

## PRO CON

### Should state-run education be subject to increasing privatization?



**MATT DICKERSON**  
Columnist

State-run education should be privatized because it is an abysmal failure. While most schools excel at mediocrity, large inner-city schools are at best warehouses for warm bodies, and at worst, death traps. Meanwhile, businesses teach remedial courses for basic skills that public schools don't teach. "Teaching new workers basic skills," said David Kearns, chairman of Xerox, "is doing the schools' product recall for them."

The public schools' cry for "more money" is the eternal squeal of the poked pig: Between 1960 and 1984, enrollment increased 9 percent; teachers increased 57 percent; principals, 79 percent and "other staff," a stupefying 500 percent, making schools the largest contract granter after the Department of Defense and the largest single employer. Pupil-teacher ratios fell from 26.9 in 1955 to 17.2 in 1991. Between 1980 and 1990, the average expenditure per pupil in daily attendance increased 48.3 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars, an average annual rate higher than the previous 20 years.

Numerous studies find no link between expenditures per student, pupil-teacher ratios, teacher salary and student performance, whether it is a comparison with other school districts or other countries. Posing as impoverished and helplessly underfunded is better public relations than saying, "I'm a bloated bureaucracy, and I'm taking your money."

Public schools have an interest in the inefficiency they engender. Monopolies are characterized by the waste, spiraling prices and shoddy service so descriptive of the public school monopoly.

What about the poor under a private system? The government could defray the expense of private schools to the poor without the imposition of a public system. An objection to this is that it might "establish" religion by subsidizing religious schools, an absurd proposition. The subsidy would be going to the poor family, not to the school, and is no more a subsidy of religion than Baptists on welfare using a portion of their subsidized income to tithe to the church.

Other than efficiency aspects of this question, freedom ought to be considered. Public education instills and sustains the small-beer fascism that characterizes America. The American system was modeled after the Prussian school system that aimed to unify Germany into a nation of goose-steppers, which has worked well once one considers this unspoken policy goal. "Great care must be taken," wrote Horace Mann, a pioneer of public education, "to inform and regulate the will of the people." A Texas law states that, "textbooks shall not contain certain material which serves to undermine authority." The monopoly of public education ought to be privatized - the ultimate product recall - not only because it is inefficient, but because it was spawned to control the will of the people as a propaganda machine for the State.

Dickerson is a sophomore economics major.

Houston schools are studying a proposal which would allow a private company, the Performance School Corp., to oversee as many as three schools. This public school privatization is simply a cop-out by the government.

First of all, this idea is inconsistent. The whole reason public schools exist is to provide quality education to everyone. This is particularly beneficial to those who can't afford to send their kids to private schools. The government has taken the responsibility to teach the children. Public education is meant to be found in a public school, not a privately run school. The private sector is reserved for the private schools.

Perhaps the government with all its power and access to knowledge is admitting its inability to deal with the public school system. Something must be wrong for the government to give up the public schools to the private sector.

The problem could be one of administrative technique. If this is the case, why doesn't the government hire the private corporation to teach the government the technique? No matter the cost, this would still be more cost effective than paying for each student individually, which is what the Performance School Corp. is suggesting.

Another option is for the government to research this new "miraculous cure" for administration that results in higher test scores. It is ridiculous to think only this corporation knows how to implement effective administrative techniques.

If the problem is not technique, perhaps it is the current administration's lack of control. Perhaps present government administrators are given little authority because of the state legislature.

Because the administrators have been given little backing, the schools have failed to achieve results. Now, the government is looking for a third party that won't be trapped by the government's regulation. The solution, in this case, would be to cut out the regulation that makes administering effectively an impossibility.

Finally, this privatization of public schools still would not give the students the freedom of choice. Currently, students are forced to remain in low-grade public schools in their district because of a lack of money. They are the ones who must suffer if school administrators fail. They have no choice. They can't switch schools. The best solution would be to enforce capitalism within the school system and change to the voucher system.

The voucher system makes the schools earn the right to have tax money from the students. The schools with good administration will survive, but those that are run poorly will fail.

In summary, the government must educate itself, provide greater power to administrators and earn the right to educate the students. Students don't need to be the victims of poor administration.

Holder is a senior journalism major.

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

## Be one of us, the few, the proud... Future editor exhorts students to be a part of the Batt

How well does The Battalion do its job? To some, Texas A&M's newspaper is more commonly referred to as the "liberal rag." It is the outlet to express the left-wing, communist viewpoints of a bunch of psychotic, hippie-loving, pinkoes who support free love and anarchy.

Others believe that The Battalion serves as the conservative propaganda machine. It is the tool of the aristocratic, pious, insensitive Nazis who are closed-minded and intolerant. And still others wish we would take more of a stand.

The media doesn't seem to have too many fans these days. At Texas A&M, this is particularly true.

The Battalion, especially over the last year, has had its share of criticism from all sides regarding an infinite number of issues. From Bosnia to Bryan, from Bill Clinton to Ron Wilson, you have had an opinion about the issues and how we have covered them.

It is you, the readers, that I'd like to address. Basically, there are two things to say.

1) Don't stop. As masochistic as it seems, keep those opinions coming. The Battalion can never be able to gauge the opinions of the readers if it never hears from them. The day this paper should start worrying is the day it never listens to what the reader has to say.

Everyone is encouraged to write into Mail Call to let your voice be heard. If there's an issue that you didn't think we covered correctly, tell us. If there's an issue that you think we should have covered instead, tell us. If there's an issue that we covered well, tell us.

The mass media has to have a two-way flow of communication. They need their audience to provide feedback and have an opportunity for rebuttal. Without reader involvement, The Battalion or any other member of a free press cannot function.

2) And more importantly, if you don't like the way The Battalion does its job, then change it.

This week, applications will be available for staff positions throughout the newspaper for this summer and fall. All students in good standing are eligible to apply. You don't have to be a journalism or an English major to apply. You don't even have to have any newspaper experience. All you need to apply is an ability in writing, editing, drawing or photography and an interest in Texas A&M.



**CHRIS WHITLEY**  
Columnist

If you have a knack for digging below the surface to find information, join the city desk.

If you have an appreciation for the performing arts, join the lifestyles desk.

If you know you're way around a camera, join the photo desk.

If you're an armchair quarterback who reads up on the latest in football, volleyball and basketball, join the sports desk.

The Battalion is looking for staffers from all parts of campus and from all walks of life. It doesn't matter if you're in the Corps or a non-reg, if you're frat or anti-frat, north side or south side, off-campus or on-campus.

More importantly, The Battalion is actively seeking minority involvement. It is impossible to explore every facet of this University without voicing issues which concern the minority community. Therefore, The Battalion would encourage every interested minority to apply and have their voice heard.

It's simple. All you do is fill out a form. They're available in MSC and in Reed McDonald. Applications are due in Room 013 of Reed McDonald by Monday, April 26th. If you have any questions or comments, please call 845-3315 for more information.

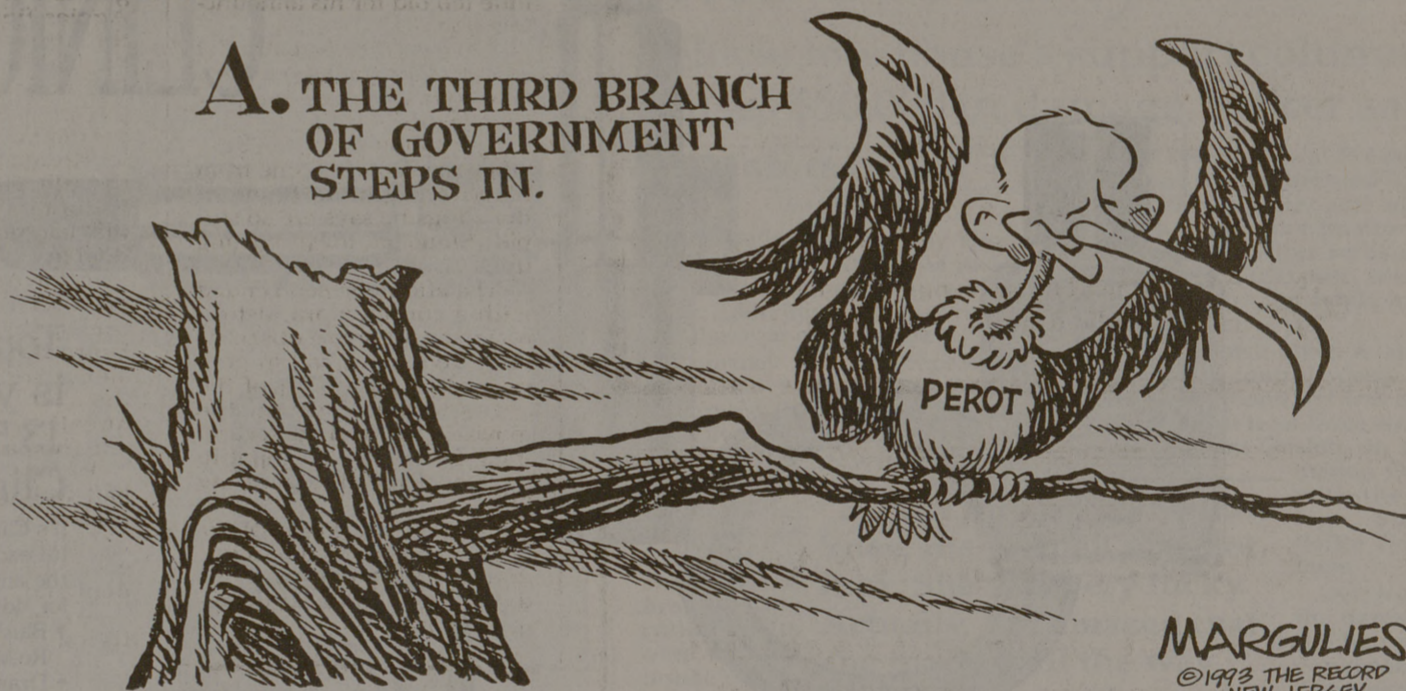
So the challenge is to you: If there's something you don't like about The Battalion or there's something you think can be improved, then we welcome the opportunity for you to change it.

The Battalion is the students' newspaper. It's run by students, and it's read by students. If this paper can continue to be a voice for the students of Texas A&M, it must have the involvement of all students.

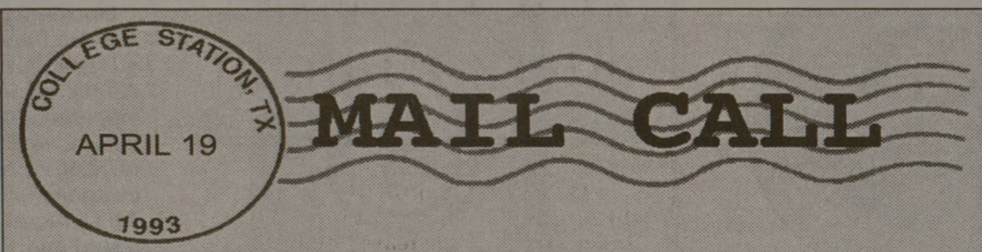
Whitley is a junior journalism major, and will serve as editor in chief for The Battalion next fall.

## Q. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PRESIDENT AND CONGRESS ARE DEADLOCKED?

### A. THE THIRD BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT STEPS IN.



**MARGULIES**  
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NEW JERSEY



## Fish Day a sacred, old Aggie tradition

In response to the April 7 letter attacking Fish Day, I would like to point out that Fish Day is a tradition of the Corps and has been one for several decades.

Fish Day serves two purposes. First, it allows upperclassmen to evaluate freshman in a variety of situations involving leadership and crisis management. This helps the upperclassmen decide which positions individual freshman will hold the following year. It also allows cadets one day to "let off steam." Cadets live in a harsh, strenuous environment while representing the University 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is one day they can relax.

Further remarks were made about destruction of property and "messing up Duncan." Cadets are required to make reparations on any damage they incur. Furthermore, the University spends no money cleaning Duncan because the cadets themselves come afterward and clean up. I along with dozens of other cadets spent three or more hours sweeping, scrubbing, and mopping Duncan.

The unnamed author then questioned the "honor and tradition of the Corps." Let me point out that this University and its traditions began with the Corps. We keep the mascot; we are the yell leaders; we are the band; we started bonfire, Silver Taps, Muster, and Midnight Yell Practice long before there were non-regs. This University's respected name is the result of over 100 years of Corps discipline and training. Anyone who questions our honor and traditions is reminded that Highway 6 runs both ways.

Kevin Lyons  
Class of '95

## Sophomores upset about graduation too

I have read numerous letters from graduating seniors in the Mail Call. I agree that it is an outrage to limit seniors to only six guests! Graduation, especially from A&M, is an important occasion that should be shared with all loved ones, not just a select few.

This situation reminds me of my high school graduation for which each graduate received only six tickets. Surely, A&M receives a great deal more financial assistance per student than a high school.

In addition, we pay a great deal of money to go to A&M. If a high school can afford the staff and money to hold a graduation ceremony with six guests per graduate, shouldn't A&M have the money and facilities to allow graduating seniors more guests? As a sophomore, I am worried about my future graduation from A&M. Should I start eliminating people from my guest list now?

Cathy Mathson  
Class of '95

## Student attending Silver Taps inspires

Returning home from Silver Taps last Tuesday evening, I saw something that made me proud to be an Aggie. In front of Heldenfels on the opposite side of the street, a handicapped student rolled his wheelchair back from the service for fallen Aggies. If you consider how much trouble it was for him to attend, it makes those who make Silver Taps a low priority look quite lazy. Perhaps this will motivate more of us to participate in one of the great traditions that make our school such a red-ass place. Gig 'em Ags!

Travis Boehmer  
Class of '95