

Opinion

Let the probes begin

The latest sordid revelation of Gov. Bill Clements' leading role in the Southern Methodist University football scandal has jolted two state representatives, Democrats Paul Moreno of El Paso and Al Edwards of Houston, into filing a resolution that urges formation of a committee to conduct an investigation to determine the merits of impeachment proceedings.

Attorney General Jim Mattox has begun his own investigation into the continued payments to SMU athletic department officials after they were fired.

A report by an investigating committee of Methodist bishops claims Clements was involved in a cover-up to cloak his knowledge of payoffs to student-athletes and payments of more than \$800,000 of SMU money to athletic department employees as an incentive for them to develop a peculiar form of laryngitis.

Whether politically motivated or not, the representatives' and attorney general's investigations should proceed and be concluded as soon as possible. Partisan roadblocks should not, must not be allowed to stall the probes.

State government cannot continue to conduct business under the cloud of uncertainty that surrounds Clements' credibility and integrity. Texas cannot survive another three and a half years of bickering and turmoil caused by the governor's "unfortunate decision" in the SMU affair.

If the state is to solve its very real financial crisis, the stench of impropriety must be cleared from the Austin air. And the only way to do that is to find out what Clements already knows.

Fact is safer than fiction

Newsrooms on Saturday nights are funny places. Well, newsrooms are funny places on any night, for that matter.

Carolyn Garcia
Guest Columnist

It was typical for a Saturday night. The room was filled with a comforting noisy chaos. The guys in sports were shouting scores to each other and at the impatient fans on the telephone who couldn't wait for the morning's edition to find out who won the Canadian hockey match.

The two ever-present, ever-blaring televisions were doing their things on opposite stations a little too loudly and the police scanner was passing along all the usual weekend DWI arrests.

The city editor was arguing with the night news editor about how long a story should be, and I for once was able to get my stories in on deadline. I thought to myself how nice it was going to be able to go home for once without first having a finger shaken in my face.

The newspaper business hasn't changed much since the days of Lois Lane — the chief is still always complaining.

People not familiar with newspapers might wonder how reporters concentrate with most of the world's current events blaring away in the background. But it's quite easy.

Journalists learn to think with half of their brains and listen with the other. Actually, you block out all the trivial and listen for the relevant.

Certain words have a way of getting attention. The usual catchy ones that may come over the scanner are the ones like shooting, murder, pursuit, back-up, bomb ... you get the idea, cop show stuff.

Well, this Bryan newsroom got a new one — machine gun.

It became very quiet. It seemed that even the television broadcasters took a station break.

The police dispatcher's usual chatty voice dropped three notches as she read the report. Two individuals were seen entering the back entrance of Post Oak Mall carrying what appeared to be a machine gun.

The hiatus lasted probably 30 seconds before it dawned on everyone that this was it. That means us. It's time to move.

The city editor told me to forget what I was writing and go to the mall. "It's probably just a joke, but just stick close to the police," he said.

Great. Thanks a lot. And if I don't, I asked myself, does that mean I get 45 holes in me in 3

seconds? It wasn't a comforting thought.

I jumped up grabbed the necessary elements — 2 pens and a fresh notepad — and headed for the mall. I must confess I went a little more than 40 mph, but I figured all the police would be at the mall. And they were.

Squad cars were parked at the side entrance to the mall. I met the staff photographer — loaded down with all kinds of camera stuff — and he said, "Don't get excited Carolyn, I'm sure it's a joke."

My response was to proclaim that of course I wasn't excited, of course it's a joke. What I didn't say was, "Of course I'm not excited, I always breathe like my throat's in a vise!"

To make matters worse, I called the newspaper to check if any more news came over the scanner, and it had.

The Texas Department of Public Safety in Waco was looking for two capital-murder suspects, one of whom seemed to fit the description of our local machine-gun toters. The suspects were believed headed toward Houston in a vehicle similar to one spotted at the mall.

It took half a dozen College Station police officers about 10 minutes to locate the guy they were looking for. They frisked him and found the weapon.

The weapon — naturally on my big story — turned out to be a toy.

The officers gave the guy a stiff talking-to about how dangerous it is to carry guns look real from 10 or 20 feet away.

So, I watched the chance at an incredible story dribble from the end of a water-shooting toy machine gun. It is especially pleasing to think we would have scooped the local television station in a major way, since it was too close to their air time.

So, I got the information I needed to write a short, funny story and headed back to the paper.

I wrote it up, finished the feature story I left when I saw the images of Bonnie and Clyde and thought my career was taking off at such a young age, and headed home.

Driving slower than before, I had time to think. I thought about how lucky the police, the shoppers and I really were that it was a joke. Our community is being plagued by big-city crime fast enough. So, I guess I'll just stick to collecting fictional ideas for those books I'll write someday.

Carolyn Garcia is a senior journalism major and assistant city editor of The Battalion and a staff writer for the Bryan Eagle.

We have seen the enemy, and they are like ourselves

For just a few hours Wednesday night, the Iron Curtain surrounding the country Americans love to hate was made just a little less rigid.



Sondra Pickard

Soviet authorities apparently decided to give a crew of the best CBS journalists what is said to be the most comprehensive and open look at Soviet society to date. For seven days, CBS took a freedom rarely given and ran with it. The result was a fascinating two-hour television program — "Seven Days in May" — in which bits and pieces of the everyday lives of Soviet citizens were professionally captured.

It probably came as a big surprise to most how much like ourselves the Soviet people really are. Granted, the political and economic system they live under differs greatly from our own, but whether it be the way they dress, the things they do, or their wants, needs and fears, the similarity is striking. It seems even more striking now in this time of "glasnost," or openness — Mikhail Gorbachev's more liberal attitude toward change in the Soviet Union.

There was no sign of long, brown coats, black boots or funny fur hats. It was spring, of course, but regardless of the season, whenever the word "Soviet" is mentioned, visions of darkly clad communists plotting to take over the world tend to dance through our heads.

Dressed in a variety of colors and styles, most of the people, especially the young, urban-types, could just as easily have been videoed off the streets of New York or Los Angeles. There were few suspicious glances, scowls or "go home you dirty, imperialist" attitudes. In fact, those interviewed were quite charming — genuine laughs and smiles abounded. The journalists were treated with respect and hospitality, and their questions were normally answered with candor and without hesitation — something that may have earned a Soviet citizen a Siberian vacation not too long ago. Although it must be considered, there wasn't a hint that any of them were simply putting on a show while the Americans were in town.

The ideas and attitudes the Soviet people expressed about our country carried a sometimes biting, but relatively familiar ring. During an informal interview, a young boy practicing his snow skiing was asked what he thought about America. To him, some places in America would be nice to visit if weren't for the rampant crime and poverty. And "there are big elections," he said, "only Blacks cannot vote in them." Ask an American child about Russia and, unfortunately, the response would probably be just as negative, if not moreso.

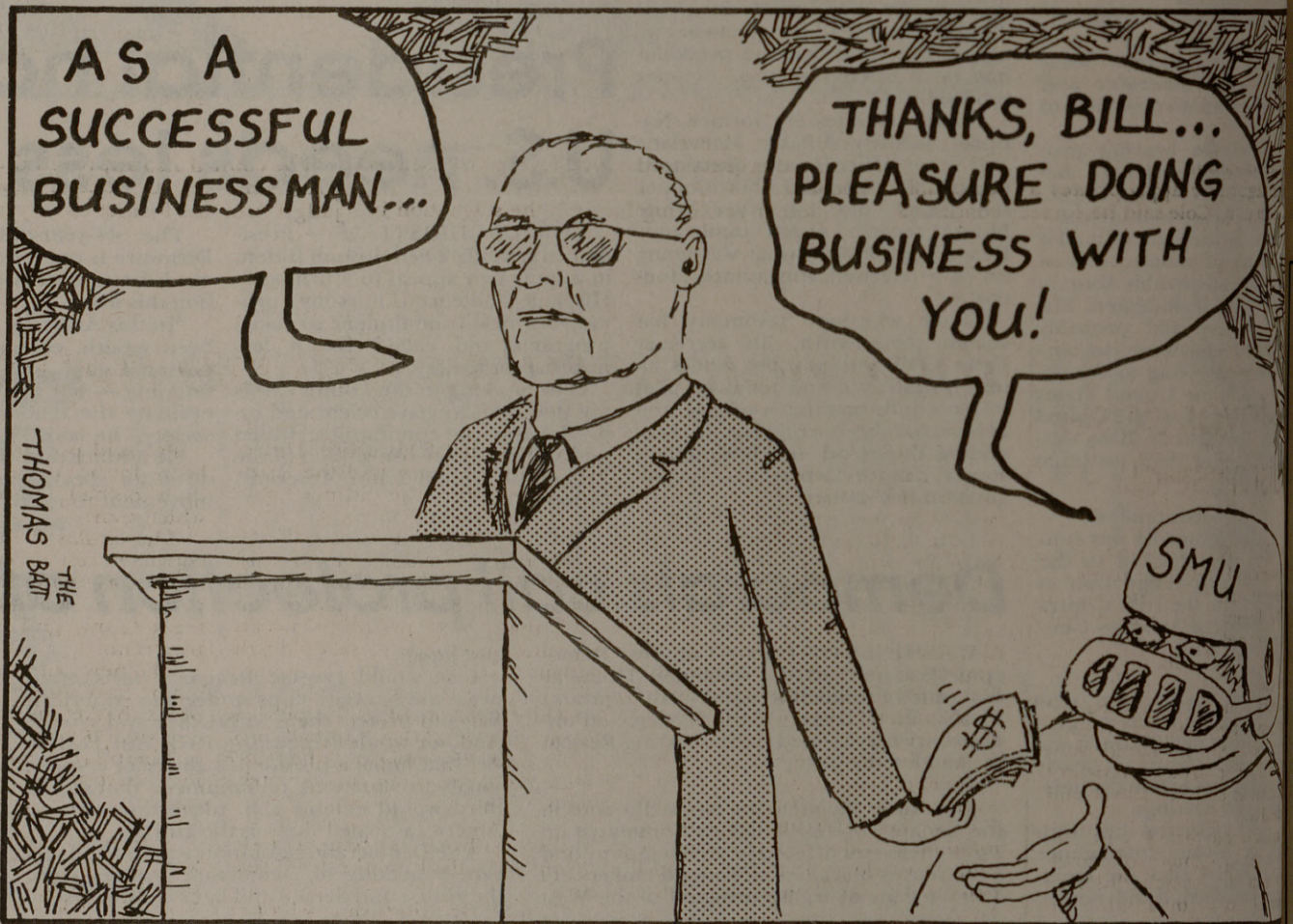
When asked what his country might learn from the United States, a Soviet journalist said he wished the Soviet people would work as hard as Americans do. He was impressed by American workers who finished painting an office in a few hours, while the same job took days in the Soviet Union. But his applause for the

advantages of our capitalistic system and the individualism it breeds were short-lived in the interview. Americans need a more philosophical outlook on life, he said. They're caught up in race, and entirely too much importance is placed on being successful and making lots of money.

A group of wildly dressed, teen rock 'n' roll fans — called "Metalists" the Soviet Union — crowded across the stage on which a band that resembled an American heavy metal band. The concert was, surprisingly, state-sponsored. A band member told CBS of an incident in which a group of young people from the "side of town" had raided one of the concerts. A riot and numerous injuries were the result. The gang from the other side of town, dressed in a conservative and acting somewhat dignified, was given their chance at the camera. The Metalists, they said, were doing was morally wrong for the Soviet cause. The whole thing sounded a lot like a squabble between a group of young American prep school young American hard rockers.

The list goes on, but when the cameras were shut down and all was done, the Iron Curtain remains at least in the minds of most Americans. But in a much-needed way, CBS succeeded in showing us that behind that curtain is a society much like our own. For those two hours, the news showed us people we could laugh at and even sympathize with, not people we should fear.

Sondra Pickard is a senior journalism major and editor of The Battalion.



Texas' future is worth the money

There is nothing more important to Texas than nurturing and maintaining a first-rate and comprehensive educational system. Our economic, social and cultural future absolutely depends on it.

Jess Hay
Guest Columnist

A special session of the Texas Legislature has been called to consider funding for essential state services, including our public schools, community colleges, independent and public colleges, universities and medical units. The decisions that our state senators and representatives make during this crucial session will determine the future of generations of Texans.

Texas is truly at the crossroads — we can move forward or backward. Our commitment to excellence in higher education has lost ground in the last two years with operating appropriations to higher education being reduced by \$645 million. This has had several negative results: it has made recruitment of top scholars and faculty members more difficult, it has undermined the morale of our educational system, and, most

important, it has sent a message to business and industry nationwide that we are no longer willing to make the commitment needed to remain competitive and do not care to provide the resources necessary for a strong, healthy economy.

The Texas Legislature must renew its commitment to the future by finding education at least to the levels of 1985, or we will face permanent and irrevocable damage to our economy and to the cultural, social and political well-being of this state and its people. Both the Texas Senate and House unsuccessfully tried to improve funding for education during the regular legislative session. The Senate proposed a \$1.4 billion increase, and the House suggested a \$1.2 billion increase in educational funding. Both proposals are coming under increasing attack as the budget deficit continues to escalate.

It is clear that our state must diversify its economy away from dependence on the petrochemical industry and towards expansion of our service industry, particularly the high technology sector, in which knowledge commands a premium. This can only be accomplished through investment in a strong educational system, an investment that will pay huge dividends in the future.

The Texas Legislature has the opportunity to offer limitless promise to future generations by strengthening its commitment to education. If our elected officials choose to ignore the need for a stronger education system through inadequate funding, they do so to the clear detriment of the future prospects for every Texan.

I encourage everyone to join the battle to make certain that education remains a top priority of the legislature. Let your state senator and state representative know that you want funding for higher education authorized at not less than the \$4-billion approved by the House of Representatives during the regular session, and (2) funding for public school education at a level sufficient to maintain the program enhancements contemplated by the 1984 school reforms. Emphasize to them that you will support their courageous efforts to generate the state revenues necessary to continue our pursuit of educational excellence for the sake of our future.

Texas' future is worth the money.
Jess Hay is a member and former chairman of the University of Texas System Board of Regents and is founder of Friends for Education.

The Battalion

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