

# Opinion

## The Battalion

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### 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.

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## Money for nothing

Belt Texans with a law, and they're likely to fight it — or so it seems with the seat belt law. The Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M recently conducted a survey showing that, although Texas cities have the highest rate of seat belt use in the nation, the overall usage rate has dropped from the past year by about 7 percent.

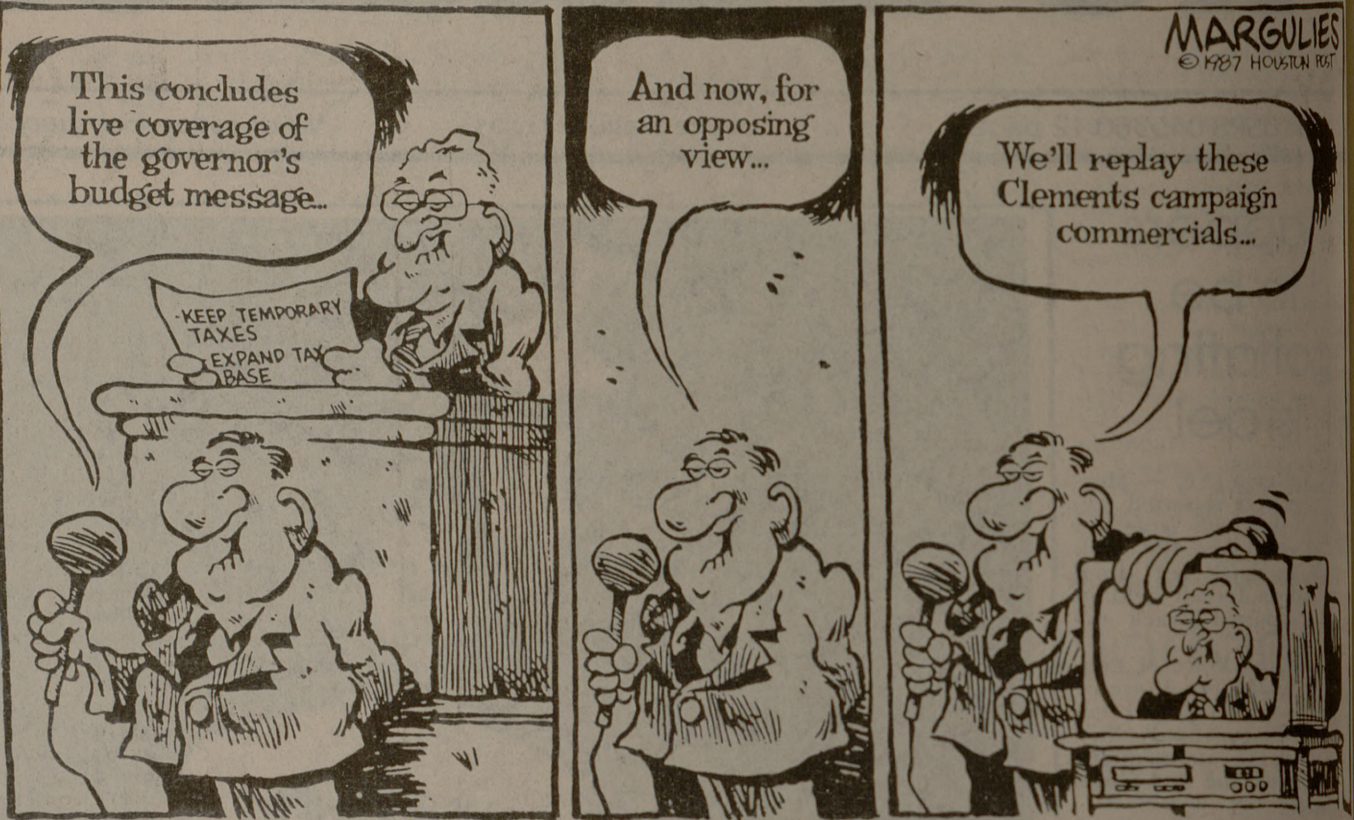
Though the survey shows that Texas' seat belt law and seat belt usage are inversely related, don't expect any change in legislation in the future.

While the motivation for implementing the law stemmed largely from a now-abandoned consideration by General Motors to build a new plant in Texas, the state wasn't left empty-handed by any means when GM took its business to Tennessee.

Texas motorists are slapped with about 7,000 seat belt citations each month at about \$35 per violation, or about \$3 million for the state each year.

Considering the success Texas has had generating revenue in the name of saving lives with the seat belt law, a state helmet law for motorcyclists seems imminent, and, indeed, is being considered by the Texas State Affairs Committee.

Legislating safety isn't such a bad idea, but considering the seat belt survey results and the state's budget situation, it's questionable just who legislators are trying to save.



## Future of A&M questionable

I like Texas A&M, and I want this University to grow. Do you? Well, if you like A&M — or Texas higher education in general — pay attention to what the new governor of the Lone Star State wants to do because he'll show you exactly what shouldn't be done.



Mike Sullivan

If you had the chance to read Sunday's *Houston Chronicle*, you might have read about Bill Clements' proposal to raise \$500 million to balance the state's budget.

In essence, tax payers are paying this guy to do exactly what they didn't want Mark White to do — which is exactly what Wild Bill promised he wouldn't do.

Clements, who is only three weeks into his new term, already has given in to the intense attraction higher education funds have for patching up legislative loose ends. If he gets his way, Clements will have Texas' education system looking like the prison system in no time at all — except the people being freed will be faculty and staff members.

Being affiliated with A&M, we're understandably concerned most with what Clements' proposal will do to our University — so let's take a look at A&M's future through Bill Clements' glasses.

Before we can comprehend exactly what Clements wants to do to us, however, we have to understand the basics. Recently, I've discovered that many Aggies believe A&M is a leg up academically on the rest of the state schools because of the Corps, tradition, the spirit of Aggieland (a song comes to mind) the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band, Reveille, midnight yell practice — you name it, but it has to be maroon.

The truth is (you can take this for truth in this educational world of theory) that without the Permanent University Fund — a historical land endow-

ment set up specifically for A&M and the University of Texas — most of us would be mistaking maroon for burgundy at some other state school.

The PUF is an endowment of about 2 million acres of oil-rich West Texas land, half of which is under lease to major oil and gas companies throughout the Southwest.

Yearly income generated from the land and capital gains on investment of that income, totaling more than \$3 billion to date, are stashed away in the PUF and can't be spent. The money is "untouchable" — like the Memorial Student Center lawn.

The dividends and interest earned on the investment of the PUF, however, can be spent. That money is called the Available University Fund, and it's divided between A&M and UT each year. The AUF was about \$200 million for fiscal 1986. A&M's share of the AUF was about \$68 million.

A&M uses its portion of the yearly AUF to finance campus construction — it's not all paid for by rich, old Ags — and, more importantly, enrichment programs such as endowed professorships and scholarships. It's used to great extent to attract quality faculty to Aggieland and helps keep them here when other universities try to lure them away from this land of the "spirit."

Simply put, A&M can buy brains that other state schools can't afford. The effect on our university is obvious.

In recent years, however, the PUF's incredible growth (it has grown by more than \$1 billion since 1980) has made it extremely attractive to the state government in its time of desperation.

Here's where Bill comes in.

Part of Clements' grand plan is to take about \$146 million from the thus far "untouchable" PUF to help finance university research rather than allocating regular state funds. If PUF money is withdrawn, the AUF will suffer in years to come — and so will A&M and UT.

Regardless of how insignificant withdrawal of \$146 million seems in comparison to the PUF's current value more than \$3 billion, if successful Clements will be setting a dangerous precedent for future lawmakers to follow — when the state is in trouble, PUF is your pal.

Though so far unsuccessful, the PUF isn't a new idea by any means. In a special session of the Legislature last August, House Speaker Gil Leeper proposed a similar plan to help pay state's bills, but the last-shot effort thwarted by public criticism.

But Clements' proposal is not a last-shot effort to make good on a budget crisis in the public eye at election time. Rather, it's a first, serious effort to bail Texas out of its budget blues.

If you were paying attention during his campaign last fall, you probably realized by now that this is part of "secret plan" Clements was boasting about. No wonder he kept it secret.

That this is the first official firm plan of Clements' four-year term also have Texas educators and those interested in the future of Texas more slightly concerned.

If educators and Texans are skeptical at night, however, they should consider the words of the governor's publicity press secretary, Jay Rosser.

"It will be a plan that will be considered by the Legislature and not discussed," Rosser said. "This government does not really care about criticism."

You understand, of course, Clements' plan to dig into the PUF is only part of a much broader plan that would tap A&M's already lean 1986 budget for about \$23 million — mention the budgets of numerous state institutions.

Did I hear someone say state income tax? I didn't think so.

Mike Sullivan is a senior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor of The Battalion.

## Farmers Write!

### The role of the Corps at A&M

Is the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M an archaic animal whose time has passed? To respond positively is to imply that integrity, leadership, patriotism and discipline no longer are cherished by our society. I contend that the Corps is as important to A&M today as it ever has been in the past.

Garland W. Wilkinson

We enjoy large contributions from our alumni, many of whom have roots in the Corps. I would not want to be the person to alienate them, especially since their contributions are enabling us to pursue a "world" status.

America enjoys a luxury known as freedom. As with all luxuries, freedom is not free. Part of this freedom is found in the press, which allows us to express our opinions freely. This is a big part of what distinguishes this nation from others and ensures its greatness. Sacrifices by our predecessors have ensured this freedom will continue, at least until now. Aggies have been a big part of that group. No doubt Aggies will be called upon again in the future to defend this country. I take a lot of pride knowing that we will respond when called upon and will serve above and beyond the call of duty. What enables us to do this in many instances is what has been learned in the Corps.

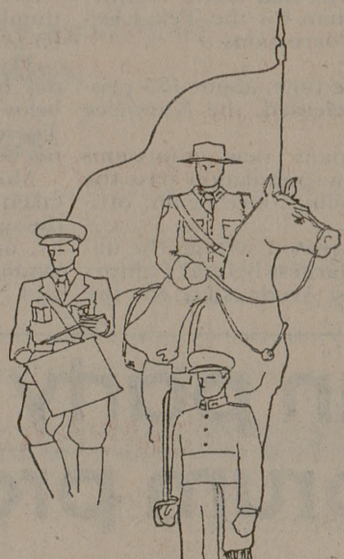
Pressure — intense pressure — is found throughout the Corps. Not everyone can last four years. Most do not even attempt to. But for those who do, the values, time management skills and attributes mentioned earlier are priceless, as are the memories.

I believe in what the Corps stands for. During my four years here, I have seen a kid from a small West Texas town transformed into a man who has learned what commitment and integrity really mean. I am sure the same goes for anyone who has ever earned the right to wear the boots.

A&M is not the Corps and the Corps is not A&M, nor does it try to be. However, it is an important part of this grand University — one part that would be wise to keep around for years to come.

Garland W. Wilkinson is a senior accounting major and the Cadet Corps Commander.

Columns submitted for *Farmers Write* should be between 700 and 850 words. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each column must be signed and must include the major, classification, address and telephone number of the writer. Only the author's name, major and classification will be printed.



## Mail Call

### Mr. Mom

EDITOR:

Are there any other single parents in the student body? Is the reason for our not having an organization that we're too busy with families and studies to take the time to organize? It would be nice to have a weekly or even monthly meeting to just talk to someone who can relate to the pressures of school and being a single parent. Got any ideas?

Charles Bruce Jones '90

### Plan for education?

EDITOR:

What is going on in this country? On the front page of the Feb. 5 *Battalion*, two headlines stand out: "Clements seeks funds from PUF" and "Reagan budget may cut student aid options." These two articles epitomize the trend in government thinking these days, which is basically, "try to solve today's problems with the quickest, easiest solution with no regard for the future." We're spending more and more money on defense every year and less and less on important issues like education, social security and a range of others.

It's disgusting to edit our elected officials squander billions of tax dollars on new, improved missiles, bombers

and other weaponry when the United States isn't even at war (yet). The United States is in such a poor economic position because we're wasting unimaginable amounts of our resources on non-productive means. It's a huge crowd of Shiites. America needs to re-evaluate its priorities. That's the first step toward solving our economic problems.

Steve Erbert '87

### A bit nostalgic

EDITOR:

Whatever happened to chivalry or the tradition of helping a fellow Aggie in trouble? On Feb. 2, my car broke down, and it had to be pushed. Five of my sorority sisters helped me push the car — three of whom were wearing dresses. One man helped us get the car rolling, but he returned to his motorcycle and drove off. I'd like to thank that man for helping us, since the other boys in the area wouldn't lift a finger.

Renee Morris '90

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.