

Opinion

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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.

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Contra-dictions

The upper echelon of Nicaragua's Contra rebels — President Reagan's so-called "freedom fighters" — is arguing over whether the military or civilian factions should have control of the movement's leadership. Congress should investigate the infighting further before it releases \$100 million in aid to bickering incompetents.

The Contras' organizational problems stem from the formation in July of the Council of Nicaraguan Commanders by the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN), the largest of the rebel armies. Military officials claim the council is designed to improve the Contras' military capability and not deter civilian leadership.

But civilian leaders claim the FDN is out to set up its own political party to carry out military interests if and when the Sandinistas are overthrown. Several civilian leaders have suggested leaving the movement.

Civilians fear that the military arm of the Contras is unwilling to share control of the anti-Sandinista movement. Alfonso Robelo, one of the three members of the ruling directorate, says that the leadership rift is serious but not "a crisis."

But the United States should not take Robelo's — or any of the rebels' — word for it.

The Reagan administration, flaunting the "freedom fighter" euphemism, has poured money into the Nicaraguan resistance in the name of its "better-dead-than-red" foreign policy.

Now Congress is on the verge of sending \$100 million in aid to the Contras. But until the disputes between Contra factions are resolved, the United States cannot be certain its funds will go toward routing communists instead of financing internal strife.

The Contras' infantile squawking match destroys the group's purpose. Both factions are supposed to be working for a common goal. If the Contras spend their time undermining their own leaders instead of the government, Reagan should consider making some other group his freedom fighters.

How can the rebels hope to toss out a government, let alone establish a democracy, if they can't decide who their leaders are? We shouldn't invest our money until we're certain of the return.

Funeral bells don't toll for right-wing America

There have been accusations that I am a radical conservative who does nothing but follow Lyndon LaRouche's hard political line in attacking liberals, women's rights, gays and any other minority groups within range.



Mark Ude

I have been told that I believe democracy comes out of the barrel of a gun (not quite true) and women should be kept barefoot and impregnated in the kitchen. I also am perceived as living in a "Leave it to Beaver" episode and was compared to Adolf Hitler.

While I disclaim much of the above, I would like to think I am fairly moderate conservative. For many, that question is moot. A conservative is automatically included in the ranks of the opposition, the extremists who think that anyone who isn't a John Birch Society member should be shot.

I don't hate gays personally. I probably wouldn't know one if I saw one. That doesn't mean I think the gay lifestyle is morally right, though. And while I'm sure Daniel Ortega is a swell guy, I dislike dictators, whether they be left or right, and any undue suffering that they cause.

I do not consider myself prejudiced or racist, yet I still think it's wrong for minority groups to have their ethnic identity in an organization's title, when they would scream bloody murder if whites did the same.

While I am not a Ku Klux Klan member training Boy Scouts in secluded survivalist camps, I am definitely not a liberal.

I do take certain stands on various issues, but I do not always take far-right views. I consider hunger and poverty an important issue in today's world, and I have never taken a let-them-eat-cake attitude toward the despondent. Nor have I based my foreign policy attitudes only on Soviet expansion or the "Domino Theory."

Believe it or not, I do have feelings that are left of the political center. There are times when I wonder just who is right on certain issues. Unfortunately, truth is subjective, and facts are not always truth.

But bottom truth is, not everybody can win, no matter what the Marxists tell you. The world has both winners and losers, and you can't have one without the other. The matter of the fact is that the strong are usually the winners and the weak, the losers.

I'd like to think that in supporting one option, the majority of participants are winners, but that's not always so. In deciding between left or right, I consider myself more of a realist, and a cynical one at that. There are too many bad people out there for a nation to blindly accept good intentions. Perhaps former President Jimmy Carter's worst fault was his naivete.

In a letter to the editor this past summer, I was addressed with a quote by Henry Ward Beecher: "A conservative young man has wound up his life before it was unreeled. We expect old men to be conservative, but when a nation's young men are so, its funeral bell is already rung."

Are funeral bells ringing? I don't think so. In my beliefs and understanding, loosely stereotyped as conservative, I would like to think of myself as practical, instead of entering an age of early senility.

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



Tax reform offers little change

The American revolution was fought to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." The revolutionaries of France marched on Paris from Marseilles singing a song later known as "The Marseillaise." The Russian revolution adopted "The Internationale," but the Tax Revolution of 1986, proclaimed thus by Sen. Robert Packwood, R-Ore., and touted as a radical document, should take as its anthem the old Peggy Lee song "Is That All There Is?"



Richard Cohen

The answer, I'm afraid, is yes. For the average taxpayer, the Great Reform Measure of Maybe All Time, will mean a savings of anywhere from \$2.50 to \$8 a week — not enough to call home about, although a letter might be affordable. As a revolution, this one will benefit certified public accountants and lobbyists: The poor will remain poor, the rich will become richer and the rest of us will pay about what we did before.

The problem with the bill is not that it is bad legislation, but that it has been oversold. One way this was done was to keep the projected savings in percentage terms. Thus the poor, who will be lopped off the rolls altogether, are said to be the bill's major beneficiaries — taxes reduced by as much as 22.3 percent. But unless their grocery store takes percentages at the counter, the tax bill will be no bonanza. The poor already pay next to nothing in taxes and even people earning between \$10,000

and \$20,000 a year will net a savings of only \$180.

As for the rich, they benefit from bookkeeping by percentages. Their windfall seems modest enough when stated like that — 2.3 percent — but in dollars, the story is different. On a \$200,000 income, someone who has not availed himself of tax shelters could save \$2,856. No need to call collect.

Many of the changes in the tax bill are worthwhile. For instance, it is both wise and fair to eliminate most tax shelters since they produced little that's worthwhile and nonproductively interfered in the workings of the economy. It was also a good idea to get the working poor off the tax roles. Being poor is burden enough. And it was about time that corporations were made to pay their fair share of taxes. Over the years, their contribution to the Treasury diminished to the point where it was negligible.

But really, now, by what stretch of the imagination can the bill be proclaimed either radical or reformist? It is a well-deserved purging of the tax code, but it does nothing to ameliorate poverty or to make the rich pay more in taxes than they now do. It only deprives them of some goodies (mostly tax shelters) — and makes it up to them in reduced tax rates. The affluent, it turns out, are the deserving orphans of our society. In exchange for tax shelters they did not deserve, they get reduced tax rates that they also do not deserve. We simply can't say no to them.

Someday people will ask how it was possible that Congress and the president huffed and puffed over taxes for so long and did not put a dent in the

federal deficit? How could they have produced a tax bill that did not address the most urgent fiscal problem facing the country: the underfunding of the federal government and the \$2 trillion debt? Of course, we know the answer: Ronald Reagan would not permit taxes to be raised and ballooned defense spending, and Congress lacked the guts to buck him. If there were a urine test for common sense, most of Congress would fail.

For Congress, the tax-reform bill is a typical performance. The national legislature has become the functional equivalent of an overindulged child. Modest accomplishments are praised as triumphs; a hesitant first step is cheered if it were a 100-yard dash. Ordinary legislation gets touted as revolutionary; an intention is all that seems to matter. Let's make the Army close the borders and stop all drugs from coming in. In favor say "aye," those opposed say "nay": The ayes have it. The borders sealed and drugs are no more. Next time machine.

By and large the tax-reform bill is good legislation. Its foremost achievement is an attempt to restore a measure of fairness, and thus confidence, in the tax code by abolishing most tax shelters. But it says something both about Congress and us that a bill that basically retains the status quo is described as revolutionary. Maybe only for the rich is that.

Abbe Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, who asked what he did during the French revolution, said, "I survived." There's looking at the tax bill, could give a different answer: They prospered.

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Mail Call

Whole greater than parts

EDITOR:

Once upon a time the Aggie ring was a symbol of great accomplishment. It was the final step before graduation when a student became fully recognized as a part of the "family" that Texas A&M students and alumni are a part of. The Spirit of Aggieland has not diminished, but the ring has.

I'll never forget the feeling when I put my senior ring on for the first time 13 months ago. I've worn my ring every day since then, until the Southern Mississippi football game, that is.

I was attending the game with my friends and getting crazy because the Ags were doing so well. In the fourth quarter I was shocked to discover that the A&M crest had fallen off my ring and was nowhere in sight. The anger I felt was incredible, to say the least.

Soon after receiving my ring I discovered that the Aggie ring had originally been one solid piece, but several years ago it was changed to a two-piece model. I'm sure this was done to save the students' money, and I applaud the intention. Meanwhile, I paid \$200-plus for a ring that fell apart after one year. I hope my ring is the exception and not the rule. Women need not worry because their ring remains one piece.

Thanks to a good Ag, I did find my Aggie crest and will have it fixed by a worthy jeweler soon.

Robert D. Wolter '86

Where was Barton?

EDITOR:

We've read too much about the loopholes in the tax reform bill for private jets, reindeer, Chicago and St. Louis sports teams and Louisiana State University and the University of Texas athletic programs to believe that the goal of fairness in tax reform has been achieved by the new bill. Perhaps we should be surprised, but we're not.

What does surprise us is that the UT athletic program got special tax breaks and Texas A&M didn't. Where was Joe Barton? Why didn't our congressman demand the same tax breaks for A&M that Austin's congressman got for UT?

John Slaughter '88
Dan Kaiser '88

Thanks to the yell leader

EDITOR:

We would like to take a minute to say thanks to Marty Holmes, our head yell leader, for the outstanding job he has done so far this season.

There has been criticism among some students who think he is being too harsh on the Twelfth Man for not fully supporting the Aggie traditions. We think he is doing just the opposite. He has taken the initiative to uphold and inform people of important Aggie traditions.

Being fifth-year seniors, we have witnessed how the Howdy tradition has diminished in the past couple of years, and Marty is trying to do something about it. He's not trying to get on a soapbox about Aggie traditions, he's simply trying to uphold these sacred ways, which many people are thankful for. If he doesn't remind us, no one will, and the traditions could diminish year after year.

Being in the position of head yell leader, he will never please everybody, but he is trying to make very positive improvements, and we know his efforts and initiative will pay off.

Keep up the good work and we'll be following you all the way to the Cotton Bowl!

Cliff Dugosh '86
Ann Cervenka '86

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.