

Opinion

It's time to change our welfare system

For years, one of the major points of disagreement between Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals has centered around our country's welfare system. Democrats argue that taxes must be raised to better enable our country to support those in need of aid. Republicans think that our welfare system is too costly and strips from those it seeks to serve their motivation to achieve. Concerning our current system, heavily burdened by the inefficiency of its own bureaucracy, both sides of the political spectrum agree it must be improved. Unfortunately for all of us, this is about as far as



Barbara Jones

our politically entrenched legislators have gotten.

Recently however, the Senate approved a welfare reform bill: the Family Securities Act, and the bill has now gone into conference to be reconciled with the House's version of the bill. This bill, if passed, could dramatically change our current welfare program for the better.

In the past, one of the major complaints of our current welfare system was that it encouraged people not to work, thus placing a monetary burden upon those who do work and pay taxes. It is indeed a weakness of our current system that recipients become dependant upon the welfare program. As a result, this country now has an entire subclass of people who depend entirely upon welfare for their survival. We must not place the blame on these people but upon the system itself.

In response to this problem, the proposed welfare reform bill would create a jobs program in which income supplements are assumed to be temporary. An important provision of the program would require that all recipients of cash assistance with children three years old and older to participate in a works program.

The bill would require states to create flexible work programs including remedial education, job training and job placement. The legislature would also feature a binding contractual agreement between the recipient and the government. The recipient must strive for self-sufficiency while the government must provide adequate support services for a designated period of time.

Another serious problem of our cur-

rent welfare system is that it discourages men from taking an active role in their responsibilities as fathers. Under current law there is no federal requirement to provide assistance to two-parent families in which one of the parents is unemployed. Critics of the welfare system have challenged this rule for years arguing that parents should not have to abandon their families in order to be eligible for welfare. This rule has resulted in the creation of another subclass of people bred by the system created for their benefit. Statistics show that presently over 50 percent of black children are born into one-parent households. Indirectly our welfare system has led to the steady deterioration of the family structure of welfare families. Once again we must not blame the people but reevaluate the entire imperfect system we as a country have created.

The new reform bill would end dis-

crimination against two-parent families. Hopefully this will enable the restructuring of the welfare family.

Bringing about change in our government is not an easy task. Public lobbyists and special interest groups contribute to the problems and inefficiencies of the legislative process. The importance of changing our welfare system must not be overlooked. The Family Securities Act has received strong bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House, but we must use the power given us as citizens of the United States to make our representatives and senators aware of the importance of this bill.

Barbara Jones is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Booting out a doctor is just plain nutty

By any measure, Margarida Magalhaes, 33, is a useful member of our society.

She's a physician, but not the sort who parks a Mercedes in the hospital lot.

Her speciality is blood diseases. She works at the University of Illinois Hospital in Chicago, where most of her patients are indigent, and she is paid about \$28,000 a year.

But she's not going to be doing that much longer. She will soon be booted out of this country.

That's because she came here from Portugal seven years ago under an "exchange visitor's visa" to get advanced medical training.

Under this visa, she has to leave when her studies are finished or after seven years. Her seven years will end next month.

Why am I telling you about this? Just to show how nutty laws can be. I like telling nutty stories.

To begin, Dr. Magalhaes doesn't want to leave the United States. She has several reasons.

One is that while she was here, she met, fell in love with and married William Silverman, who is also a physician. He specializes in emergency medicine at a suburban hospital.

Because Dr. Silverman is an American, and prefers to remain one, he would like to have his wife live with him in his country.

Second reason. If Dr. Magalhaes returns to Portugal, it's unlikely that she could practice medicine there. For some reason, Portugal has a glut of doctors.

So here we have someone who is doing valuable work, but we're telling her that we want her to go where her skills really aren't needed.

Naturally, she and her husband are trying to find a way for her to stay here. They've written to senators, talked to the immigration authorities and the State Department.

And here's the deal.

She can go back to Portugal for two years and then apply for U.S. residency and probably return.

The problem with that is that she would then be separated from her husband, which is not a pleasant prospect.

Of course, he could go to Portugal for two years. But he wouldn't be able to practice medicine there. And he'd become a deadbeat on the student loans



Mike Royko

he's now paying back.

And both would fall two years behind in their medical training and experience.

Another option. They can appeal, which will delay Dr. Magalhaes' departure for a while.

But while their appeal is being studied by the State Department, she will have to stop her medical work.

And it is likely that the appeal will be denied. That's because the State Department has a limited number of reasons for letting someone like Dr. Magalhaes stay in this country.

The reasons must be "catastrophic" by State Department standards.

And what's "catastrophic?" The person has a disease that can be treated only in the U.S. Or the person's homeland is having a civil war or some other dangerous upheaval. Or the person needs political asylum.

As Dr. Silverman says, "The fact that a family would be separated isn't considered catastrophic."

"I'm looking at the calendar, counting the days to when my wife has to leave. And there's Reagan and Gorbachev discussing human rights. And Reagan was criticizing the bureaucracy in Russia for separating families while the bureaucracy here is separating me and my wife."

He does have a point. And he didn't even mention the "catastrophic" aspects of two reasonably young people who, I assume, have normal impulses, spending the next two years billing and cooing by long distance phone calls.

But what makes this even nuttier is that this country has been engaged in a campaign to persuade illegal aliens to drop in at their local immigration office so that they can be declared legal under the new laws.

We've been practically begging illegals to come forward so they don't have to worry about being shipped out anymore.

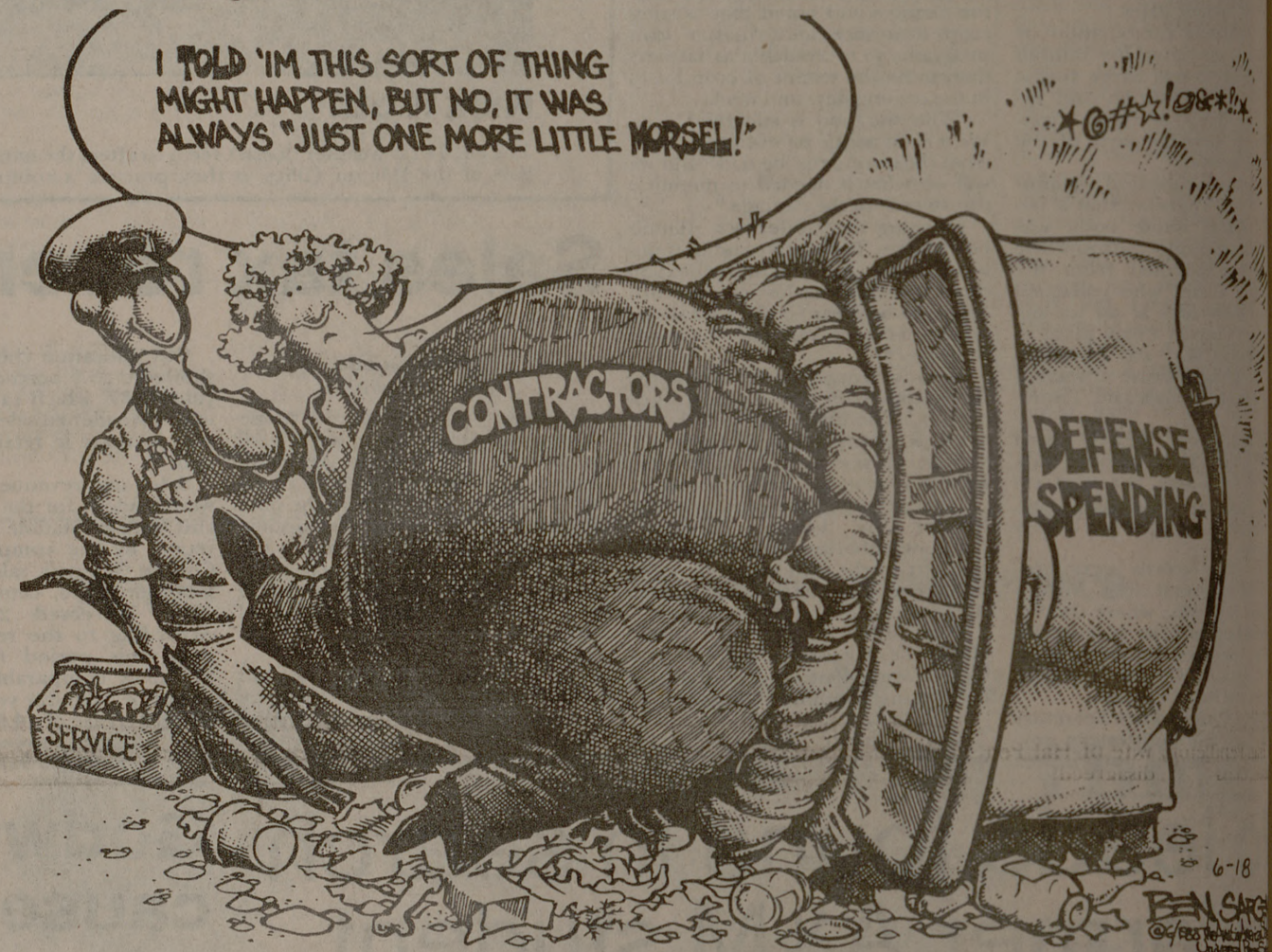
Yet, here we have someone who came here legally, paid taxes every year, has a useful, humanitarian profession, and she's being shown the door.

In many big cities, entire subcultures of foreign dope pushers have flourished. They commit gang murders, knock off cops and make millions of dollars. They come and go, and the law can't keep up with them.

But a physician who works with the poor, and is married to an American, is told to take a walk.

Sometimes I think that we should try having a psychiatrist as president.

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Mail Call

That Maker of Men

EDITOR:

I really enjoyed Jill Webb's column "What do we fear but change itself?" in the June 15 edition of *The Batt.* It is very true we all fear change in one form or another.

The only problem with the column is that the timeliness is off. It would have been more effective had the organization it was intended for been in school. You know the one I speak of, the Maker of Men, the Boy Scouts in sheep's clothing, the He-man woman haters club of A&M, the keeper of traditions: that is the Corps of Cadets. Maybe you could run it again this fall.

Timothy J. Hammons '89

The economics of obesity

EDITOR:

In response to "fat chicks," let me start by saying that "fat chicks" are beautiful too! In an economic sense that is. Do you realize the billions of dollars — maybe even trillions — that the national economy would suffer if all these chicks lost their flab? How many companies might go out of business? Dolly Madison, Sara Lee, Betty Crocker and Nestle are just a drop in the bucket! The tons of chocolate, caramel and twinkies that these chicks eat every day is astronomical. And how many authors wouldn't have made their millions writing diet books that never really worked in the first place? And would VHS be as popular today without Jane Fonda's workouts. That's just speaking

on a national level. What about the local economy. How many "fat chicks" do you see walking to class? Maybe one or two at the most. So how do they get to class? Answer: Scooter Browns!

What about the personal level of obesity? How many those of beached whales along the coasts each year were really whales? Think about it — could it have been a deranged husband who was trying to get rid of his fat wife by putting her in a wet suit thinking somebody might pull her out into the ocean never to be seen again? And who knows — if all these women lost their weight the earth might rotate around the sun faster. Wouldn't that just be hell! We'd have to change all the calendars and our birthdays would come earlier, thus making us old before our time! Who would want that? So all you "fat chicks" do us a favor and eat your twinkies and ding dongs, buy Jane Fonda's workout, don't forget to be careful when sunbathing, and what ever you do — don't lose that flab! I'd like to stay young as long as I can!

Andrew Myers '91

And if we all gained weight, would the earth rotate slower making us young before our time? Oh, twinkie induced eternal youth. — The Editor

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The Battalion

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

