

Opinion

The Battalion

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Interest in education

Education Secretary William J. Bennett's recent proposal to increase interest rates on student loans in exchange for a longer repayment period appears to benefit graduates who have lower-income jobs. But Bennett is using student financial aid as a weapon in his perpetual squabble with colleges and universities over tuition increases.

Under the proposed aid policy, students would have to pay back loans at the rate of 91-day Treasury bills (currently 5.34 percent) plus 3 percent. The interest rates would be higher, but the repayment time would be adjusted to income.

Currently, the federal government spends about \$2 billion annually to subsidize interest on student loans. Under the new plan, students would be solely responsible for interest payments.

Bennett's goal is to reduce government expenditures and skyrocketing college tuition by eliminating government-subsidized interest payments. Bennett may be correct in saying that colleges raise tuition because, under the current aid policy, the government is willing to pick up part of the tab. But his proposal will make students pay in the long run for troubleshooting the system.

While graduates with low-paying jobs could reduce the amount of the monthly payments, they will wind up paying more in smaller payments. Even those who pay back the loan rapidly will pay more under the increased interest rates than they currently do.

Bennett claims the proposal will allow graduates to fit payments to their career rather than their career to their payments. But the proposed aid package charges students for taking more time to repay. In attempting to reduce colleges' misuse of the financial aid system, the government would milk a few extra dollars out of graduates as well.

Given the choice, most students would rather have the lower interest rates and get their loans paid off than ultimately pay more money at a higher interest rate.

If student well-being was the primary concern, the Education Department would find a way to discipline colleges without using students' aid funds. Instead, financial aid has become a pawn in the ongoing Bennett-colleges war.

When it comes to saving government money versus helping students in need of financial support to get through college, we know where the government's interests lie.

Koop favors sex education, opposes silence about AIDS

When U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Everett C. Koop issues a report on sex education, taking the position normally associated with the permissivists, one draws back from the conventional position and reflects. Is there something to recommend "sex education"?



William F. Buckley Jr.

It pays to remember that Koop is not merely an M.D. He is very much the moralist. Long before he became the surgeon general, he teamed up with the Rev. Francis Schaeffer, the late theologian, and produced a six-hour documentary on abortion, which in Koop's judgement is out-and-out murder. He is a practicing Christian and an evangelical, and now he comes out for sex education of the kind generally opposed by moralists of Koop's persuasion. What are his arguments?

The 34-page report issued by the surgeon general's office is the first that addresses directly the problem of AIDS. It begins by telling us something every newspaper reader knows, namely that the disease continues to spread, and that the figures are discouraging. Fifteen thousand people are dead of the disease already, and 12 times that number will be dead of it within five years.

Now Koop did not need to tell any informed American how to slow down the spread of the disease to protect the uncontaminated. That's easy: Don't use a needle for drugs, and don't have sex except with uncontaminated people. But the trouble with advice that simple, Koop (and, of course, others) are saying now, is that we are not talking about counsels of angelism. We are talking, to use a phrase, about how the world works.

On the matter of intravenous infection, protection is as simple as using a needle that isn't infected, and that isn't difficult to do provided the needle-user

breaks out of the hypnotic allure of needle-sharing and insists on using a hygienic vehicle for his poison. In the matter of sex, "the best protection against infection right now, barring abstinence," writes Koop, "is use of a condom." So therefore? Teach children to use condoms.

We got that right? No, no, no: Teach children NOT to have sex, Koop the moralist would say, but then teach them that should they fall into the temptation of doing so, they should use a condom. What Koop opposes is "silence" on the subject.

"This silence must end," he writes. "We can no longer afford to sidestep frank, open discussion about sexual practices — homosexual and heterosexual. Education about AIDS should start at an early age so that children can grow up knowing the behaviors to avoid to protect themselves from exposure to the AIDS virus."

One greets such advice, so apparently reasoned and compelling, with residual reservations. To begin with, we know that there seems to be a negative correlation between sex education and pregnancies. The great Scandinavian experiment, which is now more than a generation old, has brought to that part of the world not only sex education, but an increase in pregnancies among children. It might be argued that there would be still more pregnancies but for the sex education, but Koop does not appear to be saying the equivalent thing in respect of AIDS. He says that if the sex education he favors were undertaken, one might save 14,000 lives by 1991.

Surely there is something to be said for the stimulation of a national habit. I can think of one that is gradually taking hold, namely the use of the seatbelt. In some states it is now compulsory, though my own experience is that some people use a seatbelt and others do not, and there is little correspondence between the use of it where it is required and where it is not required.

If children were taught that, all other considerations to one side, the condom

always should be associated with sex even as the safety belt always should be associated with driving, some progress of the kind Koop seeks could be expected. There is abundant evidence that the mature homosexual community is, so to speak, seatbelt-oriented nowadays in a sense that it was not even a year or so back.

But to teach the condom, and to go the logical step further of supplying the condom (for the sake of the young inflamed who have not thought to bring along their own), is arguably to induce an atmosphere in which the Scandinavian analogy becomes directly relevant. If the utilitarian emphasis is stressed, it may well be at the expense of the moral emphasis — which returns us to the question of which of the two should take precedence among teachers and parents.

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Constructive criticism

EDITOR:

It would appear from *The Battalion's* report of the Memorial Student Center Council's discussion of the "A Panorama of Republican Perspectives on Issues Facing the State of Texas Program" that the Council has little intention of utilizing the criticism generated by the program in a positive fashion. I sincerely hope that this is not to be the case.

Instead of being concerned about publicly replying to this criticism, those involved with the program should use these inquiries and statement to learn from an obviously flawed program. Any program in which the principle speaker renounces the format and abandons the topic (do Strategic Defense Initiative and Libya directly concern the Texas governor's race?) and the VIP list partially is drawn from lists provided by the respective campaign has problems. Any time a current member of the Board of Regents (William McKenzie) appears on the stage of a partisan function representing the University and student service fees help pay for such an event,

an unfortunate incident into a tragedy. He has characterized Chan's black supporters as lacking "the guts to be the men and women God made them to be." And then, as if to show that he is truly a minister, he allowed that he had forgiven Chan: "If we didn't forgive him, we would have cut his head off and rolled it down the street."

Wilson's rhetoric was too much for Mayor Marion Barry, who offered himself as a mediator. The mayor based his post-election burst of activism on his economic concerns for the area. Although not a word about demagoguery escaped his lips, he remains by comparison a towering moral figure. Washington's congressional delegate, the Rev. Walter Fauntroy, when last heard from, said nothing. There are few votes in the Asian community.

There is more than a little bit of racism at the heart of the Chan affair. At first he was said to be a Korean since they, more than the Chinese, have been buying Washington's mom-and-pop grocery stores. Even when his true ethnicity was discovered (he happens to be a naturalized Chinese-American), it hardly changed matters. His real offense is that he is not black and does not live in the neighborhood where he makes his money. Therefore, in the facile economic reasoning of both Wilson and Fauntroy, he takes money out of the community. Never mind that his store provides a service, not to mention jobs to several clerks.

It is something of a paradox that the Chan controversy is taking place in Washington, the nation's capital. Newspaper accounts undoubtedly will be noticed by members of Congress and high Reagan administration officials, who will then turn their attention to something "momentous." It will occur to only some of them that what is happening within the proverbial shadow of the Capitol is a reflection of a larger national tragedy, for which the government has been doing precious little. A whole generation of black America is missing.

The mom-and-pop stores that are now run by Asians were once the busi-

nesses of, among others, Italian, Jewish immigrants. The small stores were stepping stones out of the ghetto class — and, for Asians, they continue to be just that. All it takes for success in industry and minimal entrepreneurial skill. In the normal course of events, these stores should now be owned by blacks. That they largely are not is national evidence that the multigenerational wounds of slavery and racial discrimination still cripple.

What is happening in Washington is happening elsewhere in the country. In some areas, the new class of entrepreneurs is Arab, in others Hispanic, in some places, Vietnamese. Little wonder that some blacks are both frustrated and, to make them more embittered, they see little good coming their way from the government. Many blacks, Reaganism has a distinct cold shoulder.

But blaming Ronald Reagan is the answer, Chan is not the problem and the old confrontational techniques are fruitless exercises in nostalgia. Too long some black leaders have been willing to lead posers chasing scapegoats. Once it was the Jewish merchant who "exploited" the ghetto; now it is the Asian. The ethnicity of the alleged culprit keeps changing, but not the conditions and not, unfortunately, the rhetoric of some leaders. The era of riots is over, but the thinking that excused them lingers. Chan is being torched.

The good news is that some black leaders oppose Wilson. They know chasing out Chan solves nothing — it is racism masquerading as economic self-determination, a hollow phrase in any case. No matter what happens to Chan, the real challenge remains the development of a black entrepreneurial class and the revitalization of the ghetto.

The sacrifice of a scapegoat, no matter how comforting it makes some people feel, will not accomplish that. If, for one, really wants to do good for his community, he ought to do two things: shut his mouth and open his store.

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Black entrepreneurial class, ghetto revitalization needed

Mail Call

investigations and criticisms should be expected. While these are only a few of the problems which surfaced in the program, I have yet to hear of any of these concerns being addressed or even an acknowledgement of the flawed nature of the program.

I don't know if MSC Political Forum is answerable to the Faculty Senate or not. This is not the point. The administrators and students involved have a responsibility to analyze the criticism and suggestions from the Faculty Senate, the *Eagle* or any other concerned party so as to improve future programming. After all, the actions of these people reflect upon the entire University through the programs produced. Unfortunately, at this point, I have seen no evidence by anyone involved in the MSC toward this end.

Derek Blakeley

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