

Cinco de Mayo
History and purpose of holiday,
Hispanic student organizations,
Hispanic culture, personal viewpoints
See Section B

Walking in the rain

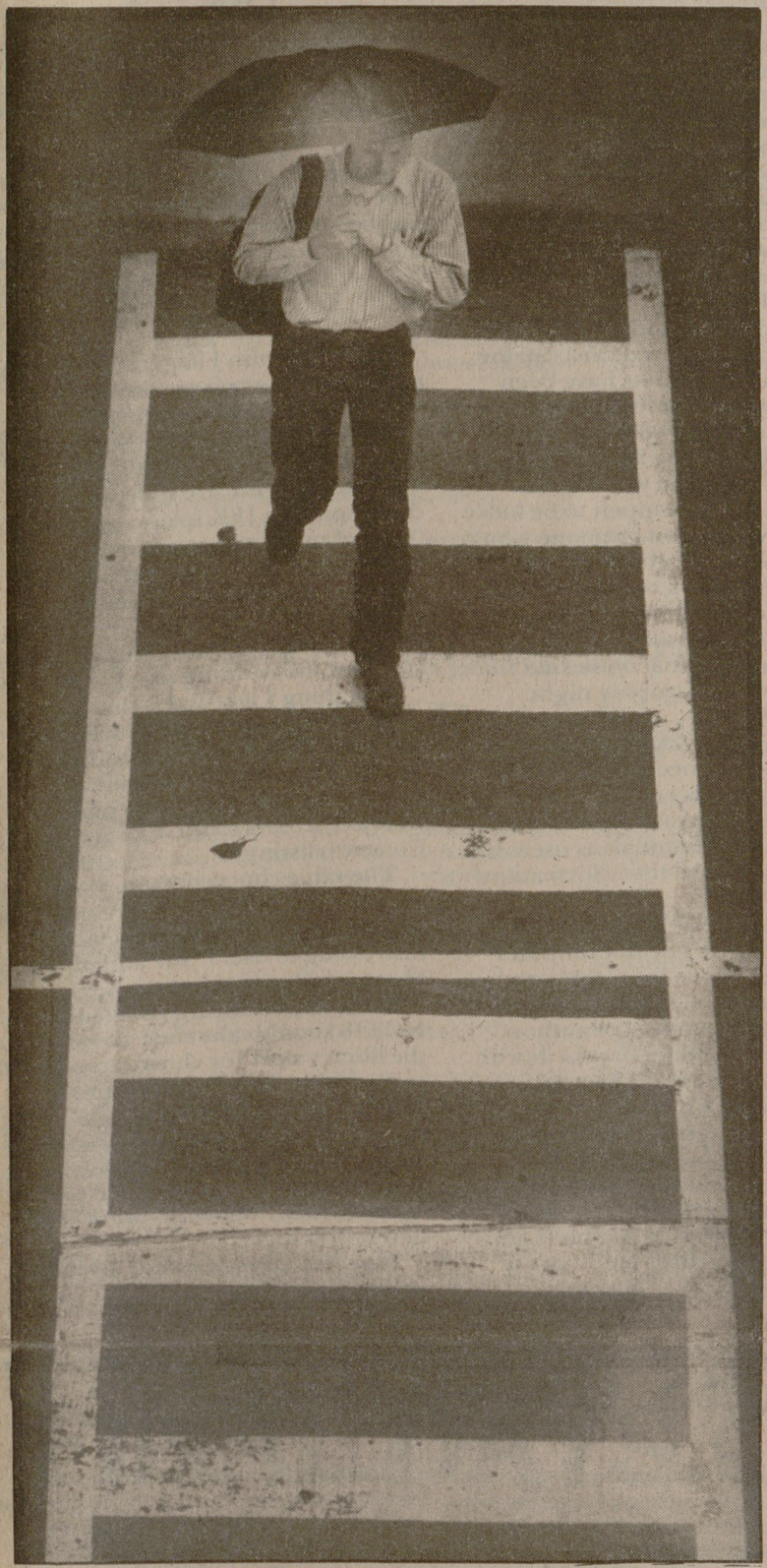


Photo by Mike Mulvey

An A&M student takes shelter under his umbrella while walking across Ireland Street from the Blocker Building to the Parking Garage. Partly cloudy skies are forecast for the weekend, along with high temperatures in the mid- to upper 70s.

CS residents vote on tax increase

By KEVIN M. HAMM
Of The Battalion Staff

The College Station City Council has proposed a one-half cent sales tax increase to be voted on Saturday by residents, including Texas A&M students.

The actual wording on the ballot says the revenue will be used to reduce the property tax rate in College Station.

In a letter to College Station residents, Mayor Larry Ringer outlined additional uses for the funding if voters approve the tax.

Contrary to the wording on the ballot, he said the \$2 million revenue would be used to reduce utility rates in College Station. One proposal the council discussed was to use \$1.2 million for the reductions and the remainder for streets and capital improvements.

According to the letter, some bond rating companies have voiced concern about the city's heavy reliance on utility fund transfers to fund its operations.

In order to maintain College Station's favorable bond ratings, the letter states the utility rate reductions

would lessen the reliance on these transfers.

College Station City Manager Ron Ragland said almost half of College Station's budget is made up of utility transfers to the city's general fund.

The proposed increase, from 1 percent to 1.5 percent, also would increase students' contributions to the costs of local government, the letter said. The city estimates the average student will pay approximately 50 cents more per week.

"As a university community, College Station is responsible for providing municipal services which are used by a greater than average number of others who are not property taxpayers," Ringer said in the letter.

Examples of municipal services are fire protection for the University, parks and street systems and police security for University events.

Texas A&M is a non-taxable entity because it is a state institution.

City Councilman Jim Gardner said in a letter that one reason he voted against the proposed increase is because of the increased burden to students who are "the underpinning of our healthy local economy."

Gardner was the only member of the council who voted against the proposed increase. He said it is unfair to tax students who would receive no relief from lower property taxes or utility rates.

The approximately 13,000 on-campus students pay no property taxes, and students living off campus pay an indirect property tax in their rent.

It is unlikely a reduction in the property tax would result in lower rent for students, Gardner said.

On-campus students also pay no city utility rate, and Gardner estimates one-third of off-campus students would receive no benefit from a lower rate because they live in single-meter complexes or pay for utilities in their rent.

"More than half of the population of College Station are students (who) don't get this offsetting benefit because (they) don't pay any utility bill," Gardner said.

Ringer agreed that students who pay an indirect utility rate might not gain from decreased rates.

He said, however, that owners of these apartment complexes would benefit and could choose to pass these savings on to residents.

He also said lower utility rates for apartment complex owners might act as a hedge against rent increases.

The councilman also expressed surprise that the city would try to impose a tax that appears directed mainly toward students.

"It seemed to me the unfair treatment of A&M students, particularly those living on-campus, was just an unfortunate consequence of imposing this tax on citizens," he said in the letter.

"However, after reading the latest information from the mayor and 'members of the city council,' it is clear that the zapping of on-campus students, visitors and others is intentional," Gardner said.

"This is difficult to understand," his letter said.

The councilman also made issue

See Tax/Page 6

Speaker discusses communism

By SEAN FRERKING
Of The Battalion Staff

A specter is haunting Europe — the specter of Communism.

— *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

In view of the recent events in Eastern Europe, Dr. Stephen Nikolov said the specter of communism is quickly fading away.

Nikolov, a member of the Institute of Sociology and the Academy of Sciences at the University of Bulgaria in Sophia, gave a general description of the events that led to the changes in many Eastern European governments during his presentation of "Eastern Europe: A Farewell in Communism."

"The startling developments in Eastern Europe that surfaced in the fall of 1989," said Nikolov, "are the results of years of oppression and underground activity."

Nikolov said the failure of communism began with the establishment of a strong democratic tradition after World War I. Until a Nazi coup d'etat in 1940, Nikolov said, democracy flourished in Bulgaria.

The communists then gained power during Bulgaria's struggle against the Third Reich because the communist guerrillas were the most organized group of resistance, Nikolov said.

"In fact, the United States and Britain supplied the communists

with arms because they were the only group to have any success against the Nazis," Nikolov said.

At the end of the war, the communists in Bulgaria easily assumed control of the government, Nikolov said.

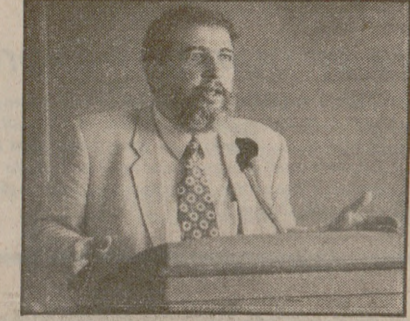


Photo by Karl Stolleis

Stephen Nikolov

After the communists came to power, Nikolov said many of the leaders of opposition parties were jailed or placed in labor camps.

"However, some leaders escaped to the United States and led the resistance to the communists from afar," Nikolov said.

After years of Soviet intervention, Nikolov said Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership in Moscow changed the face of communism around the world.

"Until Gorbachev, we could do nothing," Nikolov said. "But since he

(Gorbachev) has come to power and set the policy of non-intervention, many things could now take place."

In 1985, the first reforms that would lead to the failure of communism in Bulgaria were proposed, Nikolov said. However, these changes soon needed to be amended, he said.

"These reforms failed because the leaders in my (Bulgarian) government forgot what their master Marx had taught them," Nikolov said. "The economy dictates politics and in 1985 the politicians were trying to dictate to the economy."

Eventually, Nikolov said, the reformers had to turn to the West and accept the failure of communism.

He said he was surprised at the peaceful manner of revolution but warned that this "velvet" revolution, a sociological description of a revolution without violence, may become "bloody" because of the lack of education about life in a democratic state in the general populace.

Nikolov also said ethnic violence could hinder Eastern Europe's march to freedom and prosperity.

However, Nikolov said he was very optimistic about the situation in Eastern Europe.

"We know we have many difficult legal and constitutional problems to solve," Nikolov said.

"But I know if the countries of Europe work together and have patience, we will be able to reach our goals of democracy and freedom."

UT racism monitored by greeks

By BILL HETHCOCK
Of The Battalion Staff

Recent racist acts by University of Texas fraternities have been closely monitored by the Texas A&M Greek system, and no problems of that type are expected here, an A&M Interfraternity Council adviser said.

Mike Leese said A&M President William Mobley and Vice President of Student Services John Koldus are aware of what has happened in Austin but don't think the increase in racial incidents by UT fraternities will affect those at A&M.

"Because of the attitudes that exist here we don't expect those types of problems," Leese said. "If anything, their problems will make us more aware and help prevent a problem at A&M."

At the University of Texas, Delta Tau Delta and Phi Gamma Delta fraternities each were suspended for one year because of recent racially insensitive incidents.

Delta Tau Delta members destroyed a car painted with racist messages.

Phi Gamma Delta printed and distributed T-shirts with basketball player Michael Jordan's body and a "Fijiman" head.

Wesley Ward, president of the A&M chapter of Phi Gamma Delta, described the "Fijiman" as a caveman-like cartoon character wearing a grass skirt and a bone through his nose.

Ward said the "Fijiman" is not an official symbol of the fraternity. The national Phi Gamma Delta fraternity has, however, restricted use of the caricature, he said.

The Phi Gamma Delta T-shirts handed out at UT drew criticism from students for projecting a stereotypical image of African-Americans.

The situation at UT is not causing any real changes in the Phi Gamma Delta chapter at A&M, Ward said.

"I'm not saying we're perfect, but I can't say this is spurring any major action," he said. "We always take our image into consideration."

Phi Gamma Delta will continue efforts to remain involved in community service activities, Ward said. He said he hopes this involvement will show the positive aspects of the fraternity.

"We are a service-oriented group and take steps to maintain good relations with the community around us," he said. "We're not interested in being insensitive or alienating anyone."

Ward said he expects the entire A&M fraternity system to learn from negative experiences in fraternities at other universities.

"Fraternities are having problems in many parts of the country now, but here at Texas A&M, we're able to learn from other's mistakes," he said.

English dept. head strives for diversity

By SUZANNE CALDERON
Of The Battalion Staff

Dr. J. Lawrence Mitchell said he came to the United States from England in the early '70s to see new places and try new things.

As the new head of the Department of English at Texas A&M, it appears he's done just that.

After receiving his undergraduate degree from Kings College at the University of London, Mitchell wanted to pursue his studies in English because he had many unanswered questions about the field.

"When I was an undergraduate, I found the area I remember having the most questions about was Old English," Mitchell said. "I didn't feel those questions were adequately answered. I thought maybe I could answer some of those questions myself by studying Old English and the history of language and teaching it to others in a way that it is comprehensive."

Mitchell came to the United States and received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa.

Before coming to A&M this fall, Mitchell was at the University of Minnesota, where he was chairman of the English department from 1977 to 1983 and director of the Germanic philology program from 1985 to 1989.

Mitchell also taught courses at UM in Old English, the history of the English language and modern British fiction.

In addition to his duties as department head, Mitchell is writing an et-

ymological dictionary, a dictionary of words traced from their early meanings, and a biography of one of his favorite writers, Theodore Powys.

Outside the academic world, Mitchell said he likes to jog and collect rare books.



Dr. J. Lawrence Mitchell

Mitchell has run in eight marathons and many smaller races, as well as running cross country in college.

"My greatest satisfaction was in doing under three hours in the (Twin Cities) marathon on my 40th birthday," he said.

Mitchell said he has since given up marathons and now only runs for fitness.

Mitchell also has an extensive collection of rare books.

The core of his rare book collection includes about 5,000 titles, Mitchell said.

His collection consists of books from these areas: modern first editions, which is British fiction between the two world wars, English dialect and slang dictionaries and books about boxing.

Mitchell said he collects boxing books because he was an amateur boxer in college and because boxing books have much literary interest.

"There is a lot of linguistic interest in boxing because there is a lot of slang tied in with boxing terminology," he said.

Boxing slang and other types of slang are helpful in studying the evolution or history of language, Mitchell said.

"There are lots of words only found in slang dictionaries which may be relics from an earlier period when they were more widely used, but now only in dialect or slang will they be maintained," he said.

"You can see the way language changes are reflected in the dialect and slang dictionaries in general," he said, "so you can say the history of the language is recorded in dictionaries of this sort."

With Theodore Powys, David Garnett and Sylvia Warner as some of his favorite authors, Mitchell said he likes to collect books by writers who are not very well-known.

"The people I like to collect for the most part are people that aren't so well-known. ... It is much better to collect people who aren't so well-known but you think they are very good, so it is really like investing in somebody in whom you have faith and maybe nobody else does yet."

Silence recognizes students' demonstrations

Students, faculty and staff members are asked to observe a minute of silence at noon today in recognition of Chinese students' nonviolent demonstrations for democracy one year ago.

The Student Senate passed a resolution earlier this spring to pay trib-

ute to the students and remind Americans of the freedoms they enjoy.

Albritton Tower's bells will ring from 11:58 a.m. until noon, and again from 12:01 to 12:03 p.m. to call attention to the moment of silence.

If you're by the Academic Building, you're asked to walk to the flagpole in front to pay tribute.

Another minute of silence will be observed at noon June 4, in tribute to students who lost their lives while demonstrating for democracy.