

Opinion

The Battalion

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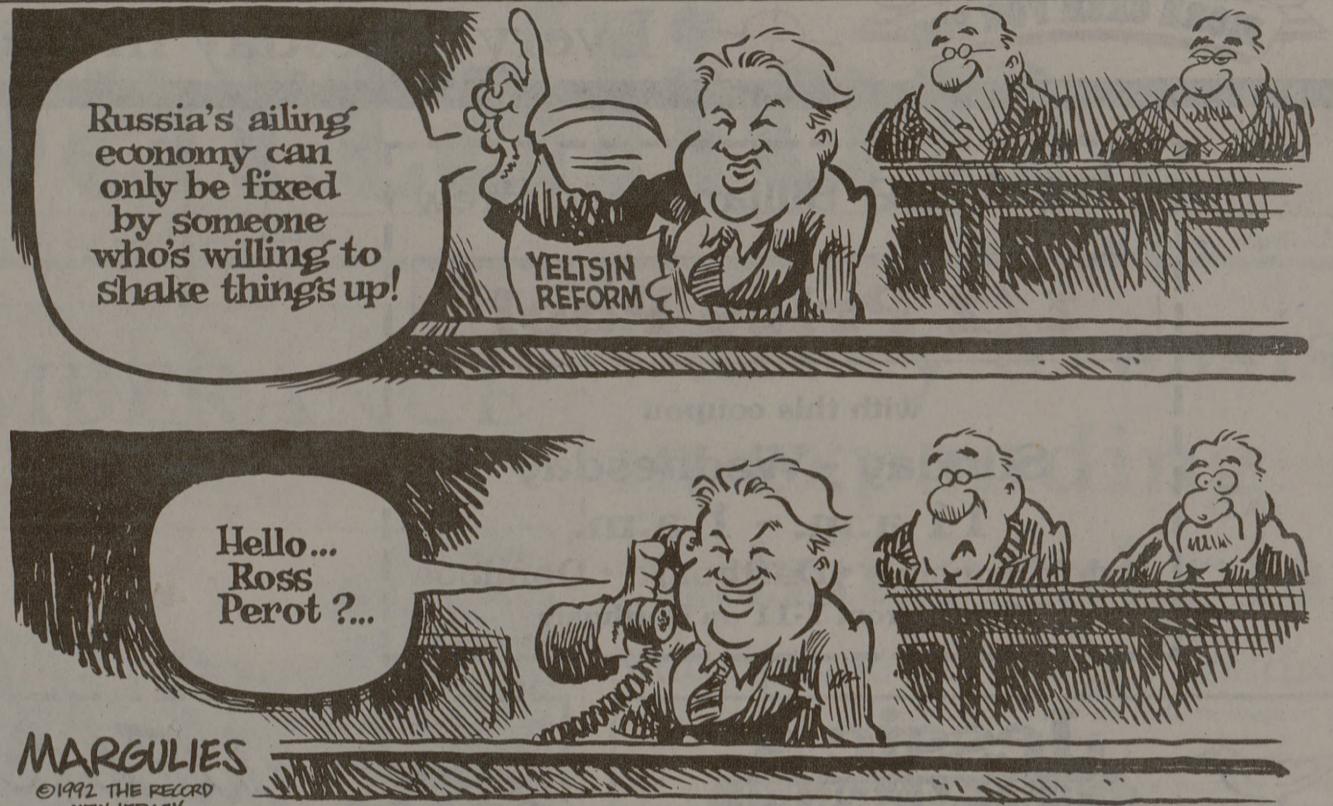
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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.



Taxing times

Tribute to IRS takes longer and longer

April 15 has come and gone, but Americans will continue to pay the federal government until May 5. An average taxpayer sends one-third of his or her pay in tribute to the world's largest bureaucracy, but will never see much of this money again. The federal government, after years of passing budget laws and agreements, continues to reach its greedy tentacles further into our pocketbooks only to waste an inordinate amount of our money on pork-barrel projects and perks for government officials.

A recent study shows that if America's 114 million taxpayers began saving for this year's tax bill on Jan. 1, they would have to continue to save every penny made until May 5 in order to pay off the government's \$1.5 trillion (\$1.5 and 11 zeros) budget. And taxpayers work three days longer for the government than they did last year.

The new figures come in a time of recession, a time when Americans have been forced to cut back after seeing real income shrink over the past few years. Democrats and Republicans alike proclaim sympathy for the average taxpayer, but neither party has any apparent plans to cut the gargantuan federal budget and subsequently cut taxes. It is politics

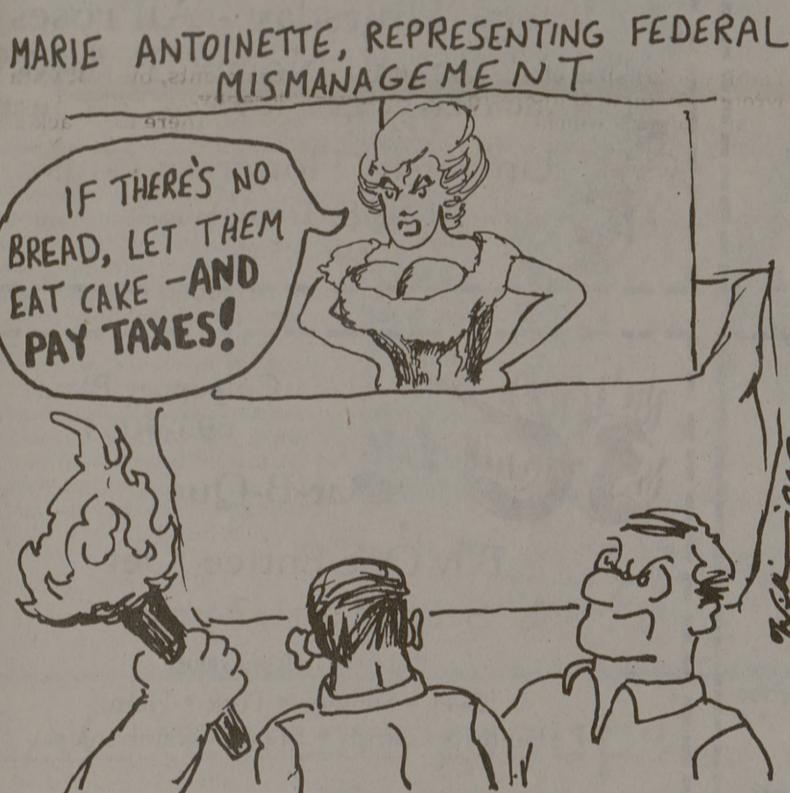
and pork as usual in Washington no matter what is happening in the rest of the country.

Paying one-third of our year's salaries would be less painful if we saw more than a small fraction of that money put to good use, whether through individual entitlements or in programs that truly benefit our communities. Charity is not painful when we know it's going toward a good cause and not to additional red tape.

But instead of hearing news of our money helping others, we hear more news of waste in the Pentagon or of Congress making money from the House Bank. We see the government rushing to the aid of other countries while practically ignoring the damage done by recent floods, and gasoline explosions, in Texas.

Figures released by the Treasury Department show Texas has received less than its fair share of federal money in fiscal year 1991. Texas ranks 38th in total federal spending and 47th in grants to state and local governments per capita.

Remember how much you paid in income taxes when voting this November. The public can replace the entire Congress within six years.



Mother government

Surgeon general acts way too much like the country's nanny

My three regular readers, being as fluent in beerspeak as I, will recognize the words "surgeon general" for what they mean to those who enjoy an occasional (or frequent) sudsy brew. In the altered state of reality that often exists in the immediate vicinity of a pitcher of the fermented malt beverage, those two words translate to "no tolerance of fun." Due to a peculiar twist of the fabric of space and time in the alcoholic plane of existence, the acronym for no tolerance of fun, NTF, is also shared by the Northgate Task Force. However, the story of our city's vain and valiant attempt to curb undergraduate madness on Northgate with armed patrols on the weekends will have to wait.

You see, Antonia Novello, the current holder of the surgeon general's post, is the televangelist of teetotalism, the nemesis of nicotine, the mother hen of safety-at-all-costs dogma. She must be stopped, at least before we all grow old enough to agree with her.

I must say that I was impressed with Novello's performance of some weeks ago, when in a press conference, she attacked Joe Camel, the mascot of Camel cigarettes, with all the gusto of a pit bull gnawing the flesh off human bones. Really. I mean, I could practically see the spittle flying from her lips in venomous little droplets. Yes, I was impressed, in the same way I might be by the sudden appearance of Roseanne Arnold in a porn flick.



Jason Loughman

Novello was outraged by a study which indicated that Joe Camel had more recognition among small children than; and I'm not sure I remember which; either Mickey Mouse or George Bush.

I'm not sure I understand her fuss. Does Novello really suspect that America's youth are all going to grow up brainwashed by a cartoon? The possibility of our high school class of 2000 all hanging out around nightclubs wearing sportcoats and playing saxophones is a negligible risk at best. We should be more concerned that they might end up as politicians or surgeons general.

She was not one to rest on her laurels, however. After her rabid attack on those purveyors of lung-mangling throat-scorchers and sowers of death and destruction — the cigarette-makers — Novello continued her maternal crusade in a full frontal assault on teen drinking.

The statistics she cited sure raised a few eyebrows, though. Let's face it - who would have guessed that alcohol abuse sometimes leads to lost productivity, domestic violence, accidents, deaths, assaults, and (oh, my goodness) bad grades?

In all fairness, she did make one statement which managed to get even my blood boiling. Novello revealed that "many of our college students seem to major in alcohol abuse." I was outraged. Had I known that I could major in alcohol abuse, I would have changed majors back when I had only 60 credit hours. It's way too late now. Younger students, though, may still have time. For those of you whose interest has been sparked, I believe alcohol abuse would most likely fall under the College of Liberal Arts.

But no, really. Is there truly anybody out there who actually does not know that cigarettes will endow

their smoker with emphysema, lung cancer and ashtray breath? And if so, is all the government's expenditure of time and money to discourage our vices still warranted just to reach those 10 or 20 unenlightened Americans?

I don't know which prospect is worse: emphysema at 65 years of age, or listening to Mother Novello's carping and nagging, and that of her eventual successors, for the rest of our natural lives. Perhaps there should be a surgeon general's warning for carping and nagging. Warning: Incessant carping and nagging has been known to provoke bloody violence in stressed-out human time bombs.

Hedonism is the pursuit of or devotion to pleasure. And Antonia Novello, the U.S. Surgeon General, is the earthly incarnation of the anti-hedonist. Listen to her motherly words of wisdom, and she will keep you healthy and bored until you are 100 years old. You'll start eating high-fiber foods, like bran, and favor smokers with dirty looks and avoid beer like the plague. Meanwhile, I'll be on the front porch of a local bar with drink in hand. If I'm feeling particularly rebellious, I might even leave my proof of age in the car. And although I recently stopped my five-year, pack-a-day cigarette habit, maybe I'll just light one up and celebrate everybody's sacred right to be as stupid as they want to be.

After all, if we needed Mother Novello, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission and other well-meaning but overbearing authorities to protect us from ourselves, natural selection should have weeded us out of the gene pool long ago.

Loughman is a senior journalism major

Mail Call

Some men don't get it about rape

Now I think I've heard everything. I thought the issue had been settled. I thought the word had gone out, and although I know the problem is not resolved, I thought most people were aware of it. I'm talking about date rape.

I overheard three guys sitting in a bench in the Cain Hall lobby. One was saying to the other two, "Now how can you rape a girl if your dating her?" How? That's one of the most ignorant, unfeeling, selfishly animalistic statements I've ever heard.

I work in Cain so I know that not everyone there has that attitude. I'm not slamming Cain Hall as a whole. But, mister, whoever you are, I'll answer your question. How can you rape a girl you're dating? The same way you rape a girl you aren't dating. The same way you can rape a woman you're married to (check the law books, buddy; it's been ruled in court that you can be charged with raping your wife).

If she says "No" and you force, coerce, or threaten her into having sex, it's rape.

Just because you didn't throw her up against a wall or punch her in the face or try to choke her doesn't mean you didn't rape her. Assault is separate from rape. They often go together, but

one is not necessary to validate the other.

Dating a woman does not make her your property. Wake up. Grow up. If you have a girlfriend, I'd question your affection for her. Does she mean so little to you that you would treat her worse than your favorite dog? Do you value her feelings so far below your own or the feelings of your best buds?

L.A. Eagleton
Class of '91

Jogging trail reverts to jungle

Has anyone seen the campus jogging trail lately? It used to run around the park south of where the new MSC parking garage now stands. When I received my undergraduate degree in 1983 it was in good condition and well maintained.

When I returned for my graduate work in 1990, it was still there and in reasonably good shape. The north end was wiped out by the construction crew working on the new garage, but the rest of the track was still kept up. Holes were filled in when they appeared, ruts from water run-off

were leveled out, and the grass was trimmed back and kept off the trail.

Then about a year and a half ago, the maintenance stopped. I don't know why (I'm sure it can't be from lack of funds). Today, the trail is more like an obstacle course, full of holes and drainage trenches. The grass has overgrown the trail so badly in some spots that you can't see the path at all. Metal poles and engineer tape still circle one spot that is rutted but was never repaired.

The trail used to be a very popular place for students to jog. It was lighted so you could run in relative safety even at night. As a result of over a year's neglect, almost no one runs there anymore. The University had new emergency phones installed at two points along the trail, but they could have saved the money since no one uses it anymore.

In a couple of years, the trail will revert back to the jungle entirely, and the Corps will have a new campus question for freshman, "Where was the A&M jogging trail and when did it disappear?"

"It was just south of the MSC parking garage. Disappeared in 1992. Whereabouts unknown, sir."

It's a shame that a "world-class university" has a jogging trail that a Third World country would be ashamed of.

Robert Jones
Graduate Student

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.
All letters are welcome.

Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. They should be 250 words or less. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-2647.