

## U.S. budget deficit has reached crisis proportions

While Americans have kept their eyes glued to the television screen watching developments in the Middle East, the real crisis that could determine America's long term survival as a superpower goes without much notice — the yearly budget deficit.

Ronald Reagan came into the presidency in 1981 saying he would balance the federal budget by 1984, and he left in 1989 with the budget worse than ever. As 1991 approaches, the deficit seems to be worsening with the costs of the S&L bailout being passed on to the taxpayer.

One can fairly say that Ronald Reagan is largely responsible for leaving his pal, George Bush, with a federal debt that is going to take decades to pay. Reagan's military buildup, coupled with his ardent distaste for escalating taxes, has given the United States the undesirable claim of being the world's largest debtor nation. As recently as 1983 the U.S. was the world's largest creditor nation, and in six short years we have gone from one end of the spectrum to the other.

The bottom line is simple: the continuous budget deficits are threatening our economic security. If something is not done quickly to rectify the chronic budget deficits, the United

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States faces the risk of becoming a second rate power — both economically and militarily.

It has been stated by Paul Kennedy, a professor of history at Yale and author of the best seller "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers," that a country cannot be a first rate military power if it is a second rate economic power. Take the example of the Soviet Union.

For decades, the champions of the U.S. military have been warning the American public of the dangers of the Soviet Union's military machine. As we have recently discovered, the Soviet economy is in critical condition. Their military establishment has become their own worst enemy. Some have even said that the Soviets lost the cold war. Their military is not the weak link; their economy is.

This is the same Soviet Union that as recently as eight years ago supposedly had a numerical advantage in nuclear weapons. We Americans were constantly being warned that the Soviets had a massive military at their disposal.

Well if they did, it has done little to ensure the survival of their dominion — it is now crumbling from within.

It's clear that all of their military might has done more harm than good. To add insult to injury, the Soviets now openly request that their old adversary grant them Most Favored Nation Status and thereby increase much needed trade between the two nuclear superpowers.

So, let us learn from their mistakes. We can no longer afford these habitual deficits. It has been recently estimated by the Congressional Budget Office that if a deficit reduction package is not agreed upon before the end of this fiscal year, the federal government could be facing a shortfall this year of \$250 billion.

Now that President Bush is back from his photo opportunity with Mikhail Gorbachev, maybe he can sit down with Congressional leaders and hammer out a budget deal. The president, in all fairness, has gone a long way in trying to work out a package. To go back on his campaign pledge (which he never should have made) of "No New Taxes" took quite a bit of political courage.

Yet it is his comrades in the Republican Party, led by the repugnant Newt Gingrich, that have made a

budget compromise difficult. Gingrich, the House Minority Whip, complained that by going back on his campaign pledge, Bush has taken an issue away from the Republicans for the November elections. One can see where Gingrich's priorities lie.

Yet if the United States is to avert, or soften, as the case may be, a recession that almost everyone is forecasting, a deficit reduction package that is substantial and equitable is critical.

Republicans are going to have to face the fact that taxes must be increased while Democrats bite the bullet and allow some social spending to be cut. Each camp must be willing to trim their sacred cows: defense spending for the Republicans — Social Security for the Democrats. If these two chunks of federal money aren't on the table, we might as well come to the realization that once again the United States will have to borrow to finance government programs.

The Gramm-Rudman Deficit Reduction Act which was supposed to force the government to trim its deficits or face automatic cuts across the board has been of little or no help. When Congress and the President realize that

once again they will be unable to meet the targets set by Gramm-Rudman, simply do what they have done in the past — raise those targets to a more acceptable level.

President Bush and congressional leaders have an opportunity this week to begin the '90s with a firm step toward a balanced budget. By ignoring the cries of special interests and listening to the sound advice of the economists, the United States might once again join the crowd of creditor nations.

Americans have become tired of hearing how bad the budget deficit is going to be every year. We have been hearing about this problem for years, and this year is no different. The time to address our deficit problem is now. It cannot continue to put the problem of the budget deficit off until the next election.

Hopefully, the crisis in the Middle East will not make it difficult for the president and Congress to give their attention to the deficit. Until the deficit becomes Americans' number one issue, the United States will continue to drift in red ink like some Third World banana republic.

*Patrick Nolan is a senior political science major.*

## We deserve to be proud of our generation's ideals

If I could have a moment of your time, I would like to talk to you about our generation. I have thought about it for a while now, and I must say I am quite proud of who we are and what we value.

This is a different conclusion from most of the evaluations of our age group from all those writers, educators and self-appointed sages of perfect thinking. Usually the only labels describing us are: ignorant, apathetic, selfish, money-hungry, (etc, ad nauseum).

I am tired of hearing all of these aspersions about my generation. It is time that we delivered a rebuttle.

Concerning the label of money-hungry, there is no doubt that we are all interested in our careers. You would have to be a fool to not concentrate a great deal of time and energy into plotting the course of the rest of your life. Since the beginning of time, mankind has needed to be engaged in some employment to provide food and shelter for the family.

Though we take our careers seriously, we are by no means striving for money as the end all of life. This is only one man's observation, but I do not know a single college student who worships money as the end all of life. Their biggest concern is finding a career which is rewarding. Most would opt for a fulfilling, but lower-paying job over a high-paying, run-you-into-the-ground-so-you-are-gray-haired-before-you-are-thirty kind of job.

This opinion is backed by a Fortune magazine cover story on today's 25 and under generation of

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career professionals. After interviewing 100 randomly picked young professionals, they concluded that these young adults, though career oriented, were not willing to become slaves to their jobs. Instead, those interviewed opted for less stressful careers which allowed them to devote more of their time to family and friends, religion, exercise, charities, i.e. simply enjoying life.

Yuppies we are not. Fortune gave us the appellation of YIFF'ies. Young, independent, free and few. A friend of mine referred to us as the "we generation." I kind of like them both.

While we are not money hungry, we are also not an outrageously iconoclastic, protest-everything kind of generation like the Sixties. We adopt causes, but in a more prudent method. Instead of trying to bring down the "Establishment," we join groups or attempt to engineer social change through individual activity.

When President Bush mentioned a "thousand points of light" he was referring to all the fund-raisers held by the sororities, fraternities and the other service organizations. He was talking about the college students who tutor non-readers, bring meals to the elderly, adopt a little brother or sister, aid the handicapped and other similar causes.

Perhaps we are not solving the world's

problems. We realize that we can't wipe out hunger in Africa or save every animal on the face of the Earth, but we can help individually in our community. If that attitude is called apathetic, then I will wear the title with pride.

Another point of criticism is that we are politically ignorant, and thus not responsible voters in our representative government. I would agree that all voters should have at least a

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rudimentary knowledge of economics and political issues. However, many social commentators think that we should know about everything that ever happened in political circles.

What a waste of time! Without really thinking about it, we make personal decisions about how we are going to spend our time and energies. We spend the most time on what truly matters or interests us. We all know that what we do with our own lives is going to have a more profound effect on our own lives than what is going on in the government halls of Washington.

Those of us, like me, who devote large amounts of time in reading about and researching the issues

do so because it is either our majors, or we simply have an affinity to following current events. We are no different from sports fans. We like to watch the game of politics. But don't slam the rest of us who don't like politics.

Older people are always saying that youngsters have no sense. I would like to turn the tables and say that we have more brains than the all the generations before us. Just the fact that hard drugs are almost non-existent on college campuses make me proud of my peers. And how many people do you see smoking cigarettes on campus?

Though it is hard to document, I feel we are returning to the traditional values of family, work and religion. In our search for personal happiness and fulfillment, we realize that money, drugs and sexual promiscuity will only bring us misery in the end.

If you asked a hundred of us what we want out of life I bet the top four answers would be: a loving family and spouse, a fulfilling career, good friends and a closer relationship to God. I ask, is that so bad? Are we so deserving of criticism?

Granted, there are many of us who do not fit the above descriptions. When you make generalizations about a whole age group there will always be exceptions. But for all of those youth detractors out there, I think maybe you ought to get off your soapboxes, and render us a judgment in line with reality. Better yet don't even judge at all.

*Andrew Matthews is a senior economics major.*

## Fraternities, A&M don't work against each other

I just read Larry Cox's column denouncing fraternities as elitist, anti-Aggie, Satan-spawned filth, and I said to myself, "Here's a really ignorant guy. But perhaps he just hasn't figured out what fraternities are yet."

Did you know that A&M has been described as one big fraternity, and rightly? If you run down to the MSC bookstore and pick up a Webster's II dictionary, you'll find three definitions for the word fraternity, the first being the most important: It says a group of persons united by similar interests, backgrounds or occupations — now, doesn't that describe the presiding character at A&M?

Being that we have nothing to fear but fear itself, why should one fraternity fear others? If you pick up that

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dictionary and look up what "brother" means you'll find that its second definition says a brother is "a fellow man or a male friend."

Coming from a fraternity, I can tell you that a lot of what we teach to our pledges and even learn ourselves is how to get along with each other. Social skills and how to learn what we have in common with other people besides being carbon-based life forms is what we learn; not how to terrorize minorities and die of alcohol poisoning.

"But, hey, what about the stuff we

read in the newspapers?" you might ask me. If we had to render a judgment by what we read in the newspapers, it would be a very pitiful one. Just as it is in the news, the only stuff people hear about fraternities is the bad stuff.

Most of the Greek organizations here are generally good — full of people who like to talk with each other, enjoy doing activities together, and feel a great deal for each other. As far as "owning each other," as Cox said, if you're picking on dues-paying, "friend-renting" organizations, I guess you'll have to take out the Boy Scouts, Kiwanis Club and numerous others with us.

I know there are exceptions: groups who have to prop themselves up by stepping on everybody else. But, by not recognizing fraternities, we won't have a

governing body or anyone for those exceptions to have to answer to. That's why we have the Interfraternity Council — to keep us out in the sunshine, so we can be seen.

I can also tell you right now that if fraternities go underground, we'll only get bigger and more unmanageable.

Anytime you censor something or ban it, you increase its appeal and decrease your own. Take, for example, "The Catcher in the Rye," "Huckleberry Finn," "The Last Temptation of Christ," drugs and many other things that have been banned. They've all become enormously popular.

You could try to get rid of us through President William Mobley, but because he is a member of Delta Upsilon, one of the fraternities with a chapter on our

campus, I don't think you'll be too successful.

At the moment, our membership steadily grown to 3,000 at A&M, and is hard to argue bad things about a group that continually gets a higher grade-point ratio than the all-males average, has provided over 70 percent of the Supreme Court justices (some of the finest minds in the country) with members, generally provides brother with priceless friendships and social skills and many other things which could be found out if you contacted IFC and were interested.

There's still hope for Larry Cox. I used to be an anti-frat man myself — and now I'm much better, thank you.

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