

YOU WERE WONDERING?



MAIL CALL

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes all letters to the editor. Please include name, classification, address and phone number on all letters. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Because of limited space, shorter letters have a better chance of appearing. There is, however, no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

A salute to the Corps

EDITOR:

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank some very special people.

Quite some time ago, I learned that a young boy named Michael in my neighborhood in Houston had cancer.

Michael began chemotherapy and was doing quite well up until a month or so ago. I was told then the disease had progressed and was causing tumors to develop on his brain.

Although Michael is only 14, he knows that when he graduates from high school, he wants to attend Texas A&M and become a member of the Corps of Cadets.

Michael might not be able to come to A&M, but Saturday, March 2, several members of the Corps went to him.

I've heard that when you have a disease such as cancer, it is your spirit that helps you to keep up your fight. Those guys gave Michael's spirit such a boost Saturday, he should keep going for a long time.

I hope one day he will be able to wear his midnights and boots and help another child keep fighting.

I just wanted to say thank you, and it's people like you who make me proud to be an Aggie!

Samantha J. Leech '91

Just say 'no' to hate

EDITOR:

Yes Andy, let us educate the hate away from Saddam.

In fact, why didn't you just get on a plane to Iraq, seek an interview with him and say: "Listen bud, we must be willing to meet our humanitarian responsibilities of this new era. We must work with (your frustration) and educate (your hate) away ..."

Yes, the solution could be just that easy. Or did you have a different way of implementing your new form of "education?" I couldn't find one in your column.

Oh, and don't forget to indoctrinate the people of Kuwait in your "Just Say No To Hate" program. They are probably a tinsy winsy bit angry with their buddy Saddam.

Yes, John F. Kennedy was right. Too bad he couldn't hold to his convictions, as you've seemed to interpret them, when he was continuing with the efforts of the Cold War.

In fact, that is a very unfortunate thing indeed. For then our military would not now have the technology to prevent the loss of so much international civilian life and

American military lives with accurately guided missile systems. Ah, the hypocrisy of it all.

And since you will be so consistent with all of your convictions stated in your article, when will you be calling up the American moms and dads of the 27 American Marines killed by a Scud missile the day before your article to tell them: "They were made to or willingly participated in war and were killed. There is ABSOLUTELY NOTHING objectively noble about that simple fact ... they may very well have been noble men, but it is not because they were ----- (you fill in the blank Andy buddy)?"

After all, real nobility comes from writing articles about how to educate hate away, not from being in hostile territory and trying to help a defenseless little country.

— Please, call my adoptive father after you talk to those parents. He is an ex-hate-infested marine. You know, the blood-and-guts, good old American type. —

Yes, what a plan. Andy, how was it you were going to carry out that re-education?

And Andy, I agree, "... pure form of hate (i.e., indifference) which justifies exploitation." We should have started the education program when lovable, not hateable, Saddam first invaded Kuwait.

But I have one question Andy, is it possible that the Iraqi government is fatalistic in its thinking also?

They could be saying, like so many of us, "Americans are just an evil lot, and they will always be that way." Then maybe WE would have been indifferent.

But no, that is just like something that organization, the "United Nations of Macho Men," would say.

Obviously, they have been infected with the "... American lust for accumulation ..." That Bush guy is something else to be able to turn the thinking of that whole "Peace Seeking Organization" (as they might arrogantly entitle themselves).

If he would just quit spending money to fight nice guys like Saddam, we could do so much good!

Andy, please do two things for all of us. Most important, send your column to your friends Saddam and Bush to end all this hateful business.

Then write a column telling us where to send our money to help with these emergency causes you listed.

If the mean old American government won't send our tax dollars, I'll send my own money to help.

Andy, I intend no malice toward you. Some of your ideals are great, but consider the whole of the situation.

Thom Ives
graduate student

Education needs help

Government money can't solve problems

This column is in

response to a column by Dr. Larry Hickman titled "Does America have moral fiber to fight a war against ignorance?" which was published in Tuesday's Bryan-College Station Eagle.

Which country in the world spends the most money on education? The United States.

And which industrialized country ends up at or near the bottom of every poll identifying educational achievement? You guessed it, the United States.

There's an old adage which says "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The opposite statement is just as relevant: "If it's broke, fix it." Yet, the fact remains that we continue to pour money into a system that doesn't work.

In his article, Hickman articulately states some of the key issues America is facing. He emphasizes the education problem, stressing its impact on national productivity. His prescription calls for more taxation, (particularly of the nation's millionaires) and more spending on education. To the general population, he assigns the role of holding "their leaders accountable for their actions in the war against ignorance."

Although I agree with Hickman about the symptoms we face, I disagree with the cause, the prescription and who can be counted on to solve the problem.

In the first place, Hickman's column explicitly states that the cause of our decline is the decrease in spending on human resources, "including education, but excluding Social Security." For evidence, he points to the fact that spending for these programs fell from 28 percent of federal outlays in 1980 to 22 percent of federal outlays in 1987. This use of statistics obviously raises more questions than it answers. In the first place, why does he limit his information to 1980 and 1987? Wouldn't it be more relevant to go back to a reference point further in the past to identify trends, say 1970 or 1960? Furthermore, at least in theory, Reagan shifted many human resource programs back to the states. Wouldn't it be more relevant to show spending breakdowns for the entire public sector? And finally, Hickman's evidence does not indicate real levels of spending, only percentages.

I obviously don't have the data I am requesting of Hickman. Then again, I am not making the same type of assertions he is making.

So what has been the cause of the recent losses posted by our educational system? Hickman asserts that the deterioration of the American Community is a consequence of ignorance and illiteracy. I disagree. I think ignorance and illiteracy are consequences of the American Community. The ignorance belongs to the upper classes. When the lower classes move in, they refuse to be communitarians. They think they can move out and leave the government to solve the problems. The lower classes are left with neighborhoods which have no element of "success" left. In comes the welfare truck. The role the community might have played in self-empowerment is dwarfed by the giant of welfare. Reading promotes



Tim Truesdale
Columnist

independence. Welfare cannot reward that.

Hickman's prescription calls for more spending (apparently) at the federal level. More bureaucracy, more middlemen skimming off the top and more dependence on faraway Washington to help us here. If anything will deteriorate American communities, more dependence on the outside will.

The only appropriate response is to foster community self-help and self-determination. When local people fight local problems, it becomes more than a job: It becomes a passion. When Chicago recently decentralized its school board mechanism, this was overwhelmingly proven.

So, if self-empowerment is the solution, who is responsible for solving the problem? Forgive my cynicism, but if you trust Congress to solve the problems we have with ignorance and illiteracy, then you must not think the problems are as massive as you let on.

We all can appreciate the swiftness with which the United States enjoyed victory in the Gulf War. However, there are no quick fixes for the problems you so clearly portray. If Congress attempts to engage the problems you outline, it truly might become another Vietnam, the war we couldn't win.

Speaking of Vietnam, why did the Communists win a war in which they were outpowered, outgunned and outspent? They won because they were able to mobilize people at the "grassroots" level. When the South Vietnamese detected enemy movement in the jungle, they could call in American "high-technology" warplanes to deliver fireballs of death. Unfortunately, such dependence on Uncle Sam and his sophisticated, expensive war machine was no match for the "people's movement" which had nothing to cling to but the passion for self-determination.

Hickman, I agree with you that the current set of priorities will lead our country to weakness. But I believe the true "ignorance" lies in believing that as citizens, the best we can do is pressure our leaders to do something about it.

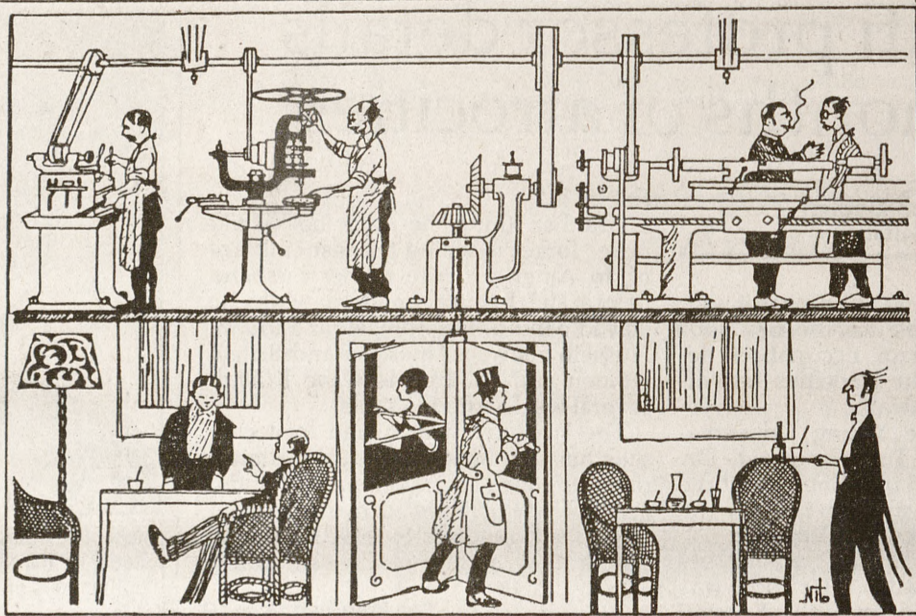
You are entirely correct when you state that our downfall "will not be for lack of expertise but for lack of will and nerve." The question is, do we have the will to rebuild a sense of community in this country? Or, are we blinded by the attitude that we can do our own thing and let the government take care of the problems?

The reality is that the problems we face are much more complex than those faced in the Gulf War. The question is whether we can afford to fight another war using the same tactics that couldn't produce victory in Vietnam. Money cannot win a war of this magnitude. Only personal dedication and engagement can.

Tim Truesdale is a graduate student in urban planning.

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