

Government must continue funding

Public schools should not be privatized

Who would believe the United States ranks below 45 other countries, all members of the UN, as far as literacy is concerned?

We don't often think about the education system being this badly deteriorated. In fact 42 percent of us think schools are doing a good job of educating our children. This figure shows that even though occasionally we complain about our schooling system, basically we are not that preoccupied with this problem.

Recently President Bush became very anxious with the state of our education system. Amid frustration and worry, he and Lamar Alexander, the minister of education, came up with a remedy for the severe ailment of education.

Their revolutionary formula is called "The Choice Plan."

They concluded that the problem lies in the lack of healthy, free market competition for our public schools. As far as getting government support, public schools are now a self-satisfied, self-protective monopoly. For a devoted capitalist, this form of organization is blasphemous. Bush and Lamar want to implement a different kind of school, both public and private. They want schools to compete for government funds, students and excellence, with parents and children of all walks of life free to choose.

The fact that Bush and Alexander have addressed the problem of education is encouraging. It shows that finally they recognize a severe problem exists. However, the method they have chosen to resolve the problem is disturbing. It shows they don't realize the value or function of education in society.

Many questions have been sparked by the Choice Plan. Can the government really provide the money necessary to open better schools? Can the government provide the financial assistance to all students who will need it to attend the school of their choice? What about the average income or poor student? Do they not have a right to a good education? Is even the quality of a basic education going to become centered around the price you can pay for it?

Chester Finn, a proponent of Choice, exemplifies the cynical, selfish and short-sighted view held by the supporters of this plan when he asks: "Under Choice, would the kids attending inner city high schools be any worse off than they are today?"

Instead of striving to find a win-win strategy that would guarantee the prosperity of our country in years to come, Choice proposes to follow a Darwinian example — make the strong stronger, and let the weak perish. It fails to acknowledge education as different from some commercial industry, like airlines, which needs deregulation.

Education is much more. It is an investment in the future of the country, not a profit-making machine. The nation is not made up of a few strong individuals — it is made up of all people. And the success and prosperity of the country does not depend on only a

few strong, rich, well-educated citizens but on the standard of living, education and opportunities of all its citizens.

Making education another free market experiment is a frightening notion.

This development, if it takes place, would mean the right to a good education may be violated. Poor and weak schools will die because they will be unable to compete with richer, stronger schools. The students attending these schools usually are poor themselves, and thus they would not have the opportunity to enter a better school because of financial constraints.

Another alarming possibility could be substandard schools springing up to serve poorer students.

In any of these scenarios, as always in a free market system, the strong will thrive and the weak will perish. Education is too important to treat in such a way.

Alternatively, Bush and Alexander can start thinking along the lines of improving education for all. Three steps are necessary to achieve the total improvement of education:

- regard educators as vital for the future of the country
- improve facilities
- allocate more money to education

The salaries of teachers today are meager. Their status in society is low as well compared with the status of teachers in other countries.

In Europe for example, teachers enjoy the respect and appreciation of society. Their salaries are proportionate to their status. Teachers are regarded as the ones with the power to mold the future, since the future of each country depends on its people. Teachers are not regarded very highly in the United States.

If the government would commit itself to praising the value of educators, if it would offer higher salaries to teachers, then more gifted and ambitious young people would embrace teaching as a career opportunity.

With the current situation, teachers have very limited possibilities for job enrichment or advancement. There must be programs through which teachers can train and extend their learning.

Facilities also would have to be improved, and new schools be built. These changes will require the government to recognize education as a priority and allocate more money for the promotion of education. Moreover the government should help the poorer states with more money and expertise in designing effective education systems.

Certainly this strategy requires that Bush and Alexander recognize education is not an industry that needs deregulation.

In the case of education, the application of free market principles would only accentuate the reflection of American society: divided by race, class and aspiration.



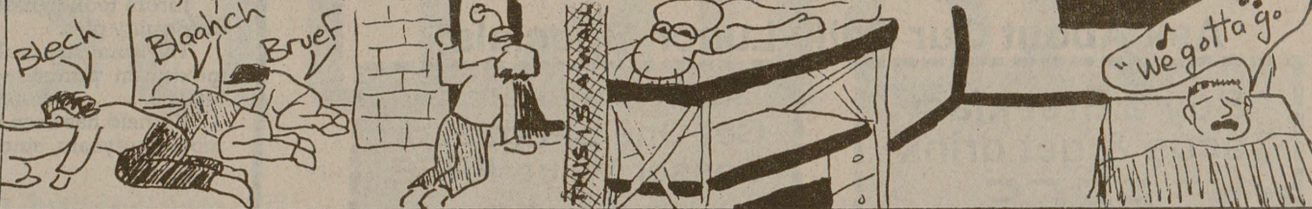
Christina Maimarides
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Davis-Gary, The Olde Years

by Bingo Barnes

MY NEW ROOM WAS ON THE FIRST FLOOR RIGHT NEXT TO THE BATHROOM. BETWEEN THE THURSDAY NIGHT BARF-A-THONS AND MY ROOMMATE SINGING "LOUIE LOUIE" IN HIS SLEEP, MY REST DEFINITELY SUFFERED.



Check bouncers aspire to clean up national budget

Though our politicians in Washington can never please all of the people all of the time, they always seem to find a way to keep our political cartoonists happy.

Their shenanigans are often pulled off individually, as Teddy Kennedy can attest, or in other cases, a sizable group of politicians are involved. Do we all remember a few years back when a number of congressmen were exposed as having had sexual flings with their pages?

This gave rise to such political humor as: Why can't our congressmen read books? They only know how to bend over the pages.

At any rate, political humorists of all forms can take delight in the latest news that our representatives cannot seem to balance their checkbooks. The first floor of the Capitol houses a tiny bank that our House members created for their own use. In only the first six months of last year, they managed to bounce more than 4,300 checks. Unlike us, they do not have to pay a penalty.

This bad book-keeping was revealed when Congress' General Accounting Office audited the bank's books and operating practices. They found that from July 1, 1988, to June 30, 1989 "a large number of checks was being cashed and then returned to the House bank because of insufficient funds."

Subsequently, House Sergeant-At-Arms Jack Russ set up new procedures to curb the rubber check onslaught. But, probably to no one's surprise, when the GAO checked the records a year later, the number of bad checks had increased by more than 300 to 4,325.

Taking into account the number of House members, that figure amounts to more than ten bad checks per person!

Because I am no stranger to Check Worthy, it would

seem that I would refrain from ridiculing our representatives. No chance.

These are the same individuals who are supposed to balance our budget. We have placed a trillion dollars in the hands of people who cannot properly handle their own checkbooks!

Putting it in perspective, this is akin to making Charles Manson the Sheriff of Brazos county or Willie Nelson the Tax Assessor/Collector.

For this year, the number of hot checks has declined, according to Russ. Fortunately for them, the \$28,500 congressional pay raise went into effect on January 1, giving the representatives a little extra spending cash. I would have assumed they would have handled the bad check problem in the manner they do the budget deficit. Credit. Why not borrow the money to pay off the checks? Are these not the same fellows responsible for creating our budgetary woes?

What's even more serious, the GAO reported that 134 people cashed 581 bad checks for amounts of \$1000 or more. And, in some instances, members let the overdrafts run for almost a month. That is pretty serious stuff.

In all cases, the house bank essentially "float-ed" the bad checks until the representative responsible for the checks could redeem them.

It certainly would be great if life outside the Capitol were so forgiving. I cannot think of too many constituents who would not be pleased if that were the case.

Imagine making a few mistakes which resulted in some bad checks circulating around the Bryan/College Station metroplex. Not to worry, the bank will float you the necessary dough until you can come up with it. No problem there either, just give yourself a \$28,000 pay raise and go on about your business.



Matt McBurnett
McBurnett is a senior electrical engineering major.

Mail Call

A&M needs more openness

Editor's note: The Corp of Cadets made an official statement about the alleged assault through the Office of Public Information.

Also, there is no public evidence that University officials were trying to "hush up" anybody related to the pay discrepancy of A&M female faculty.

As a recent transfer student to Texas A&M, I'm quickly finding out the lengths to which this school will go in order to keep a spotless reputation.

The alleged incident regarding the assault of a female cadet because she wanted to participate in one of the Corps' many ancient rituals is bad enough.

Whatever a person's feelings are about women participating in the Corps, it should sicken any student here to think she may have been beaten just for wanting to become more involved in it. Instead, she should be praised for not following the social customs that cause Corps women to be the butts of jokes.

What's more is that Texas A&M and the Corps leaders have decided to refuse discussion of the subject, hoping students here will forget the incident ever happened.

Tim Piper, commander of the Parsons' Mounted Cavalry, the group the female cadet wanted to join, and Corps commander John Sherman took the cowardly approach. They didn't express one bit of concern for the cadet or for the fact other cadets could be involved. Instead they decided to duck and cover, to shut up and hope this thing blows over.

Add to this the administration's hushing up of female staff members being underpaid for the last several years, and the incidents become a trend.

It's up to the students to make sure this incident

doesn't end up buried like the other stuff I've heard goes on here.

Brian Boney '92

ERA would not benefit women

Editor's note: There are well over 150 women on the A&M faculty payroll. The 19 women Holly Becka referred to were those who filed for pay discrimination.

I am writing in response to Holly Becka's column on discrimination of women at Texas A&M. Becka states that the University sends the message of "men being better thinkers and better teachers at the higher education" by currently enrolling only 19 females on faculty payroll.

Becka overlooks the fact that more women are getting away from the teaching field. Today's liberal-minded women want to diversify to prove they can hold management and other professional positions.

Another such topic is women's equal rights. Many women push the Equal Rights Amendment upon us and strive to have it pass. In what way are today's women discriminated against? Many will answer sexual harassment on the job. There are already laws governing this issue. No other law, such as the ERA, would prevent further sexual harassment on the job.

And finally, I arrive at a touchy yet real topic. The white male is the most discriminated being today. If a white male, any female and any other race of male apply for the same job position and all displayed equal credentials, the white male will be the last hired. This statement is neither sexist or racist; rather, it is a truth we all throw behind a curtain and ignore. If any sex has a legitimate reason to complain about discrimination, it is without question the male.

If this article has offended you in any way, my apologies are sincere. However, if it has made you stop and think, then I have accomplished my purpose.

Michael Brent Peavy '94

Groups often act recklessly

I can only defend the Corps in saying that those involved in the alleged incident connected with the Parsons' Mounted Cavalry were individuals who acted as a group and would have done otherwise as individuals.

However, I wonder if the Corps itself does not indirectly promote this type of behavior. Fraternities have long been targeted for such actions. Group dynamics take the individual out of his/her normal element and the wrongdoers are more likely to "go with the flow" of the group.

I'm sure anyone who has ever been awake by a hundred screaming joggers at 6 a.m. agree that the Corps behave as a group. I wonder how many of the members would awake on their own to run screaming across campus before dawn. Probably few.

My point is, the Corps might blame the reported incident on a few bad individuals. But I think the Corps as a whole may allow this kind of "mob-think" to occur, if not encourage it through the mindless actions of the many. So, fix the Corps, not a couple of sophomores.

Hans Hansen '92

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The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee letters will appear.

Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.

