

Opinion

The Battalion

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Oil-well heaven

Gov. Bill Clements has been outspoken lately about keeping his already-broken promise not to raise or implement any new taxes. Clements has even threatened to call a special session of the Legislature unless legislators come up with a budget that he can live with.

He's said on several occasions that the estimated \$6-billion deficit represents a "wish list" and that he will veto any spending bill calling for more taxes to fund the proposed budget. In this instance, Clements is quite right. The additional \$6 billion does represent a "wish list."

Texans "wish" their universities weren't doomed to mediocrity, their prisons weren't in a complete state of disarray and that they had enough money to fund much-needed social programs.

But even if Clements really believes he can pay for Texas' future with less than \$6 billion and without increased taxing, he still hasn't come to grips with the reality that the oil-well fairy has flown the coop. The ever-expanding budget hole is getting deeper and deeper, and Texas gold isn't going to fill it in the near future.

Instead, the governor's office told *The Battalion* Monday that Clements' strategy for Texas' future is to "hold the line on spending."

The trick, it seems, is to wait for the Texas economy to miraculously improve all by itself — perhaps when and if the price of oil climbs back to pre-1980 prices and rescues us from slow death.

A representative from the governor's higher education department disagreed, however. He said he didn't think Clements' "strategy" would hurt the future of Texas education or other social programs ranking high on the "rearranged priority list."

But Texas college faculty members' average salaries are almost 10 percent below the national average. Still, Clements' higher education spokesman said that holding salaries steady while the rest of the nation grows will be detrimental for our state.

The spokesman didn't seem to object to a Texas state income tax as a feasible means for funding the deficit and pulling Texas back up to par, but, he said, "the average Texan is not ready for an income tax." And he may be right.

At the same time, however, the "average Texan" may decide to become the average Californian, Michigander or even New Yorker if Texas winds up at the place it's now heading — nowhere.

Boxing in the name of God

Mr. Don King
Boxing Promoter Extraordinaire
Holywood, CA

Dear Mr. King,

My name is Mike Sullivan, and I am the proud manager of a boxing club called Part-time Boxers for God (PBG). Some say our initials stand for Pretty Bad Guys. And those people are right, Mr. King.

I don't mean to scare you, but our stable includes some of the greatest part-time boxers in the world, and I'm mighty proud of them. I manage fighters like "Jabbin'" Jimmy Swaggart, Jim "The Insatiable" Bakker, Jerry "Fightin'" Falwell and, of course, "Ornerly" Oral Roberts. We've got God on our side, Mr. King. And that's why my boys are strictly part-time. When they're not hitting the bag, they're thumping the Bible.

But I'm not writing you simply to brag about my boxers, Mr. King. I'm writing to you because recently one of my boys was robbed. He was robbed by the Devil himself, and so was I.

You may have heard about my boy Oral getting attacked by Satan. Well, there's no lying to it, Mr. King. Oral was sleeping soundly after a hard workout at the PBG gym one night last month when that red-haired heathen lit into him as if someone had thrown ice-water on hell.

If Mrs. R hadn't removed her makeup before going to bed, she might not have been able to scare off that red-tailed tyrant, and PBG's best fighter might have met his owner — and we wouldn't have seen one holy cent because the fight wasn't contracted.

Needless to say, PBG is a little disturbed by the Devil's deed, and we'd like you to get us a rematch.



Mike Sullivan

Forget Hagler and Leonard. This easily will be the hottest fight of the month. And we're willing to let our boy get in the ring and square off against that horn-headed hippie from hell under three conditions:

- We want \$13 million for our boy Oral. (That may seem steep, but Oral has some financial obligations that he needs to take care of. Besides, Hagler got \$12 million and he only fought Leonard.)
- Jessica Hahn must get a free ring-side seat. (Please don't tell anyone about that condition.)
- A head butt by the Devil is grounds for disqualification — considering his horns and all — and absolutely no pitchforks will be allowed in the ring.

If the Devil wins, he can have Oral's "Expect a Miracle" show — religious broadcasting is a bit lopsided now anyway.

But if our boy Oral dukes it out with the Devil and comes up a winner, he gets a new Mercedes 380 SL, a Rolex watch, a new Gucci briefcase, a summer home in the Bahamas and two more ideas about how to finagle the idiots who watch his show out of more money. The Devil must also talk God into taking a lower cut from Oral's fight winnings.

As you may have guessed by now, Mr. King, I'm an idea man. And I have a few ideas about how you might promote this fight.

First of all, there's got to be an exhibition bout before the main event between Oral and his ungodly opponent. May I suggest a tag-team wrestling match between some of Falwell's fearless Fundamentalists — who believe the Bible is the literal word of God — and a few of Bakker's brain-dead dozen — who consider a fudge factor when deciphering the Good Book? Wrestle Mania III, eat your heart out.

You also could save on the cost of having programs printed by simply selling Bibles at some incredibly inflated price — say, \$4 or so.

The brawls that break out in the aisles because of disagreements about interpretations of the Bible will be an extra treat for our fight fans.

Think it over, Mr. King. You'll probably catch a lot of hell for promoting a fight with the Devil, but when you get to the bank, you'll think you're in heaven — just like my boy, Oral.

Sincerely,

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

Mail Call

Good point

EDITOR:

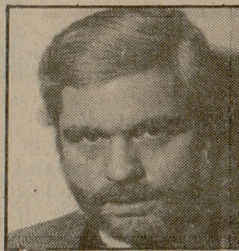
The Battalion's April 6 editorial concerning the College of Business' first-time publication of teacher evaluations for student use was basically on target except for one major point. While it is true that the professor's permission is required before their evaluations can be made public, this permission must be given at the beginning of each semester — long before the professor has any idea whether his eventual evaluations will end up negative or positive.

Allen Arnold '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.

Changing mind no longer a woman's prerogative

Where philosophy was mute and religion tongue-tied, a judge of New Jersey's lowest court turned loquacious. Faced with the Gordian knot of the Baby M case, Judge Harvey R. Sorkow took the sword of contract law and smashed everything in sight. In the end, his decision came down to a sing-song taunt of one kid who has taken advantage of another: a deal is a deal. This is how Baby M became Melissa Stern and used cars get new owners.



Richard Cohen

"The contract is not illusory," the judge said. "Mrs. Whitehead was anxious to contract. This court finds that she had changed her mind, reneged on her promise, and now seeks to avoid her obligations." A visitor from Mars would be surprised to discover that Mary Beth

Whitehead was a mother and the article in dispute was her child.

Of course, the father, Howard Stern, was the other half of this contract dispute. It was his sperm that on Feb. 6, 1985 artificially inseminated Mary Beth Whitehead. The two had a deal. In exchange for \$10,000, Whitehead would bear the child and surrender it at birth. After the birth, though, she changed her mind. Sorkow was unmoved: "The bargain here is for totally personal service." Here is a judge who would have used contract law to uphold Shylock's demand for a pound of flesh.

Momentous issues of philosophy, theology, law and psychology were brushed aside. The child was awarded to what is probably the better parent, Stern. Compared to Whitehead, he is better educated, more affluent and, it seems, more stable. Barring the triumph of Utopian socialism in America, affluence and education will always count. Melissa Stern will go to camp.

But to Sorkow, social class seemed to

be critical. He was contemptuous of Whitehead, calling her "manipulative, impulsive and exploitive . . .", when she was, by any standard, confused and overwhelmed. Without meaning to, it may have been the Sterns who were, if not manipulative, then at least, impulsive and exploitive. They made no concerted attempt to adopt and offered the indebted Whitehead a contract for which they, in essence, wrote the rules. Just the fact that assorted middle men, baby jobbers posing as biomedical pioneers, cheered the decision shows how bad it was.

It could be that everything that could go wrong in this case did — that it is an extraordinary example of surrogate motherhood, not an ordinary one. But the longer the trial stayed in the news, the harder it was to believe that. As TV explored the issue, we heard children who saw a half-sibling turned over to strangers express fears of abandonment. Some surrogate mothers admitted to wrenching second thoughts,

and ethicists and theologians raised weighty issues: What happens, for instance, if the baby is born deformed? Does the contract come with a warranty?

We watched Mary Beth Whitehead as she performed mothering for court-appointed observers. She played patty-cake wrong; she hugged the child too much and she had a hard time distinguishing her own needs from that of her child. She was, in short, a disaster as a mother, a frantic woman not up on her Spock. She was outclassed in a mothering competition by another woman who had, in addition to a medical degree, something more important — possession of the baby. Stern could be relaxed. She could ration her hugs. Like restaurants, the two were rated. To the judge, Stern was an epicurean's delight and Whitehead a greasy spoon.

But where was the sympathy for Whitehead? Where in the decision did the judge empathize with a befuddled woman who felt a baby grow in her womb and then balked at giving it away? Where is contempt for a process in

which the rich pay the poor a veritable stud fee? Where is criticism of a contract that does not even recognize the right of the mother to maternal instincts — to a change of heart? And where is humility, a recognition of how little we know? Instead, Sorkow dismissed the recommendation of Baby M's court-appointed guardian that Whitehead retain some parental rights. This judge has a clean desk.

Surrogate motherhood is an amorphous definition. Neat categories — mother, mother — are rendered meaningless, and a child becomes a possession. The judge groped for what was best for the child and probably did best by her. In the end, a technocrat of the law, faced with the new technology of medical science narrowed the focus to contract law — a "bargain." He had the right answer but the wrong parties. The bargain was not between Whitehead and Stern. It was with the devil.

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