

God, not greed, made U.S. great

Self-interest shouldn't justify improvements in social welfare

"Greed — for lack of a better word — is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the revolutionary spirit. Greed, in all its forms ... has marked the upward surge of mankind, and greed ... will not only save Teldar Paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the U.S."

— Michael Douglas, as Gordon Gekko, in "Wall Street"

"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel."

— James 4:1-3

Will selfish greed be the salvation of the United States, or its destruction? Obviously, opinions differ. However, both sides agree that greed is an important force in capitalistic economies. And most observers agree that the United States is currently a capitalistic country. But just what is capitalism?

In his best seller "The Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith explained capitalism in terms of an "invisible hand." This hand causes people to spend their lives trying to satisfy their own selfish interests. Smith claimed that if each of us subjected ourselves to greed, we would produce a virtual heaven on Earth. Production and wealth would be maximized, and society would be much better off.

This utopia could be attributed to everyone acting in the most greedy way possible, maximizing profits. If Smith was indeed correct, then greed must certainly be reclassified from cardinal sin to virtue.

Does this system actually work in the long run, away from the textbooks? If you think the S&L scandal has benefited our country, then you would have to agree that greed is good. If you believe greed has "marked the upward surge of mankind," then you must agree that rising drug addiction and alcoholism rates (both of which are supplied at tremendous profits) are beneficial to our society. Greed leads to corruption and degradation, not honesty and wholeness.

Some of the problems we face in 1991 are not all that different from the issues in 1776. National competition from other superpowers is still a concern, as Michael Douglas' character pointed out in "Wall Street."

But placing ourselves under the invisible hand of greed is seen as the solution to problems away from Wall Street, as well. A survey of recent Battalion issues reveals the following answers to national crises:

In last Tuesday's paper, one columnist pointed out that, "We need to educate the state's poor, too." Although there are many good reasons

Tim Truesdale
Columnist

to do so, the columnist provides only one: selfish interest. The columnist points out that unless we educate "all of our students," the United States will fall behind in the world market.

A column appearing last Friday suggested that "organized activities for today's youths will help solve gang problem." This column did a great job of explaining how inner city boredom leads to "doing drugs, stealing and shooting ..." The columnist points out that "our society needs to focus more time, energy and money on its young people." But when she gets around to explaining why society should fund these much-needed programs, she offers only one reason to do so: selfishness. She points out that it will probably cost more in the long run to build prisons than keep inner city youth occupied.

Another Friday column claimed that "Education can save future of economy." The columnist proposes a sound program. However, the only reason he gives for us to consider it is because the alternatives are limited to supporting "one-fourth of our population through our welfare system or let the poor become a permanent — and dangerous — underclass."

Each of these writers claims we are currently too absorbed in selfish interests to solve domestic problems. Then each of them go on to say that we should be greedy enough to implement the solutions. Fight greed with greed.

On the other hand, both the Bible and common sense agree that greed produces weakness and instability, not strength and security.

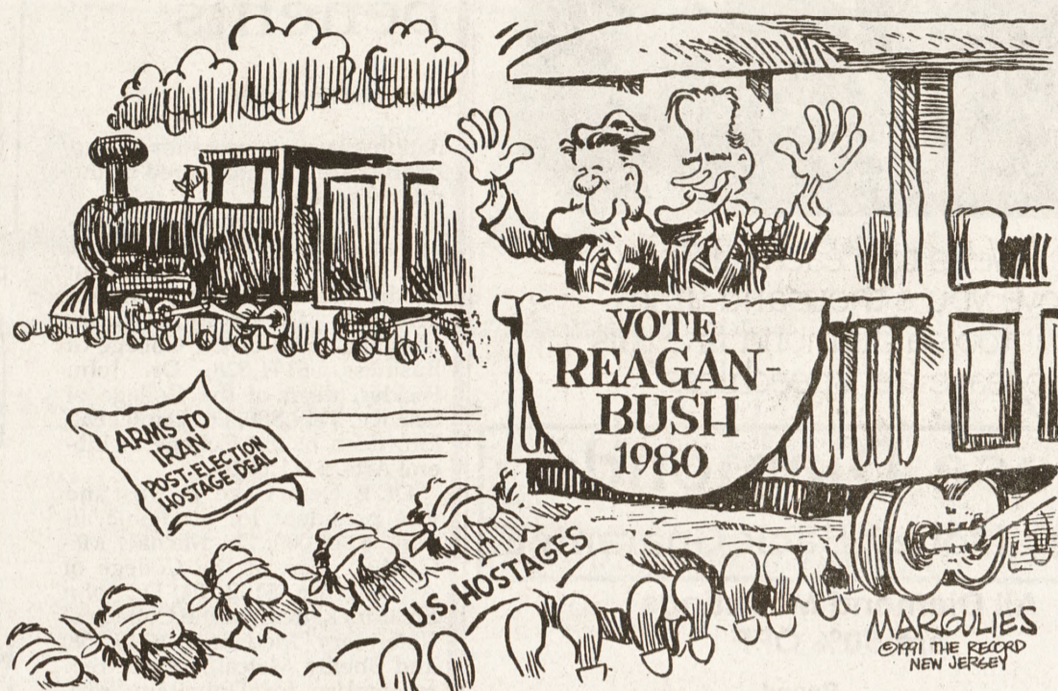
So, how has our country prospered for so long while based on capitalism, whose roots lie in greed? The point is that THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN AN ADAM SMITH CAPITALISTIC NATION!

In capitalism, all actions are directed by the invisible hand of selfish interest. However, early American settlers knew nothing of an invisible hand, but trusted fully in the hand of Providence.

They felt that by putting their efforts in God's hands, He would provide for them. It was not a disgrace to be poor. But it was a disgrace to stop short of doing one's best. To do so would be to rob God. Likewise, if someone in the community had a need, others provided for his needs. Not for selfish reasons, but just because it was the right thing to do.

But, since nowadays we prefer not to "believe in anything that cannot be seen," we have rejected God in favor of the invisible hand. (If anyone has an explanation for this hypocrisy, I'd sure like to hear it.) And if you think God is unjust, take a look around and see the havoc that can be wrought on a nation by the invisible hand of selfish interest.

Tim Truesdale is a graduate student in urban planning.



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. There is no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.

U.S. intervention is wrong

EDITOR:

As a student in a Mexican university, a history professor repeated to us a phrase that has become a very familiar slogan: "Those who do not learn from the past are destined to repeat it." It is with this in mind that I respond to Tim Truesdale's column "Uncle Sam must look south again."

Tim endorses the concept that U.S. intervention into the domestic affairs of independent Latin American countries is not only acceptable, but actually a moral imperative. This idea is not new; quite the contrary, it has shaped American foreign policy toward Latin American countries almost since these nations began to sever these ties with their parent country, Spain. And there has never been a shortage of men who, in a Truesdale-like analysis, have been ready to explain why past interventions were wrong and present intervention is not.

The now-infamous Monroe Doctrine was written with this type of reasoning. European intervention is unacceptable, but American intervention is fully justified. And the United States has intervened in more instances than we care to remember. When Colombia, for example, refused to allow the American government to dig what would have been the "Colombian Canal," the United States sponsored a revolution whose army was comprised of volunteer firefighters who declared a new nation of Panama and promptly sold the land to the United States. While Tim may now assert that this was "not a case of good parenting," the American participants at the time would have countered that the construction of the canal is obviously in the best interests of all American countries.

And where has this intervention brought us? Tim is correct in stating that "the United States is not one among equals in the Organization of American States." We are the most powerful and the most distrusted among OAS member nations. OAS members will rarely openly support American intervention of any kind; to do so would make gaining OAS support against the United States difficult in possible future intervention in their own countries.

Most Americans would be surprised to learn that the majority of the Mexican population seriously believes the United States has plans to forcefully take control of Mexico at some unspecified future date, either by military or economic means. As one Mexican put it, "This is not said, but it is believed." Nearly all of those with whom I discussed this topic during my nine-month stay in Mexico agreed with the above statement. This belief underlies Latin attitudes toward the United States, and has been strengthened by our recent interventions in Grenada and Panama. This is where our intervention in Grenada and Panama has brought us.

Finally, we must realize that Latin American countries are NOT our children nor are they our nephews NOR DO THEY WANT TO BE. They are independent, self-governing nations who gained their freedom from Spain and its imposed governments through the sacrifices and deaths of their own patriots and their own citizens, without the aid of neighboring United States. We did not spawn them, and we cannot claim any parental status, responsibilities or privileges over them; neither does our high standard of living or the freedoms that exist here give us this status.

Our credibility in the Latin American community is low — it can only be bolstered by allowing these nations to retain the complete self-determination we expect for ourselves.

Christopher Lee Medlin '92

Thanks go out to Aggies

EDITOR:

As a graduate of a rural school, Annapolis, I would like to say thank you to the fine students, professors and staff I've spent this past year with. Aggies are very special.

There's Charles Gibson, a foodservice handler at Sbsa and Mark, his manager and the other hard working dedicated workers. Thanks, Sbsa! The food was great, especially on those special nights — creole, German! Amazing that so much food, especially fruit, was available at such a low price.

There are the two Davids, Linda (bet it's a girl!), Hal, Mel and beautiful Sarah at the LRD in the Library. Thanks staff. A died-in-the wool IBM user before, now, thanks to the helpful coaching of the LRD staff, a Mac convert. Great Product!

Thanks, also, to Martha, Cain pool's capable manager, who made the best of a difficult situation. With the main filter pump broken in the fall — shutting down the outdoor pool — for fitting - in recreational pool hours in every conceivable time space in the indoor pool.

Finally thanks to my fellow economics graduate students, especially those from Korea, especially Seung-Luon Kang and Yunho Lee. We had a good time. And learned.

As I board a Continental Airlines airplane next Thursday, from Easterwood, returning me to my family, I'll have my fondest memories yet in my total of ten years here.

You current Aggies are the best I've been with. You are smarter, friendlier, healthier and the coeds more beautiful than any of your predecessors since 1968.

And next year at Kyle Field, against t.u., I'll be cheering you on. 1991 — my graduation year and the year we go to the Cotton Bowl! Go Aggies! Gig 'em Horns.

Gibbs Digrell
economics graduate

Budget cuts would be catastrophic for Texas higher education

The Texas House of Representatives has passed an Appropriations Bill that would create a budget catastrophe for the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University and deal a devastating blow to high-quality education in Texas.

The bill would deprive UT Austin and Texas A&M of more than one-fourth of the state funding needed just to maintain current services. It would destroy the institutions as they are known today and would set them on the road toward mediocrity.

Texas through the years have wisely provided for a diverse system of higher education that includes different kinds of colleges and universities serving different needs. Two of the state's major comprehensive universities — UT Austin and Texas A&M — have achieved truly international standing. They offer a full range of undergraduate and graduate programs of the highest quality, conduct world-class advanced research in numerous fields and provide services to citizens

Dr. William H. Cunningham
and Dr. William H. Mobley

Guest Columnists

all across the state.

They are also major engines driving the state's economic development and diversification, as attested by their roles in attracting MCC, Sematech and the Superconducting Super Collider. And they are among the nation's leaders in attracting private and federal research funds, which benefit the entire state.

Our concern is not to cry foul or protect a vested interest, but to make it clear the extent and destructiveness of the House bill. The consequences should be clearly understood. The bill would cut UT Austin's current level of appropriations by \$100 million and A&M's by \$70 million during the next two years.

Compared with the funding level

required to maintain current services for the next two years, UT Austin would lose approximately \$106 million in General Revenue appropriations and A&M would lose approximately \$94 million. ("Current services" means the current level of funding adjusted for the actual growth in student enrollment and related educational facilities since the last appropriations period.)

The bill prescribes much more drastic reductions for UT Austin and A&M than for other institutions. It requires overall cuts of \$245 million in the current services budget for the next two years at the state's 35 senior colleges and universities.

Schools with less than 10,000 students would face a budget cut of 2 percent, while schools with enrollments between 10,000 and 37,500 would face cuts of 3 percent. Schools with more than 37,500 (only UT Austin and A&M fall in this category) would be required to absorb all the rest of the \$245 million in cuts. That would be a 26 percent cut at both UT Austin and Texas A&M.

This plan is inherently inequitable,

and it is bad public policy. UT Austin and A&M, which together enroll 22.4 percent of the students at Texas public senior colleges and universities, would be burdened with 81 percent of the total budget cuts among those institutions. Texans should seek to strengthen all institutions of higher education, rather than tearing down two of the state's most comprehensive universities.

We at UT Austin and A&M understand very well the serious budget problems faced by the state and stand ready to do our fair part to help legislators and other public officials deal with those problems. But our two institutions cannot fairly be expected to do their share and everyone else's share as well.

The House bill would effectively deny to the people of Texas the option of maintaining these institutions at the highest level. Many of Texas' best and brightest students would be forced to go outside the state to obtain the type of education that has been available at UT Austin and Texas A&M. They will find significantly higher costs outside the state, and the long-term costs to

Texas will be enormous, as many of the young people who go elsewhere in search of opportunity will not return.

Since the founding of the Republic of Texas, the visionary and practical citizens of Texas have aspired to develop universities of the highest quality. This aspiration has been visionary because education enriches and ennobles all of society, and it has been thoroughly practical because education is the only sound foundation for personal and societal advancement.

Today, UT Austin and Texas A&M embody that aspiration, but all that has been achieved can be destroyed quickly in the extremely competitive world of higher education. The House Appropriations Bill is a pernicious proposal that threatens to undo, almost overnight, everything that generations of Texans have labored to build at these two magnificent institutions.

Dr. William H. Cunningham is president of the University of Texas at Austin, and Dr. William H. Mobley is president of Texas A&M University.