter it." In the press, Moyers' words ought to be admonition. In the long run, people not be flattered by scare stories when the truth prevails, will resist being played the fool.

The job of the press is to question, probe and, ultimately, to answer. The question: What's new? The answer: it comes to drugs is simple: There's a worsening epidemic. There's a worsening journalism.

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## Mail Call

I wanna be a Pallmeyer  
EDITOR:

Gee, I really loved Karl Pallmeyer's column, "B-CS a cultural black hole." I can clearly see the desperate, pathetic, hopeless situation in College Station and at Texas A&M now that he has painted it so graphically and responsibly for the backward citizenry of this horrible little hole-in-the-wall.

So why do people not see how stupid it is to have a good football program? It's all silly hype, right? After all, the pitifully small amount of money A&M football brings in for the University to help "normal students" (like Karl) "read, research and learn about the world" is so small we could add it up on our gosh darn fingers, right?

College Station also has another terrible and shocking problem that Pallmeyer was smart enough to point out. Yes, none of our totally backward video rental stores carry any Rainer Werner Fassbinder films! What a bunch of nerds! I am surprised they actually had that wonderful classic we've all seen five times and own three copies of, "Cries and Whispers," by Ingmar Bergman. (To be honest, I cried the first time I saw it.)

Gosh, Pallmeyer is the greatest. I just wish I knew as many foreign film directors as he does, but of course, I'm only dreaming. I also wish I hated football, G. Rollie White Coliseum, the local theaters, Madonna, Sylvester Stallone and, of course, that nerd with the big gun who's always in movies with loads of terrible violence that permanently damages the minds of children — Clint Eastwood.

I wish I could be more like Pallmeyer. But how? I know, I'll get my roommate to give me a bowl haircut.  
Pete Sukoneck

Purpose of the signs  
EDITOR:

Regarding Christine Schroeder's letter of Sept. 16. The original purpose of those small yellow signs was to alert emergency personnel, in the case of an accident, that there was a child in the car that needed help. Now, with the proliferation of all those other signs, their original purpose has become lost.  
Michael Allmann '88  
Future emergency care attendant

In memory  
EDITOR:

On behalf of the Sigma Chi chapter and friends of Brennon Meyer we wish to express our warmest sympathies to all the lives he touched. May his memory burn forever in our hearts.  
The Brothers of Eta Upsilon  
Sigma Chi Chapter  
Texas A&M University

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