

Opinion

The Battalion

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A grim proposal

When it comes to military spending, President Reagan seems to understand long-term investments. Spending billions on SDI now, he tells us, will protect us from enemy missiles in the future.

Yet he fails to comprehend the significance of making a long-term investment in education. Helping students now may protect us from a destruction far more agonizing than that from missiles. As we cut education funds, we cut America's ability to maintain its status as a world power in the future.

The United States has prided itself on its "Yankee ingenuity," but the less money available to help foster that ingenuity, the less there will be to deal with problems we may face in the future.

As an answer to the president's reductions in education funding, Secretary of Education William J. Bennett has proposed a new type of student loan. The new loans would have a higher interest rate than Guaranteed Student Loans, but the rate of repayment would be based on the individual's income after graduation.

This so-called income-contingent student loan policy may sound virtuous, but it also may steer students away from lower-paying but important careers, such as teaching, journalism and social work. College students' desires no longer may be to pursue challenging careers, but to get jobs that will enable them to repay their loans as soon as possible.

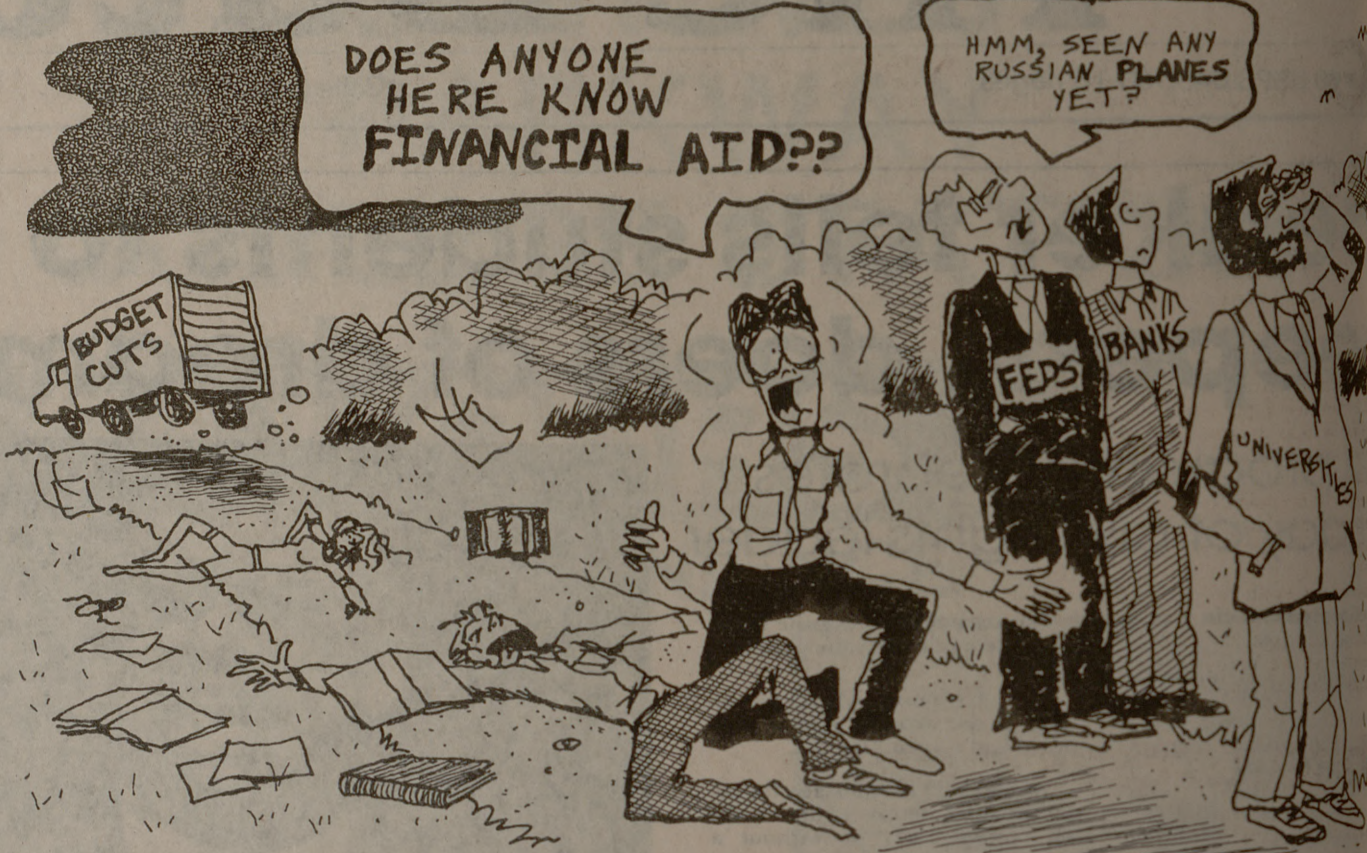
The proposal also fails to account for changes in the job market. If, for example, someone took out an income-contingent loan to get a degree in petroleum engineering four years ago, the job market looked bright. But the recent oil glut virtually has sealed that market to newcomers.

We can't continue to allow the costs of higher education to skyrocket and then refuse to offer adequate assistance.

The new Reagan proposals would make college unaffordable for lower-income families that may not be able to qualify for a loan and, because of the proposed budget cuts, would be unable to receive grants or scholarships.

Instead of thinking of college students as people seeking an education, Reagan should imagine students as miniature SDIs, which, if invested in properly, will provide a great service for this country in the future.

If the ballooning defense budget continues to suck the air out of social and education programs, the country may find itself with Reagan's much-vaunted Star Wars program and no one left who's educated enough to use it.



Can the U.S. afford not to finance higher education?

"Dad, what's SDI?" asked Johnny, a boy of about 13.



Loren Steffy

"Well, son, that's our country's salvation. It protects us from our enemies and keeps us safe," the boy's father replied.

"How's it work?"

"Oh, geez, son, I don't know. I learned a little about it college, but I don't remember much. It has something to do with lasers and mirrors and magic."

"Dad, what's college?"

"Oh, nothing really. It was kind of like school after high school, only it was real expensive and nobody could afford it."

"Is sending me to junior high expensive?"

"No son. The government pays for you to go to school because it's important for a country to have educated people."

"Then, why aren't there any more colleges? Why didn't the government pay for them, too?"

"Well, the government tried to help out. For a while, students could get what was known as scholarships — basically gifts of money from the government. But it got to be too expensive. The government needed the money for protecting the nation, for things like SDI. The people didn't like it at first, but the administration at the time came up with a slogan — 'Better safe than smart.'"

"Couldn't students who wanted to keep on learning get a loan, like we did for our house and car and home entertainment center?"

"The government used to provide loans, even at lower interest rates than the ones you're talking about, but that got to be expensive, too. There had to be national priorities, son. The loan programs changed. The government made the switch by claiming that students defaulted at a high rate. Actually, the student default rate was about the same as it was for other types of loans, but if the government says something, you know, you don't question it."

"So how did you get to college, Dad?"

"Well, I got what was called an income-contingent loan. I paid back the loan at regular interest rates, but only as fast as I could afford to."

"That sounds fair. But what could college offer that a quality high school couldn't?"

"They were called careers. Now, most careers are done by machines, but in those days people did them, just like they do jobs today. I wanted to be a teacher, you know. Back then people were still teachers — we didn't have the lecturing machines. I thought it would be wonderful to help kids learn, to grow, to become responsible citizens. I thought that if I did a good job, some of my stu-

dents might actually better. What an idealist I was.

Teachers didn't make any money. Like I said, there had to be a way. And if I decided to go into teaching, would have been about 50 years old. I didn't want to pay off my loan. I didn't want to take the rest of my life, so I went into nuclear physics. That tied me into national priority. The Defense Dept. couldn't wait to get its hands on me. And I've done well for myself."

"Do you have any regrets about being a... what'd you call it... teacher?"

"No. I was in one of the last classes. After that, people stopped going to school and just concerned themselves with jobs. I wouldn't have anything to do. This way I got a job. Now all I have to do is sit and authorize instruction programs for the assembly line computers."

"Well, then you must have some idea of how SDI works, if you know construction and maintenance programs."

"I just authorize them, son. I don't figure them out."

"But Dad, if you don't know how it works, who does?"

"No one, son. Oh, I guess that people still went to college and did that sort of thing, someone knew how to work. I guess back then they had machines to develop things. People must have designed it. But it doesn't matter. It's up there, and that's all that matters."

"What if it breaks?"

"It can't son, it's infallible. I said so, and he never lied. Remember the story of young Ronald Reagan and the cherry tree?"

"Hey Dad?"

"Yes son."

"Is it true that America used to be world power? I mean bigger than the Soviet Union or West Germany or Japan?"

Loren Steffy is a journalism student and editor for The Battalion.

Don't just send prayers — Oral needs your money

The latest antics of Oral Roberts, television preacher and faith healer and convertant with God, intrigued me greatly.



Lewis Grizzard

I've poked a little fun at O.R. through the years, but when he recently told his television audience if he couldn't raise \$4.5 million by March for his World Outreach Program, God was going to kill him, or let him die, whichever it is that God does, I had to know more about this character.

You don't go around saying God is going to kill you if you don't come up with four-and-a-half big ones if you're not (1) totally crazy, (2) an incredible put-on, or (3) somebody who will say absolutely anything to make a sale.

Cathy Milam turned out to be the resident expert on Oral Roberts in Tulsa, where Roberts is headquartered with his Oral Roberts University.

She is the medical writer for *Tulsa World*, and, believe it or not, she also has the Oral Roberts beat, what with the medical center Roberts has built in the city.

She explained that Roberts' current money drive is for financing scholarships for each of the students currently enrolled in his medical school.

"Last year, he began by saying if the money didn't come in, God was going to 'call him home,'" said Cathy Milam.

"But as each week passed, he became more and more explicit with his audiences. He is now begging for the money, saying, 'I don't want to die.'"

Cathy Milam has been covering Roberts since 1980. I asked her bluntly, "Do you think this guy really believes all this stuff or does he simply know what will get his audiences to fork over the cash?"

"I had the chance to interview his

mother once," Cathy Milam answered. "She told me that when her son was born, she dedicated him to God."

"She said she told her son from the day he was able to understand her that he belonged to God and had been chosen by God."

"As I listened to her, I realized she had so instilled this in her son, that he really does believe he is on a special mission from God. I think her son is a charlatan and just realized a good thing when he saw it, however."

I asked how the Tulsa community looked at citizen Roberts. Was he an embarrassment?

"In some ways, sure," said the reporter. "But you've got to realize the

economic impact he has had on this city. He has brought a part of the city back from some very hard times. There is no way you can argue he hasn't been good for Tulsa."

Good for Tulsa or not, I know what Cathy Milam must go through to cover the Oral Roberts beat. His followers — and I speak from personal experience — do not appreciate any negative remarks concerning the Chosen One.

I'm "Satan's Tool." That's the nicest thing they've said about me.

"My prized possession," said Cathy Milam, "is a death threat written in crayon."

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Mail Call

Racism: alive and well

EDITOR:

Celebrating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. resurrects a feeling of deep sadness in my heart. For if Dr. King were alive today, he would surely be filled with mixed emotions about the status of the black American. He would see black astronauts in space shuttles, black teachers in classrooms, black entertainers on television, black athletes on playing fields, and black businessmen in office buildings.

Yet as many things change, many things sadly remain the same. In too many cities and towns Dr. King would still see segregated neighborhoods and schools with violent consequences for those daring to venture across the borders. He would still hear ugly racial language from the poorest of people to the richest of people, and, ranging throughout the age spectrum, he would still see gross discrimination throughout the working society.

He would still see great poverty and unemployment among the black communities, and if he looked closely he might even see another Rosa Parks struggling to keep her seat on the bus.

Prejudice is an ugly, unnatural disease which must be carefully taught by those with misguided ideals. Unfortunately, this disease

still runs rampant throughout our society and is apparently extremely difficult, if not impossible, to cure. Indeed, if Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. were alive today, his observations could only lead him to declare, "I still have a dream."

Glenn Creamer
Department of Aerospace Engineering

Censored

EDITOR:

While I respect Paula Vogrin's right to voice her opinion, she has in her power the ultimate form of censorship. If she doesn't like hearing Moby use "obscene" words, then she should turn off the radio. Nobody is forcing her to listen to these "obscene" words. I hope she never hears the language used in certain movies or songs. Maybe she just should not listen to any songs or see any movies.

Pat Schulte '90

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