

## Cable TV would improve if competition is allowed

**Patrick Nolan**  
Columnist

the installation charge is \$53.00. Simply put, \$53.00 to install 12 channels, \$25.00 to install 34.

One more thing: Only subscribers to the premium package get the 14-day money-back guarantee. If you are one of those poor unfortunate souls that cannot afford \$33.34 a month, be sure you know what you're getting yourself into.

Yet there really isn't much of an alternative. If a consumer thinks TCA

charges too much, his only option is to watch the one over-the-air channel out of Bryan, which usually signs off at midnight.

But if high prices and poor service aren't bad enough, the choices of channels that TCA offers their subscribers stinks. Why are there two country music channels and no VH-1? Would you like to watch MTV's new comedy channel, HA? Well you'll have to wait until you go home to visit Mom and Dad, because TCA doesn't offer it.

As it is now, the cable channels after 11:00 p.m. are loaded with junk commercials posing as talk shows. When someone referred to television as a "vast wasteland" they must have just turned

off cable television.

The ironic thing about the situation is that the companies that now offer telephone service have been begging Congress to allow them into the cable television business. The cable television lobbying groups have no good response to this proposal. They cite numerous studies that supposedly prove that the prices are as low as possible, and that competition will benefit no one.

What many people do not understand is if the current cable monopolies are doing the fine job they say they are, what do they have to fear? If the prices are as low as possible, why not allow another company to offer service and find out for itself that there

is no money to be made offering the consumer a choice?

The fact of the matter is that there is no other industry in the United States widely used as cable television and protected. The current policy of the consumer suffer while the fat cats offer lousy service and high rates to end.

Yet until Congress finds the backbone to stand up to cable television lobbying, it will be the consumers who must either pay the ridiculous high rates or face what amounts to a news blackout. Until then, let the buyer beware.

*Patrick Nolan is a senior political science major.*

Americans have long cherished the idea that competition with an industry benefits everyone. Yet there is one industry where competition is not taking place — cable television.

The accusations that the cable industry offers poor service with high prices and is unresponsive to the consumer have not fallen on deaf ears. Congress is planning a vote this session on whether or not to re-regulate the prices cable companies charge their subscribers.

As one might suspect, the cable industry is doing everything they can to prevent this from happening. As far as they're concerned, why spoil a good thing? Since federal law stipulates that there can only be one cable company in each town, the cable companies essentially have a lock on the market in their respective areas. Couple this fact with the one that cable television is more of a necessity than a luxury in a town like Bryan-College Station, and you have a classic example of a monopoly. Sounds too good to be true doesn't it?

Re-regulating the prices that cable companies charge their subscribers, however, is not the answer. This might keep prices down, but it does not guarantee service will improve. What the cable industry needs is deregulation, not re-regulation.

Bryan-College Station's local cable company, TCA, is a clear example of why monopolies have long been frowned upon here in the United States. To begin with, TCA's installation rate is inversely related with the number of options one subscribes to.

For example, sign up for the "Premium Package" and one can expect an installation rate of \$25.00 and a monthly bill of \$33.35. Subscribe to the "Full Entertainment" option and pay a \$35.00 installation rate and a \$19.34 monthly bill. The difference between the two packages is that the "Premium Package" has a movie channel of the subscriber's choice, while the "Full Entertainment" package does not. Both offer 33 regular channels.

Yet what happens if you don't want a movie channel and don't feel like watching 33 other channels? Well, if you bring your magnifying glass to the TCA office, you just might see on their cable information sheet — at the bottom, in fine print — that TCA offers a 12 channel package for \$9.95 a month. It sounds reasonable until you realize that



Battalion file photo

## Stay for your 5th football season (or 6th, or 7th)

**Larry Cox**  
Columnist

vast array of student organizations are an important and integral part of the collegiate experience which can't be replaced by lectures and library time.

**Rule #2:** Go for five. Football seasons, that is. The four year degree is a myth promulgated by academic advisors and other fairy tale experts. It requires you to go to class every single summer session and take 22 hours of upper level courses your last semester here. If you're in that big a hurry to get out in the real world, there are mental health professionals who may be able to help you out — but hurry.

A fifth football season helps maintain your sanity while allowing you time to

get a couple of summer jobs out in the real world. These look good on your resumé and tend to give you all the exposure to "out there" that you'll ever want.

The real reason, of course, is football. Aggieland in the fall is a special place (okay, take your hand from over your heart). You can't beat the smell of gunpowder across Kyle Field, the feel of the heatwaves as Bonfire is lit, or the sounds of your last yell practice as an Aggie. You'll never regret staying around for that fifth season, and Coach Slocum and the team thank you for your support.

**Rule #3:** Avoid the real world for as long as possible. 'Nuff said. If rule number two doesn't work out and they try to make you graduate, think about graduate school. It's not the greatest thing in the world, but it's still much better than "out there".

**Rule #4:** Become an Aggie. We,

unfortunately, have a number of students on campus who are as far removed from anything Aggie oriented as they can be. Don't miss out like they do.

**Work on Bonfire.** Join a student club or MSC committee. Make road trips, go to Silver Taps and Muster. Hell, there are dozens of events and traditions which set this place apart from anywhere else in the world. By choosing to become an Aggie you'll have many more memorable college experiences and a lot more fun than those other bozos.

**Rule #5:** Sell your car. Mr. de Sade, the Director of Parking on campus, is hesitant to admit that 40,000 parking permits are sold for less than 2,000 student spaces. The money you make from selling your car should be more than enough to pay for that fifth football season and will also allow you to buy beer they have commercials about (as opposed to college beer- Schaefer Lite,

Milwaukee's Best, etc...), thus improving your quality of life index another notch.

**Rule #6:** One of my wisest professors used to say that if you kicked the rear end of the person responsible for most of your problems you wouldn't be able to sit down for a week. I've found this over the years to be one of the most valuable lessons to be learned from college. Your capacity to do well in college, or your propensity for failing out are all up to y-o-u.

My favorite axiom in dealing with college life is that if people took the most important things in life seriously there would be a huge shortage of fishing poles. There ain't, because they don't.

Take in the whole college experience profit from it, do your best, but don't neglect your football. With your basic priorities in place, the rest will come easy.

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### The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Newsroom: 845-3313.

Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year: 845-2611. Advertising rates furnished on request: 845-2696.

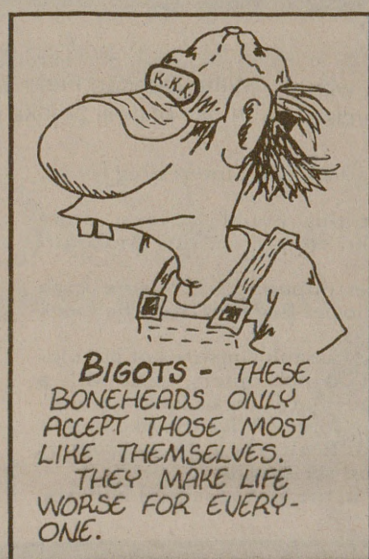
Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

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