

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The Battalion



100 years at Texas A&M

EDITORIAL

The invisible tax

Value-added taxes seem worthless

In what has now become an almost familiar routine of reluctant announcements, White House officials said Wednesday that a national sales tax is under consideration to pay for the as-yet-completed national health care reform plan.

A value-added tax would apply to all levels of production. It is regressive by nature because it would hit lower income brackets much harder than others. Such a regressive plan does raise a great deal of revenue, but also leads to price hikes at every stage, not just at the consumer level.

Although other proposals are being considered and President Clinton has remained noncommittal about the issue, the way in which the new, value-added tax has been brought up is similar to the grudging introductions of the recent income tax increase and energy tax proposals.

The first strike against this proposal is that both parties in Congress are in rare harmony in their disapproval of it. Both Democrats and Republicans agree that a value-added tax bill has little chance of being passed, because such a tax is just another burden on the middle class, which may bear the brunt of Clinton's income tax increase and will be hit hard by an energy tax. This directly contradicts Clinton's campaign promises of middle class tax relief.

Additionally, some questions surrounding both a sales tax and the health care plan must be answered. What products and/or services will

be subject to a national sales tax? If food products are subject to the new tax, how will the poor be able to afford to feed themselves? How, if at all, will the issuance of food stamps change to compensate? Perhaps most importantly, exactly what kind of health plan does Hillary Rodham Clinton's task force have in store, and will Americans be even remotely willing to fund it?

These questions may be moot if the predictions of the tax bill dying in Congress come true. But the rhetoric surrounding the proposal begs the question of how much authority the president has over the issue.

Some of Clinton's advisers have suggested dismissing a value-added tax altogether, and Clinton himself said two months ago that such a tax was not a consideration. However, at least two Cabinet members, deputy budget director Alice Rivlin and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, are treating the plan as a viable option. If Clinton is indeed following his advisers' lead by playing down a value-added tax, the comments of Rivlin and Shalala could be interpreted as efforts to undermine his authority.

All of this presents Clinton with a prime opportunity to take charge and clear up the foggy economic and health care proposals. A concrete health care plan should be finalized and approved first. Then the White House can determine how it will be funded.

Juice Tigers, Bedazzlers and Flobees

Infomercials: You'll never leave your couch again

I sat in the basement of Reed McDonald, contemplating what could be said about the Supreme Court vacancy, the trade policy of the United States with Vietnam and the words of Jesus Christ — via Waco. Enter News Editor to the stars Kyle Burnett.

"Hey man," he called out, "Have you ordered the Elvis plate?"
 "What are you talking about? The Franklin Mint Plate? No, Kyle. I'm just trying to come up with something to write about."
 "I don't know what you can write about," he said, "but that plate is a great investment."

His idle banter led into condemning me for always trying to create something out of nothing. It was true; no one really cares about my ideas on judicial activism. I'm an undergraduate. I have no true political experience. I can barely dress myself. Aside from the 10 or so people that have responded to my political columns, no one cares.

"Write about what you know," Kyle said. "I think you know a lot more about things infinitely more interesting than politics."

Does this man know me or what? The wisdom of the ages came to me. You must do what you know. If you have a column due yesterday and can't think of anything to write about, then you must write about what you know.

The point was so clear. Beauty is in the simplest of things. The good news for college students is that this beauty is Infomercials — cheap and fun to watch.

Moreover, college students probably care much more about these program-length advertisements than they do any trade embargo, Soviet coup or standoff of the week.

The most important thing to note about these Infomercials is that with the products advertised, you may never need to leave your fouthon again. With the advent of new technology, the tasks of obtaining food, clothing and shelter were never easier — or so much fun.

For those viewers with an interest in fashion, late night TV offers the Bedazzler, the Lasting Kiss, and the Super Scissors from Dick Van Patten.



RICH HENDERSON
Columnist

Balding? Well, with a phone and your roommate's credit card you can order spray-on hair. Too much hair? Get the Flobee, the vacuum cleaning barber machine. With these amazing products, you can create a swank new look that will, well, bedazzle your friends. Even better is the fact that your chic style will all be created in the privacy of your den.

If your interest is in creating a living environment, you probably would be more interested in vinyl siding from Sears or Gallery Glass — an aerosol that makes stained glass that rivals most cathedrals.

But the most prolific advertising is in the food service industry. Everything here is fast, cheap and healthy. The cyclonic oven probably runs the full range of the hyperbole the best. It cooks an entire turkey in 30 seconds or so. It costs half the price of most microwaves. Most importantly, this miracle machine locks in all the vitamins and minerals that the microwave zaps out.

Of course, the most nutritionally aware of all Infomercial products is the Juice Tiger. The beauty of this juicer is that it creates a way for all of the couch potatoes who watch program-length ads to stay healthy. If you don't believe, ask that 110-year-old geek in the purple polyester jumpsuit on the commercials who "pulled 70 boats behind him on his 17th birthday."

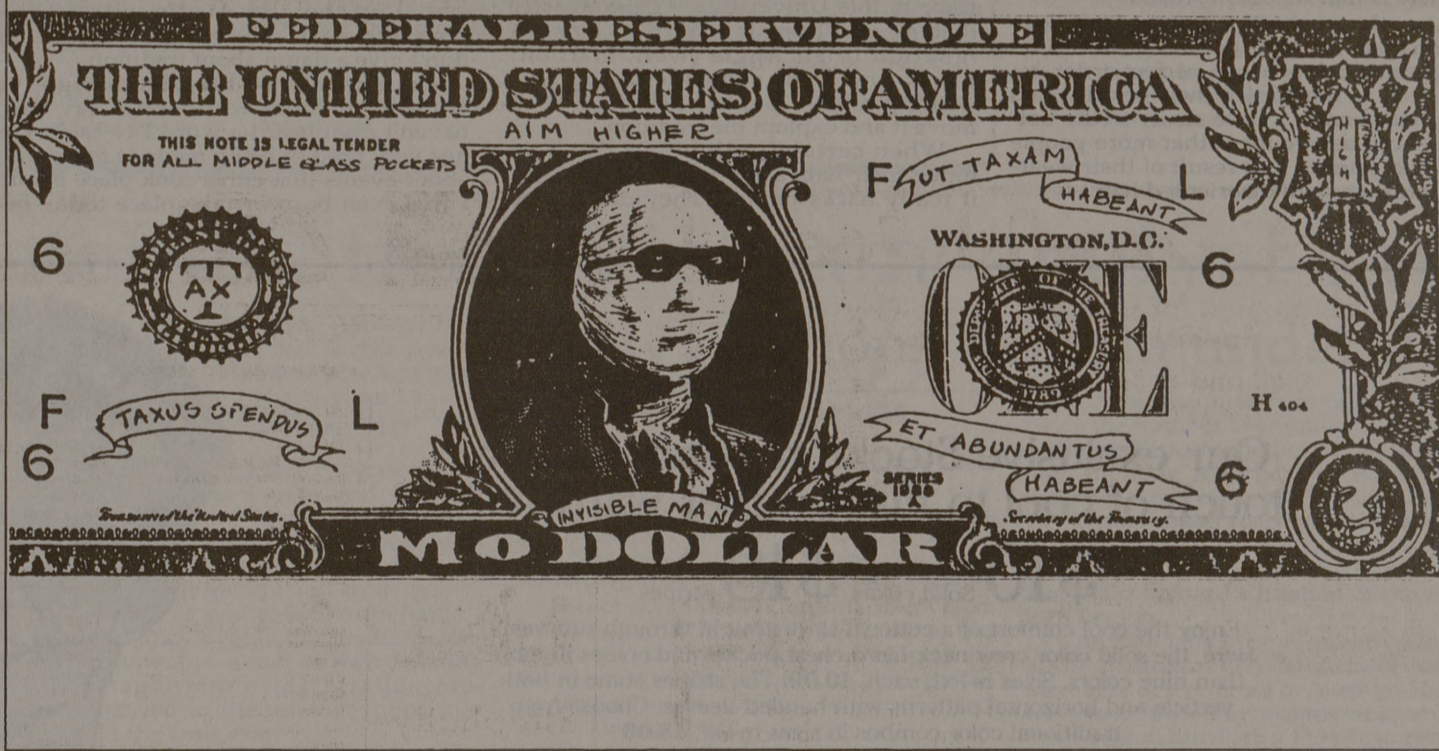
Hey — at least he's healthy, maybe he should get a Bedazzler to liven up that wardrobe.

Well, regardless of the quality of the products, the ads are fun to watch. And, in the ease of having everything at your fingertips, people can learn about the simple beauty of life. Instead of everyone worrying about the problems of U.S. judges, economics, and standoffs, people might instead enjoy judging which product to charge, how many items to buy and the standoff between the different types of juicers on the market — you'd be surprised.

But I think all political problems can be solved. Kyle, the philosophy guru, might be right. If we could get the whole world to come over, cook up a turkey or two in the cyclonic oven and serve them all on an Elvis plate, we might all be able to forget about the petty problems of our world.

It's just that simple.

Henderson is a sophomore political science major.



COLLEGE STATION, TX
 APRIL 16
 1993
MAIL CALL

Hats off, please

Students respond to MSC hat controversy

This letter is a reaction to the comments made by the president of the A&M chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., Joseph Gourrier, in the April 14 issue of The Battalion.

First of all, I do not appreciate the accusation made by Gourrier that Congressional Medal of Honor winners from Texas A&M were members of a lynch mob. This in itself shows both a great deal of disrespect for these courageous soldiers and a lack of class by Gourrier.

Secondly, I don't buy the story of blacks not taking off their hats in the M.S.C. because their hair will not cooperate as easily as someone else's. That's simply a bunch of hogwash as far as I'm concerned. Taking off one's hat is a small price for an Aggie to pay to show a little respect for another Aggie.

In conclusion, let me say that I fully acknowledge and respect the fact that the

removal of the hats is just a tradition and not a law, but it disappoints me deeply to imagine an Aggie not willing to make such a small effort to pay a little respect.

*Josh Wadsworth
Class of '95*

This letter is in response to the April 14 article on the MSC hat controversy. I do not think that this is a racial issue, rather it's an issue of honor and respect.

I know that it is not just minorities that wear their hats in the MSC; I have seen people of all races wearing their hats. I think that it is sad that people don't have more respect than this for our veterans. These are the people who fought for our country, our freedom and our way of life. People of all races fought for this country. Many veterans "messed up" more than their hair while defending our country.

I don't think that it is too much to ask someone to take his or her hat off for someone who gave life and limb for America. I would bet money that if you asked veterans or people that lost someone they loved in war how they felt about this, the answer would be unani-

mous. In my opinion, there are three ways to avoid this controversy: (1) don't wear a hat, (2) don't go in the MSC or (3) TRANSFER!

The more diversity we have on this campus, the better the learning experience will be for everyone. If everyone wants to be treated equally, everyone must follow the rules equally. People that want to be treated with respect, should show some respect.

Taking your hat off in the MSC is not a rule, but it is a reflection of your respect and integrity as a human being.

*Wade Hooker
Class of '92*

I am outraged at the remarks in the MSC hat controversy story (Vol. 92 No. 130)! The remarks by Joseph Gourrier finally hit a raw nerve in me.

He stated that some minorities shouldn't take their hats off for people who would have lynched them if they had been here during World War II.

The worst remark he made though was that blacks can't run their fingers through their hair to straighten it out after they've been wearing hats. He said this was a "cultural difference" which prevents blacks from taking off their hats. Is Joseph Gourrier, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, FQR REAL? I am a white male that looks as if I had crawled out of bed.

No matter how I run my fingers

through my hair, it is still the hat hair from hell. Please do not insult the intelligence of others by calling this dilemma a "Cultural Difference." As for Gourrier's remark on the lynchings, I cannot believe that someone in his position would commit such a racial slur.

The MSC was initially a memorial for remembrance for those Aggies in the first and second World Wars, but today it is a remembrance for those who died in ANY war. These individuals did not sacrifice their lives for their own specific races, but for an entire country. I don't take my hat off for only the white soldiers — I take it off for any color, any person who made the highest sacrifice for this country.

So get off your high horse and GET REAL! The least every individual can do is show respect for those who died fighting for what they believed in. The hat policy in the MSC is not a discrimination problem — so lets not make it into one.

*Paul T. Zutz
Class of '93*

This letter is in response to the front-page story in the Wednesday Battalion concerning the MSC hat controversy. I, along with several fellow members of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Cadet Corps, have a few things to say to Joseph Gourrier.

I agree that the men who are commemorated by the "hats-off" tradition in the MSC were all white. This I have no control over. However, Gourrier must realize that he and all of those who agree

with him also enjoy the freedom for which these heroes made the ultimate sacrifice.

I would like to be able to bring one of these men back for one moment and watch Gourrier look him in the eye and tell him that he doesn't even have enough respect for him to remove his hat for a few minutes in his memory.

Do the organizations represented on Gourrier's hat deserve more respect than the men who died so that we may be free to attend such a wonderful institution as Texas A&M? Additionally, if Gourrier is having such a problem with the way his hair is behaving, may I suggest carrying a comb? Furthermore, I would like to propose to him that this issue is much more than mere tradition. However backwards you may accuse me of being, Highway 6 runs both ways, mister.

*Jeffrey Miller
Class of '94*

Accompanied by 57 signatures

It is ironic that a group of people who wish to have their own history recognized, are refusing to recognize someone else's. The fact that the Aggies who died were white is completely irrelevant. These men are fellow Aggies who sacrificed their lives, refusing to uncover its blatant disrespect. Remember this, because your name will be called at Aggie Muster someday.

*Shea Snyder
Class of '95*