

Government does not always pit itself against individuals

After reading Mr. Matthews column concerning the abuse of government power, I was struck by his portrayal of the individual (battle-weary hero) and the government (oppressive and deadly) as two opposing entities. A closer look reveals that this need not be the case.

A government could take the form of a repressive dictatorship (for example, in Chile and China). It could also be founded on the principle of democracy, i.e. a government of the people, by the people and for the people. In such a society, government actions are constantly monitored by the people who exert strong checks and balances on the government to prevent it from abusing its power. These checks and balances manifest themselves in several ways such as the rights as given in the First Amendment and the right to vote a government out of office.

As long as democratic institutions remain strong in a society, governments can never be repressive. By these institutions, I mean a strong and independent judiciary, a 100 percent free press, active civil rights groups and widespread political consciousness among the populace. A just society must be based on the above principles.

Sarang Shidore

Reader's Opinion

Do the above principles limit the role of government in society? Certainly they do. Do they, however, require that a government provide nothing more than services such as courts, police and national defense? Certainly not.

Given that the above conditions exist, a government is then nothing but an extension of the individual because it is the individual who creates and nourishes the government. When the individual demands social and economic justice, the government must act.

I disagree with the point of view that "monopolies are usually created by laws reducing competition." Let us assume that a new marketing "concept" has been created. (An example of this is the concept of a nationwide chain of fast food restaurants — which, by the way, has proven to be enormously successful.) Assuming the originator of this concept has a considerable amount

of capital at his disposal, he will exploit this concept immediately. Keeping in mind the fact that more capital automatically means more economic power in a purely capitalist society, the investor will have a head start over his rivals. Let us assume that in no time at all, he successfully markets this concept. So far, so good.

What happens next? The owner now knows that he is unchallenged in the market. The fact that he presently dominates the market entirely makes the task of his rivals that much more difficult. The more total the domination, the lesser the competition. Presuming the owner is a good businessman, it is easy for him to use the profits from this enterprise to accumulate an even greater hold on the market. This process can continue, until the owner actually affects the functioning of several markets. This leads to absolute economic power — an equally insidious and oppressive form of power as absolute political power. Is this just? The answer is obviously, no.

How can the individual combat this injustice? By passing laws through the means of elected representatives to "limit" economic power. Although this may sound strange, it is obvious that the passing of such laws leads to less government in the sense that concentration of power (in this case, economic) in the hands of an individual has been prevented. May I add, in this context, that I do not propose government ownership of the means of production. This again is a form of a monopoly — in this case by the government itself — and must be avoided at all costs.

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal brought market socialism to the U.S. It is lamentable that later administrations, especially those in the past 10 years, have reversed this trend. They ought to learn their lesson from the economics of Western Europe — so prosperous, yet so humane.

Sarang Shidore is a graduate student in aerospace engineering.

Persons interested in submitting a Reader's Opinion should contact the Opinion Page Editor at 845-3314.

Committee's suggestion makes condom sense

Last week the Texas A&M Committee on AIDS recommended that condom vending machines be installed in buildings on the A&M campus. To decide if this is a good idea, we need to review some facts.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a disease characterized by the deterioration and eventual failure of the body's immune system. It is invariably fatal (the person succumbs to various nasty infections) and at present, incurable. It is sweeping the world (most devastatingly in central Africa) and causing a rapidly increasing number of deaths each year.

AIDS was first identified in the United States in the early '80s among homosexual men and Haitian immigrants. Next it became an epidemic among intravenous drug users and their sex partners; it is now present in every ethnic and social group.

Even before the cause and progress of AIDS in the body became known, the routes of transmission were clear: transfers of blood, or seminal or vaginal fluids.

Homosexual men were being infected by having sex; I.V. drug users by sharing needles.

It is now believed that AIDS is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Tests are available which determine the presence of antibodies to HIV (not HIV itself); a person will not test positive until long after being infected (usually two to six months, but sometimes up to three years).

What does all this mean for a student at Texas A&M?

It means that if you have anal or vaginal (or perhaps even just oral) sex or share a needle with someone, you risk contracting one of the most vicious and deadly diseases ever known to humanity. Sexual activity also potentially exposes a person to syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, gonorrhea and unwanted pregnancy.

Now it's a simple fact that one can avoid all of these things in a foolproof way: abstinence. Just like mother taught you — no sex.



Jeff Farmer
Columnist

It's 100% effective.

It's also a simple fact that sexuality is a powerful and important part of being human; thus many people engage in sexual activities in spite of the various risks, and often fail to take them into account at all. This is especially true on a college campus where hormones frequently overpower judgment. For these people, there is a very simple action that can drastically reduce their risk of pregnancy or illness: using a condom (and following the instructions).

So much for the facts — now comes opinion. First, my advice to the sexually active: If you can't avoid anal or vaginal intercourse altogether, then at least use a condom. It's cheap and easy. The presence of latex doesn't mean that sex has to be any less "romantic" or "spontaneous," it just means that you care about yourself and your partner. Don't try to avoid the issue. Take this simple step that will help to protect you both.

As for putting the vending machines on campus, I'll simply say "yes." Of course it's easy to buy condoms at the store, but you usually don't need them at the store, and inexperienced people often fail to plan ahead. Having them available on campus makes it much easier for students to make a decision that could save their health or even their lives.

I think that's a good enough reason.

Jeff Farmer is a graduate student in mathematics.

Mail Call

Americans judge by creed

EDITOR:

In his letter, the comment that Collyn A. Clemens made that minorities receive more rights and privileges than the majority is false. We agree that rewards and privileges should be awarded on credentials and not on the color of their skin. Due to the fact that some Americans still hold racist views, people cannot be judged by their abilities, but are judged by their creed.

Affirmative action only gets a person in the door. Once they are there, it is their ability that keeps them in that position. We are also concerned about the fact that people feel that minorities are equal with the majority of that they receive more rights. Education of minorities is an example of how this belief is not true. In closing, if the attitude that equality has been reached and affirmative action is taken away, it will result in qualified minorities not being judged by their credential, by their race. Because qualified people will be denied the chance to succeed, America will lose a lot of her potential.

Karmen G. Moss '93

Column distorted role of ideologues, government

Mr. Matthews has again prompted me to write a response to his somewhat misguided view of life. For some reason I get the distinct impression that he has been grossly misled by the views of Pat Buchanan and Bob Novak as well as a few narrow-minded economists.

Mr. Matthews, there comes a time that people must understand that there is not always a clear-cut distinction between black and white, that each picture also includes many shades of gray. Your column gave some gross misconceptions concerning the role that political ideologues as well as the federal government play concerning the individual.

To begin with, there are those who belong to both the left and right of the American political spectrum, regardless of party, who are the champions of the individual. Quite often there is a considerable amount of disagreement between the two about the ends and the means in which those ends are met. However, while those disagreements may be ideological in nature, each side has the liberty of the individual at heart.

There are also those in both camps who are advocates of the imposition of stricter government controls on the liberties and choices of the individual. There are those on the left who wish to enact strict gun control laws, while there are many on the right who wish to impose anti-abortion legislation. Each is

Paul B. Woodard

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an attempt to use the immense power of the government to infringe on the rights of the individual and to limit the ability of individuals to seek their rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" as they were called for in our Declaration of Independence. Any true "Goldwater Republican" can recognize this fact.

Yes, the Constitution was designed to limit the power of the federal government, but it was also designed to protect those not powerful enough to protect themselves. One must understand that many of the federal regulations that guide the market, while controversial, help to add a measure of stability and honesty that otherwise would not exist. Regulations are laws and to see someone attempting to glorify those who break those laws is disturbing.

Many of the "mavericks" you praise illegally dump toxic waste because they view the regulations concerning their proper disposal as a "constraint." Many of your "mavericks" break laws concerning insider trading because they view these laws as a

"constraint." Many of your "mavericks" violate regulations that ensure worker safety because these regulations are viewed as a "constraint." The list goes on.

It must be stated that there is something fundamentally wrong with the glorification of illegal or unethical conduct, especially at a university which prides itself for honesty and fair play.

On the other hand, Matthews claims that government regulation is the sole cause of monopolies. Lest we not forget, during the 1970s our federal government deregulated the air traffic industry in order to increase competition and to give some of the smaller fledgling carriers a chance to gain a share of the market.

We should also not forget the deregulation and break-up of AT&T in 1984, which also helped to increase competition in the telecommunications industry. While there has been a degree of controversy concerning the long-range outcomes of these actions, your so-called "Big Brother" has in fact given some of these smaller companies a chance to flourish in the face of corporate monoliths.

As for the merger mania of the 1980s, the lack of responsible government regulation has led to what is nothing more than a system of monopolies which control more than their fair share of the market.

Matthews' comments concerning the decisions of the individual reflect a gross lack of understanding of the real world. A great number of our fellow Americans do not have the choices he claims they have, and those flaws are not a direct result of government regulation.

There are many people right here in the Bryan-College Station area who do not "live how they want." Because they lack the same advantages that we have been blessed with, they cannot have the jobs and income they desire, which in turn limits the amount or quality of goods that they can purchase as well as the places available for them to live. This in turn has an affect on our economy.

You cannot expect any thinking person to believe that our government enacts regulation whose sole outcome is to condemn a segment of our population to poverty.

I agree with Matthews that there are legitimate uses for the government and that any infringement on our liberties has to be justified. Yes, I agree that the government should have a limited role in the legitimate and moral choices of the individual.

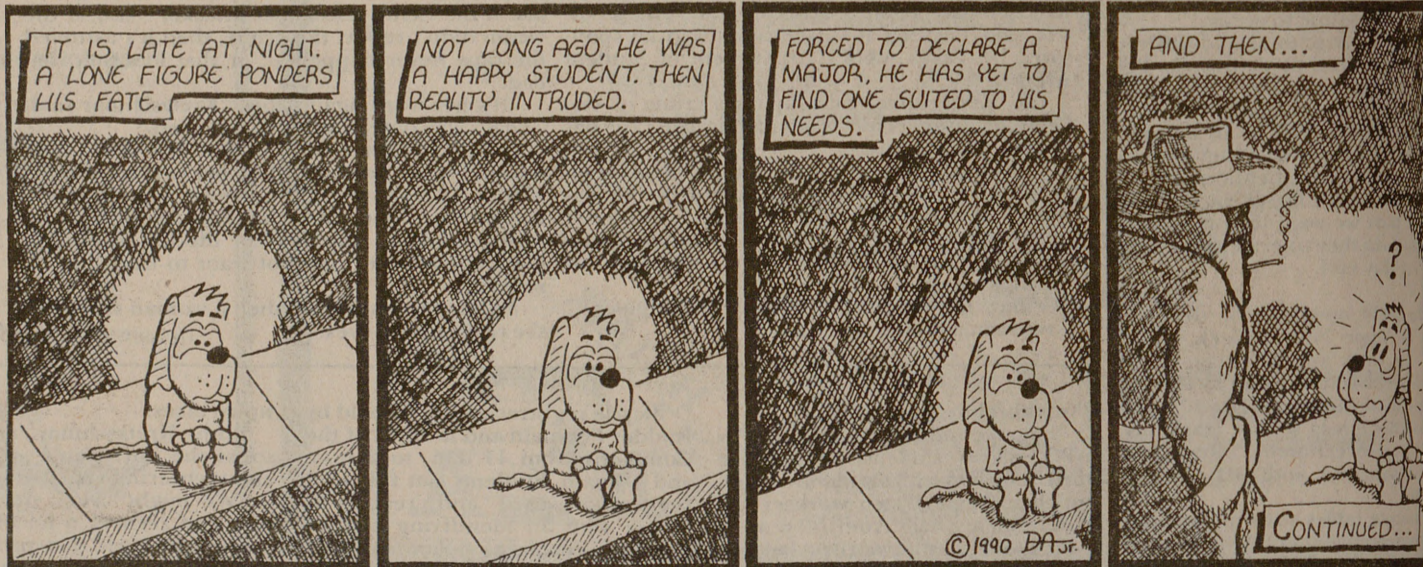
But the government also has a role to play in the protection and care of those who do not have the economic or political power to protect themselves. It is this group of people whose rights are most often abused, therefore it is the prudent use of regulations that keeps the few who have an over-abundance of economic and political power from running roughshod over those who do not.

This is a very tricky area of American political debate in which every citizen has the Constitutional right to express an opinion. However, we must also remember that Abraham Lincoln called the American government a "government of the people, by the people and for the people," not a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

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Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.



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