

Opinion

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Cathie Anderson, Editor
Kirsten Dietz, Managing Editor
Loren Steffy, Opinion Page Editor
Frank Smith, City Editor
Sue Krenek, News Editor
Ken Sury, Sports Editor

Editorial Policy

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. The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism. The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843.

Political specimens

Lately a lot of politicians have been structuring their campaigns around the bottle — the specimen bottle, that is. But the “my-urine’s-cleaner-than-your-urine” banter has gotten out of hand. This anti-drug craze spinoff that has entered the political spectrum has clouded the real political issues. Many campaigns have gone to the dogs or the gutter, but the 1986 elections have gone to the bathroom.

Candidates across the country are filling bottles to prove the purity of their bodily fluids. The governor’s race in Arkansas resulted in not only the incumbent and the challenger submitting to urine tests, but also their wives and the challenger’s campaign consultant. In Atlanta, frontrunner Julian Bond lost a congressional primary after he refused to match his opponent bottle for bottle.

Other political concerns such as Star Wars and a balanced budget pale in comparison to dueling specimen bottles. Our confidence that candidates’ worth as representatives of the people can be proven by the purity of their urine has superseded other concerns for choosing leaders — such as trust.

Unfortunately, urine can’t be tested for corruption, incompetence or lack of sincerity. Drug-test mania has dropped already-gutted American politicking to sewer level.

Candidates are requesting a showdown in the restroom instead of the political arena. No longer must elected officials be pure of heart and pure of mind — only pure of specimen.

It’s time to call a cease-fire in the so-called “jar wars.” The voting public deserves better than politicians who spend their time squabbling over urine. The voting public deserves candidates who are concerned with the issues and show some signs of personal dignity. Let’s let the clean-urine issue go down the drain — where it belongs.

Mail Call

Is it really a rally?

EDITOR:

To my knowledge, today’s “Panorama of Republican Perspectives on the State of Texas” is the first time that the Memorial Student Center’s Political Forum has ever engaged in such blatantly partisan activity. It has been my understanding that it is Political Forum’s policy to be a non-partisan organization that sponsors informational programs for the benefit of students, staff and community.

Because the program features only prominent Republicans (Vice President George Bush, Sen. Phil Gramm, Rep. Joe Barton and former Gov. Bill Clements) and no Democrats, it would seem that a balanced discussion of the issues is not possible. Also no overall theme seems to be addressed by the program.

The encouragement of political thought and discussion is an important function of a university, but how is it appropriate for Political Forum to spend money that is generated through our student services fee to sponsor what amounts to nothing more than a last-minute, pre-election pep rally for Republican faithfuls? I think the rally participants should have used better judgment than to try and use their position to corrupt the organization toward partisan ends.

William L. Hancock Jr. '87

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

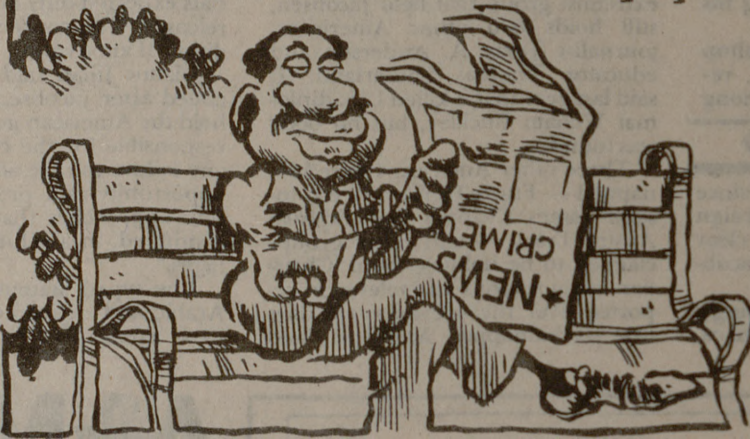
The Illiteracy Crisis:

Mary Lou can't balance her checkbook

MARGULIES ©1986 HOUSTON POST



Grover is unable to read the paper

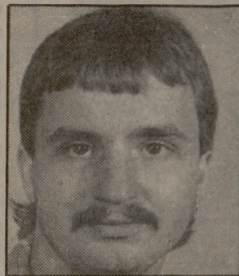


Ed has trouble with important documents



Politicians make their money for nothing, promises for free

On this day, the eve of elections, I have reached a point where I am as tired of political television advertisements as I am of all the promises that the candidates have made.



Craig Renfro

There is no way in the world that those promises will be kept, but when politicians are on the campaign trail, they say whatever makes them look good, knowing full well that those promises will be swept under the doormat as soon as the reality of the political world hits them.

To help make some sense of this mess I have uncovered where the politicians’ hearts lie — MONEY.

I’m talking about campaign contributions of major proportions, made by groups of people who expect something in return for their investment.

Running an election costs money, and most politicians, while financially independent, still require additional funds to ensure that the election is not lost just because they didn’t appear on television often enough.

All of these contributions are made with the preconceived notion that if the candidate is elected, any critical piece of legislation that concerns this special interest group will receive the candidate’s supreme support, lest the candidate not receive any future funding.

I recently chatted with special interest group analyst Gimm E. Cash on the sub-

ject of just how much a candidate is influenced by special interest groups.

Cash made some startling observations that proved once and for all that you don’t bite the hand that feeds you.

“Once there was a situation where some investors wanted to put up a shopping mall in East Texas,” Cash said. “However, construction of the mall would have interfered with a 250-acre mushroom field.

“Normally something like that wouldn’t stop a shopping mall. But considering that the UMPA (United Mushroom Pickers of America) contributed several thousand dollars to candidates from the district, construction never began.”

“Those mushroom pickers must be a pretty powerful group of people,” I replied. “But surely not every candidate is controlled by these special interest groups. There must be at least one politician who can stand on his own two feet when it comes to critical legislation.”

Cash laughed heartily at my political naivete, and decided to tell me what it is really like in the political world.

“The first thing you have to realize is that politicians are scum in three-piece suits,” Cash said emphatically. “The second thing you must know is that they will say or do anything to get into office, even if it means making a few promises they know they can’t keep.

“The third, and most important, thing is that they will be ‘true blue’ to the people who come up with the ‘mean green.’”

“So what you mean to say is that the

candidates will do whatever their money tells him,” I replied.

“Exactly,” Cash replied. “Because if they don’t, you can bet they won’t receive any money from the groups they slighted.”

“But doesn’t anyone control these special interest groups?” I asked. “Or are they free to give money to whomever they want?”

“That is the key to the whole political game,” Cash replied. “They are free to give as much money as they please to as many politicians as they want.”

“But what purpose does that achieve?” I asked.

“Boy, you really are dumb,” Cash said. “They give money to as many different politicians as they can because they know that some candidates, despite the support money, won’t vote on their side, and they want to make sure that they have all political bases covered.”

“I think I’m finally beginning to understand this process,” I said. “Special interest groups give money to politicians, and in turn politicians give political favors to special interest groups.”

“Yes, I think you are beginning to understand how this game works,” Cash replied.

“But there is one thing I don’t understand,” I said. “How does your normal, average, everyday citizen fit into the picture?”

“He doesn’t,” Cash replied. “Unless he can contribute a few thousand dollars to a politician’s cause.”

Craig Renfro is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

What is the real value of a college education?

Choosing careers by income ceilings can lead to big bank accounts but low job interest

After I visited my friend, who attends a northern Missouri medical school, I came home feeling shortchanged by life. Everything was fine as Fred and I reminisced at length about our care-free high school days. But when we began to ponder our futures, I started feeling a little envious of him.

Mike Sullivan
Guest Columnist

As we discussed our postgraduation plans, Fred shared a bit of his dad’s advice with me about choosing a career. When Fred began college, his dad told him that no matter what career Fred chose, he should make sure there was no ceiling on his income potential. As we continued our chat about the exciting road to financial freedom and the proximity of our graduation dates, I began to question the shrewdness of my decision to major in journalism. Thinking about Fred’s almost certain monetary success made me feel like I had made a drastic mistake in charting my life’s course that only a three-year detour to law school could correct.

During the flight home, I gazed out the window, wondering if destiny would ever land me in any of the tiny towns below. Maybe I’d wind up writing for a small newspaper — for a small salary — in one of those million little Smithvilles, or maybe I wouldn’t even be that lucky. In any case, I felt doomed to a life of monetary mediocrity. At the end of the flight I had convinced myself that after four years of college I would have no more income-earning potential than the day I graduated from high school. I felt my tragic error was pursu-

ing my love for writing instead of my liking for money.

But a good night’s sleep in my own home helped me shake the insecure feeling, and by morning my clear thinking had been restored. Money motivates me — it does most people to some degree. A better car, a bigger house and nicer clothes appeal to the majority of the up and coming.

But I feel sorry for students who plot their lives’ paths in the direction of the nearest bank, giving only secondary consideration to how much they will actually enjoy their future careers.

The students who only consider the income potential of their future jobs are missing out on things that money can’t buy. For those college students, higher education is simply the next step in what has become a system for success. College isn’t a broadening experience for them, but simply a means to an end. They take only those classes necessary for their degrees, learning the way to do things and never questioning the why.

After four years of specializing in an area, and becoming more and more narrow in their thinking (I always thought college was supposed to be mind-expanding), students graduate, fit nicely into society, and are rewarded for their good behavior with money.

It could be called hush money in some cases. After all, it’s given to people who don’t question authority but follow it blindly. But how long can the novelty of owning a new car and a home in the



suburbs last? It had better last a lifetime for the people who give it primary consideration while in college.

The real twist comes in the later stages of a career, when the money is taken for granted and the competition for advancement gets tougher. The people who love their work will do a better job. They’re the hustlers — the people who make working 60 hours a week look fun. Guess who gets advanced?

And look what happens to all the intensely specialized people when their industry takes a dive. The people who enjoy their fields of study in college diversify their electives instead of seeking the path of least resistance. It makes them better

equipped to handle unexpected changes in their industry.

Most students don’t worry about whether they’ll like a particular job because, although they’re devoting four college years to it, they really know little about the actual field.

Last year I had two roommates majoring in accounting who said they would be driving BMW’s five years after graduation. That’s an impressive goal, and it was one they had set for themselves as freshmen. Three years later, neither of them have even been inside an accounting firm, and they probably still don’t know exactly what an accountant does. I have to wonder if they’ll turn out to be good accountants or just good BMW drivers.

The lure of material things has strengthened in the last 20 years, and the result is a society of people who think they can set themselves apart from one another by driving the best cars or wearing the nicest clothes. The easiest way to reach this level of individualism is to follow the trail set up for them by society. Young people go to college, pursue careers based on income potential, and buy as many things as they feel they need to be different, to be an individual.

Maybe I will go on to law school after all. I don’t think I’d really enjoy being a lawyer, but like Fred says, there’s no ceiling on income potential. When I graduate, I’ll be able to buy the best things. I’ll be able to drink imported beer. Hey, I’ll be an individual — just like Fred.

Mike Sullivan is a senior journalism major and a staff writer for The Battalion.