

Congress fails to deal with budget deficit problem

Almost lost amid the daily media frenzy over Iraq is the fact that congressional leaders are once again failing to do anything about the federal budget deficit. I know everyone (including myself) is sick of hearing about this topic (we of the TV generation are sick of anything after 50 minutes), but I'd like to try to arouse another 10 minutes of interest or so.

The United States government has been in the red since before I became aware of things political (about 20 years ago). I have spent two decades watching politicians lie, cheat, steal, squirm and switch positions on this issue; let me review it.

In the 1970's, it was the responsible Republicans who argued for a balanced budget and the bleeding-heart spendthrift Democrats who said that budget deficits were "good for the economy" and "irrelevant;" while Republicans made more noble noises about fiscal restraint and the inadvisability of creating a welfare state.

In 1980, the Republicans got their birthday wish: Suddenly they were in control of both the presidency and the Senate, and in a position to do



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something about that horrible deficit. So what did they do? They CUT TAXES AND RAISED SPENDING!

Oh, they covered it with a bunch of economic bullstuff and talk of an evil empire, blah, blah, blah. In fact, it turned out that the Republicans didn't mean any of that garbage about fiscal responsibility at all; they just didn't like the people whose votes the Democrats were buying.

So instead of supporting teachers, social workers, and welfare bureaucrats they started channeling the tax bucks to aerospace engineers, defense companies, HUD contractors and S&L owners. To make sure the middle class stayed on board they cut some taxes and maintained Social Security benefits. And as soon as the Republicans started

spending, who do you think got that old-time fiscally responsible religion? The Democrats. Sure.

So please excuse me if I start laughing hysterically when Ted Kennedy talks about solving deficit problems. Or Phil Graham, or George Bush, or George Mitchell, or any of their ilk. I have listened to these politicians prevaricate on TV for too many years to start believing any of the crap they are now spewing in my direction.

The only thing I am prepared to believe is a balanced budget *this* year. Not in five years (or 100 years, which is what they mean when they say five). But I'm not holding my breath.

If I seem bitter and cynical, well, I am. But in my saner moments I realize that it's not fundamentally their fault. I know these people don't get to Washington by magic. The blame rests with the voters: you and me. The sad but simple truth is that Americans have become greedy and stupid. I say greedy because we want something for nothing and stupid because we believe the people who promise it to us.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan promised to

cut taxes, raise military spending, and balance the budget (which was already bleeding). He won easily. The budget deficit soared, as anyone who paid attention in seventh grade math class could have predicted. He was then re-elected in 1984 over a man who promised to fix the problem by raising taxes. The American people still believe in Santa Claus. Touching.

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This budget stuff goes on today: A candidate for State Senate (our district) recently promised to vote against any tax increase *unless it will directly benefit A&M*. The man is campaigning to go to Austin to steal for us. I can't think of anything sleazier.

Our grandparents' generation was neither greedy nor stupid; they worked

hard to make life better for us. Our parents' generation is at least not so stupid that they voted themselves more Social Security benefits than they paid for before turning it over to us. We, however, have been borrowing enormous sums to spend on planes, and VCR's. So don't ask why Japan soon own the west coast or why they're repossessing your car sounds like Helmut Kohl.

Now you know why I won't buy a media hype or political b.s. about some "historic agreement" at the "budget summit." That's why I won't give my vote to any incumbent who hasn't voted "no" on every unbalanced budget, increase in the debt ceiling, every spending resolution in excess of revenue; and I will vote for no challenger unless they promise to do just that. That's why I support Libertarians (who stand for balanced budgets, among other good things); it's why I wrote this article.

I don't think we will wake up in time to stave off disaster, but I hope we do sincerely hope we do.

Jeff Farmer is a graduate student in mathematics.

NAACP's ban of UT statues merely avoids real problems

An ancient Haitian proverb states that ignorance doesn't kill you, but it makes you sweat a lot. University of Texas civil rights leaders must be perspiring profusely after their latest play for media attention.

The African-American population of our nation is beset by a multitude of dire problems. Drug addiction is appallingly prevalent, black on black crime is epidemic, murder rates among young black men approach genocidal numbers, and the number of single parent households continues to skyrocket. The NAACP's solution? Ban statues, of course.

Austin NAACP president Gary Bledsoe called last week for the removal of four statues of Confederate war heroes from the University of Texas campus after a statue of Confederate leader Jefferson Davis was vandalized.

The 9½-foot-tall statue of Davis was spray painted with the slogans "Stop Racism" and "Am I a Hero". Given the apparent tendency of UT students in the past to spray paint statues at A&M, this defacement should come as no surprise, however it has rekindled calls for the statue's removal by minority groups angered by the racial conflicts which have beset their campus in recent months.

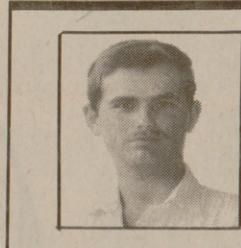
After two racially motivated incidents at UT fraternity houses last spring provoked confrontations between university officials and minority leaders, several constructive solutions to the racial problems on campus were suggested. Moves to increase cultural diversity in the faculty, curriculum, and student body were called for and a sensible plan to educate students and ease racial tensions was undertaken.

The NAACP call to have the statues removed is simply a self-serving non-solution intended to call attention to themselves while going about the business of ignoring the real problems in the African-American community.

Bledsoe said, "Jefferson Davis has no more connection (with the university) than Abraham Lincoln, but there is no statue of Abraham Lincoln. That's very telling to me."

This "telling" point appears much more oblique when it is noted that Bledsoe petitioned and gained approval from University President William Cunningham to add a statue of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. to the campus.

King's connection with the university? The same as Davis'. He was an historic figure who played a significant part in shaping our nation, as did Davis, Lee, Jackson, etc. ... Instead of remembering historic figures — all figures — Bledsoe and the NAACP want to selectively



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rearrange and edit those parts of history which they find offensive or unfit.

As a Southerner and descendant of Confederate soldiers, I find these attempts to take away part of my heritage tremendously insulting and dangerous to an educated nation. Born of ignorance and a desire to obfuscate any understanding of the historical significance of the Confederacy to our nation's development, these attacks on Southern history should be soundly rebuked at every opportunity — whether they come from the NAACP or the KKK's blasphemous abuse of the Confederate battle flag.

Bledsoe said he has long found statues of Confederate leaders offensive because they suggest the school endorses Confederate principles.

What are these horrid principles? In 1865, the men of my great-great-grandfather's regiment in South Carolina composed a resolution which stated that, "The war in which we are engaged is a war of self-defense; that in the beginning, nearly four years ago, we took up arms in defense of the right to govern ourselves, and to protect our country from invasion, our homes from desolation, and our wives and children from insult and outrage." Scandalous!

Bledsoe chooses to recall the six percent of Southerners who were slave owners. I choose to honor all those who fought and died for what they believed in.

If ignorance wins out in Austin, as it usually does, I propose a trade — their four statues in exchange for the atrocious "Planned for the Future" statue which sat outside the MSC. They deserve it. Besides, Texas A&M does have a connection with Jeff Davis — he was offered the school presidency in the late 1800's.

I hope we have enough pride in our past and our history as a Southern institution to behave differently from our Austin brethren. Besides, even in Aggie math four for one is a heckuva deal.

Larry Cox is a graduate student in range science.

Aggies must make effort to appreciate each other

As happens each fall, there have been a rash of emotional letters concerning 'exclusionary' organizations. I would like to step back for a moment and take a less emotional look at the issues which surfaced in these letters.

The first letter I read was written by Mrs. John Paul Johnson, who criticized sororities for hurting their prospective pledges' feelings by judging them on certain criteria. A rebuttal followed from Amy Bening defending sorority selection processes. Finally, two letters were submitted which criticized Ms. Bening's points and prejudices. There was also an unrelated column which proposed that fraternities should once again lose their University recognition.

Though I could spend a great deal of time analyzing each letter's strengths and weaknesses, I do not plan to do so. Instead, I would like to address the issue of respect. It seems that each of the authors cared about what the other authors thought, or at least were concerned that the opposition's arguments would sway other Aggies. No one dropped down to the level of reminding anyone that Highway 6 runs both ways.

As Gwynne Ellen Ash pointed out in her rebuttal to Ms. Bening's article, everyone needs to belong. This is true of anyone regardless of their appearance, IQ, gender, race, or location of birth. People derive a sense of self respect from the feedback they receive from others. Being shunned by a group may cause one to reconsider one's value (after the anger passes).

Once accepted into a group, people naturally take pride in the group since it reflects their values. Consequently, a member of the Corp of Cadets should be proud to be a CT, a member of a fraternity or sorority should be proud to be a Greek, and a student or former student of

Louis Decker

Reader's Opinion

Texas A&M should be proud to be an Aggie. If one loses respect for one's peers, one's self respect will likely follow.

Another important issue is that everyone must decide for themselves what their priorities are. Very few people (if any) can be good at everything. We each have our strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, we set goals for ourselves, and try to be the best people we can be. How we choose what is 'best', is usually a function of our upbringing, peers, and religion. But certainly, everyone's goals and talents are different.

A member of the Corp of Cadets should be proud to be a CT, a member of a fraternity or sorority should be proud to be a Greek, and a student or former student of Texas A&M should be proud to be an Aggie.

In order to strive to do one's best, a person must play many roles. My father uses the analogy to spokes in a wheel. There needs to be enough spokes in the wheel to make it sturdy and dependable. Thus, a CT may also be a member of a religious group, participate in a professional society, and of course be a good Ag. Likewise, greeks, dorm students, and off-campus students can be good Ags too. In other words, being a good Ag by actively participating in yell practices and so forth is only one spoke in the wheel.

If we can all learn to respect others for what they are, and try to understand what their goals and talents are, then we may not be so hasty to criticize them. Not

everyone can win a beauty pageant, throw a winning pass, lead others to a better outlook on life, advance the state of technology, or be the hit of a party. On the other hand, we do have our own special gifts as well as friends whom appreciate us.

If a group (which does not exist under government regulations) wishes to choose people based on the values of the group members, it seems to me that it has the right to do so. Those who do not fit into the group would not be happy in the group even if they were allowed to participate. Is it better to tell people they are not wanted, or constantly be at odds with them? Has someone you wanted to go out with ever repeatedly told you 'maybe' instead of tactfully telling you 'no'? I personally prefer to pull the bandage off quickly instead of slowly ripping out one hair at a time.

On the other hand, groups should choose their criteria carefully so as not to miss out on the wonderful talents each and every person has. Open mindedness and acceptance of change are two prerequisites for growth. Groups who do not choose their acceptance criteria wisely may find their functions to be rather drab and superficial.

Note that when groups set criteria which are detrimental to society in general, then society must act to protect itself from these organizations. Thus, organizations which discriminate based on race, religion, and similar criteria should be shunned.

In conclusion, I hope that Aggies will continue to care not only for their school but also for other Aggies. The only way to truly care for others is to try to understand them and to let them add their own special qualities to the essence of Aggieland.

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