

EDITORIAL

Raising gasoline taxes

Perot's idea painful but prudent

As crazy as it seems, Ross Perot's proposal to increase the gasoline tax is reasonable and beneficial both economically and environmentally.

Ross Perot, independent candidate for president, argues that America needs to increase the federal tax on gasoline 10 cents every year over the next five years.

The probable results include environmental improvement, competitive incentive, and increased incentive for the federal government.

Increasing the price of gasoline by 50 cents over the next five years will spur consumers to buy more fuel efficient cars and to demand that new cars produce fewer emissions.

Decreased emissions help defer the possible problem of global warming and the spread of acid rain.

Consumers calling for better cars force American automakers to innovate in order to meet market demand.

In the 1970s, automakers insisted that they could not make cars which used gasoline without lead. By the same token, they will succeed in making more efficient cars today. Better cars for domestic use translate into more competitive cars in

the international theater.

The revenue from the tax could help make the United States more competitive internationally.

As much as Americans hate to feed the federal government with tax money, our country needs to improve its infrastructure and to pay off its debt.

If the gas tax revenue were earmarked for a certain use, such as debt reduction, we would be guaranteed that the painful medicine would be applied to the most dangerous injury.

While some may argue that the gasoline tax would unfairly hit the poorest segments of our society, the fact is that gasoline costs us very little.

By comparison, America has the cheapest gasoline in the industrialized world.

Other nations pay two and three times as much for gas as we do. In relation, American gasoline is cheaper today than at any time in the last four decades.

Taxing gasoline more heavily will provide environmental and competitive benefits while amassing more income to pay off the federal debt without significantly burdening the American consumer.

A passion for the written word

Love of writing, reading share common principle

Mystery surrounds the depths of the bond shared by writers and their reading public. Why do writers love to write? Probably for the same reason others love to read.

It is a compulsion which consumes one's being and controls the psyche.

The dialectical interplay between writer and reader is often taken for granted; yet it is an intimate and complex process. A writer's thoughts, or "private language," become "naturalized discourse" via the written word and are digested into the reader's private world.

Writing is a gift that cannot be taught or purchased. It is my love, though by no means my first. I fell in love with the written word as a 10-year-old delivering the Long Island Newsday on frigid wintry mornings when the slowly falling flakes of snow were cut by a wind so sharp it brought tears to my eyes.

Trekking from house to house, my footsteps leaving prints in the otherwise virgin drifts, I would often pause and gleefully read about my baseball heroes training in the Florida sunshine.

That love, born of youthful innocence, matured to the point where writing became my passport to the four corners of the Earth; from the Hawaiian Islands to the sun-drenched Mexican desert to the black townships and right-wing mercenary camps of a blood-soaked South Africa. The doors to the minds of men like Frank Kush, Bruce Hurst, Eugene Terreblanche and F.W. DeKlerk were suddenly thrust open.

As one might expect, such a magical journey is wrought with danger and pure struggle. For though writers may be born, they must be continuously remade each day. Yet this daily growth is the sweetest part of the writer's honeycomb since every encounter and observation serves as potential material. Looking at life like any ordinary soul is Kryp-



ANTHONY C. LOBAIDO
Columnist

tonite to a writer's career.

There is a great price to be paid: a debt which requires payment in blood, sweat and tears. Low wages, doubt and rejection are burdens the writer must carry while accumulating the needed skills to be stored in a journalistic "toolbox." Words are power, what drives the writer to harness its energy.

The pen is mightier than the sword only for those who dare to endure the weeding out process of the professional writing world. Those writers who dare to rediscover the freedom, joy and innocence of an imagination lost since childhood know that it's not what you write; it's what you rewrite... again and again.

The writer's side of the writer-reader bond is forged in solitude. What is the genesis of those 3 a.m. "bursts of inspiration" which lead the writer to hastily scrawl ideas on napkins and envelopes?

Perhaps it is akin to the force which keeps the reader turning the pages of a novel like *The Stand* long into the night, blissfully lost in Stephen King's world of "The Trashcan Man," "Tom Cullen" and "The Kid." Or is it something more? Something like love and the pursuit of dreams?

For this writer, it is both. Writing is not my first love, nor will it ever be. My ultimate dream was to be a left-handed pitcher for the New York Mets. However, from Little League to high school to a major university team, baseball was always a bittersweet joy of frustration, pain and unfulfilled potential.

To fill that great void, writing has become my Major League. Each word is a pitch; each paragraph is an inning, and each column is a game. There is no coach or rotator cuff tendinitis to block my way. No random element. Just my mind and the typewriter.

Secretly hidden behind my love of baseball and writing is my love for you, the treasured and anonymous reader. For without you, there could be no "us." The bond we share is our love for the written word — and that's no mystery.

LoBaido is a doctoral student in educational technology

MAIL CALL

One of those funny childhood moments

I do not know if you would be interested in a "Kids say the darndest things" statement, but here it goes:

I have two children, ages 3 and 2, of whom my son is the oldest. We were walking across the parking lot of Sonic on Texas Avenue, and about five Corps members were sitting in a Blazer with the top removed. Logan said, "look Mommy, crash dummies!"

Of course this is in no way a put down to the Corps, I just thought it was cute how a 3 year old looked at the world!

Thanks for reading this letter.

Andrea Widdison
Department of Student Financial Aid

To PTTS: Don't mess with Texas A&M

We are offended by the actions taken by a Parking, Traffic and Transit Services officer Wednesday night. While looking out the window of the Agriculture Building, we witnessed the officer throw the back of a warning sticker on the ground next to the car he was ticketing.

We wanted to see if the officer would politely pick up his trash before one of us made him aware of his actions. After informing him of what we saw, he made the comment that he was tired from working all day.

Well, maybe the student who parked there was tired, so why should that person be ticketed and not the officer? He unwillingly agreed to pick up his mess after making the statement that he was tired of college students' attitudes toward parking illegally.

We were very shocked at the officer's rudeness and callousness.

Now tell us, fellow Aggies, if we had been caught in the act of littering, would we have been slapped with a bright yellow ticket ranging in cost from \$50 to \$200?

A&M prides itself on keeping the campus remarkably clean. Trash cans are strategically located throughout the campus for this sole purpose. Four trash cans were within 20 yards of the car he ticketed.

Students are continually made aware of their illegal actions.

We think PTTS officers should be

treated no differently than students when it comes to breaking the rules. They are not above the laws they are paid to enforce.

Nicole Santikos
Casi Franklin
Class of '92

Fraternity service activities no excuse

I wish to commend Joe Salem for his awareness and sensitivity to an issue that is often ignored here at Texas A&M and in our community.

His letter that appeared in *The Battalion* on Oct. 12 concerning the Sigma Alpha Epsilon "jungle" party reminded us all that disrespect and disregard for other minority ethnic cultures is still very much a part of our lives.

In a response to Salem, SAE President Michael Hebert stated, "SAE does not condone any racially motivated activities."

Well, Hebert, if your "jungle" party complete with pledges dressed in black face and actives chasing them down does not constitute a terrible act of racism, I don't know what does.

To SAE members of minority ethnicity, I find it most unfortunate that you: one; failed to recognize, and two; allowed such an event to take place.

Furthermore, the fact that your fraternity does various service projects is fine, but these projects should not be used as a front for your wrongdoing. Instead, your service should be an opportunity to better understand what those in need endure and to share your good fortune with them.

I am a member of a service organization that concentrates its efforts on the low income minority community. Among other things, we strive to teach young black and Hispanic children that skin color does not matter.

Your organization's actions were totally contradictory to what we try to instill.

It is important to realize it will take more than workshops on cultural sensitivity to better understand this great problem. Racism is not inherited, but taught.

Let this incident teach us that respect and sensitivity toward one another is essential if we hope to end discrimination and racism in this country.

Veronica Valdez
Class of '92
President, Kappa Delta Chi

Multicultural classes needed to stop racism

Racism has taken on many different styles and ways of manifesting itself. I'm curious to know why the fraternity members didn't stop to think that their

behavior may offend others or carry racial overtones.

I honestly feel that they believe their actions were harmless. Therefore, by default, they are not racist, just plain stupid.

So to be racist, one doesn't have to be conscious of this fact — this is what I have been trying to tell people for a long time. Many times you people don't even realize it.

I think this type of behavior and misunderstanding is the symptom of a much larger problem. Many fight multiculturalism and dismiss it as forced learning.

Without the knowledge of the other people with whom this world has to be shared with, "jungle parties" will continue to happen and the behavior will continue to be thrust aside and drowned in a sea of "Sorry, I didn't know's" and defended as being innocent on those grounds.

Ignorance is no excuse. Like the German scientist Max Weber said, "If people want to understand others they must put themselves in the place of the subject of inquiry."

Believe me, members of SAE, I have put myself in your place and I still can't figure out a sensible reason for your attitude.

To the president and faculty and all of the people with infinite wisdom as to why multiculturalism should not be a required course, like kinesiology is, we should remember what one of our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin, said: "Maybe sometimes we should doubt our own infallibility."

Knowledge is the key to unlock all doors, but right now, there are a whole lot of people locked out — like the SAE's and the other three fraternities who have already had "Jungle parties" this school year.

Steve Miller '92
Former class president

Liberals get a taste of their own medicine

We would like to respond to the charges made by Shawn Ralston in her column on Tuesday, Oct. 13. Conservatives all across this country have put up with a lot of garbage from liberals for many years.

We've been called everything from "right-wing radicals" to "religious fanatics" — not just by people on the street, but also by the media, supposedly the guardian of truth and fairness.

When Pat Buchanan expressed his personal views at the Republican Convention, he was branded as "divisive" and "scary."

We are told, however, that Mario Cuomo's radical convention speech gave the nation a warm fuzzy feeling. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., is consistently called a "right-wing extremist," but how often do we hear Senators Mitchell, Kennedy, or Metzenbaum de-

scribed as "left-wing extremists?"

They are merely liberals, even though their views are just as far to the left as Helms' views are to the right. David Duke is often ostracized from national politics, as he should be, but Jesse Jackson (who is clearly anti-Semitic and anti-Oriental) is considered to be in the mainstream of American society.

He who controls information controls the world. Conservatives are finally waking up to this reality. We refuse to accept the lies and distortions any longer, and you liberals cannot stand the fact that we are being heard.

So, if you want to know why conservatives have become so "aggressively intolerant," take a long, hard look in the mirror.

Kani Sathasivam
Jim Clark
Graduate Students

Squelching dissent is a sign of insecurity

I'd like to thank Shawn Ralston for her Oct. 13 column. Unlike Philip Peter stated Oct. 12, not everyone at A&M is either a "very staunch Republican" or a conservative.

There are those of us with dissenting beliefs (not necessarily political) who are not only underrepresented but are condemned.

We tend to be labeled, and labels invite injustice.

Homosexual bashing, racism, "hippie" bashing, etc. are more common than many pretend to believe.

How do tie-dyed shirts and long hair, combat boots, or dark skin harm you?

As long as homosexuals don't attack you, how do they harm you? I am not asking you to accept the actions of all dissenters; militants blemish every group.

I just ask you to respect my beliefs as I respect yours.

I think you condemn dissenters to hide your fear; you wouldn't engage in futile, destructive actions like attacking protesters if you weren't afraid that a dissenter may have a valid point or may cause you to want to open your mind and change.

Webster's defines conservatism as, "the tendency to prefer an existing or traditional situation to change."

Adherence to the status quo works as long as the status quo still works.

In our turbulent world, demanding homogeneity borders on ignorance. You are intelligent; act like it.

Condemning dissenters hardly expresses the strength of your beliefs or displays loyalty to your cause.

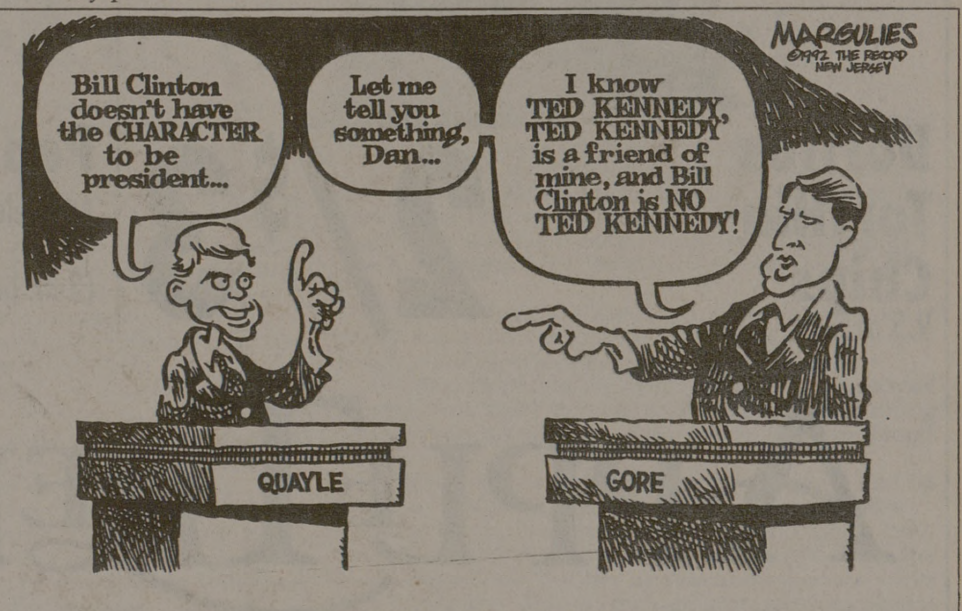
Unless you borrowed beliefs from your families and friends because you were too unsure to form your own, you shouldn't be so insecure as to think dissenters can undermine or threaten your beliefs.

You shouldn't even assume we want to.

Personally, I believe much of what I believe because I work to be open-minded and accepting of others' beliefs.

You should be allowed to believe whatever you want, but so should I.

Sandie Smith
Class of '94



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013 Reed McDonald Mail stop 1111
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843