



NEW WORLD ORDER

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100 years at Texas A&M

## EDITORIAL

### Freedom's last chance?

#### U.S. can't afford not to build station

Like the Skylab program's end during the 1970's, the current United States space station program may go down in a ball of flame this week. The proposed space station Freedom faces the danger of having its budget pulled out from underneath it, leaving the program to fall into obscurity.

In Washington, last week's appointment of David Gergen as a senior presidential advisor signifies a lack of executive support for the program. Gergen has repeatedly recommended the space station be axed as a way to cut costs. As editor-at-large of U.S. News & World Report, he recommended in a column that President Clinton could improve his economic plan by canceling the space station.

Yesterday, Clinton's blue-ribbon panel to study the space station received three differently priced redesigns of Freedom from NASA. The new designs were presented as \$5 billion, \$7 billion and \$9 billion alternatives to the proposed \$14.6 billion cost for the actual hardware needed to house four astronauts permanently. Later this week, the panel will send its report to the president.

On Capitol Hill, the chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, Rep. George Brown, proposed a vote on yet another design adapted from Freedom that would end up costing \$500 mil-

lion more than the most expensive design President Clinton said he would sign. The vote most likely will come before the recommendation of the president's panel is made.

This type of disjointed decision making is part of the problem with the space station funding. Few politicians want to appear to the public as being against progress and the exploration of space, but the nation is calling for costs to be cut, so the officials must look for ways in which to cover their true intentions.

Washington needs to realize that spending for the space station is not an investment that will pay off in the short term. Research and development costs are high, but the real benefits of a permanent laboratory in space will be realized after the station is up and operating.

The present funding situation can be compared to the government investment in railroads, canals and seaports during the 19th century that led to the growth and eventual worldwide domination of the United States economy. The cost of the construction was a burden at the time, but the eventual benefits far outweighed the expense.

The United States cannot afford to drop programs such as the space station in the name of budget reduction for the present year, because the real expense will come from not investing in the future.

## The content of our character ...

### Skin color no qualification for government officials

I like green M&M's. I don't know why. Maybe it has to do with something I once heard about their effect on people.

I just know that when a bag of M&M's is opened, I search out the green ones.

It's kind of silly, really, because green M&M's don't taste any sweeter or crunch any louder than the others. They don't make me feel any better than yellow M&M's do, or brown M&M's do, or even, say, oysters do.

But for some stupid reason — because someone once told me that green M&M's were better — I favor them.

Lani Guinier has been removed as the president's choice to head the Justice Department's civil rights division because people charged that she, too, played favorites.

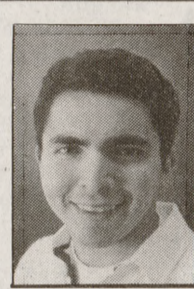
Guinier, people said, favored minorities for government positions simply because they were minorities. She has been called the "quota queen" because of articles she wrote suggesting that Congress encourage diversity in government "until enough nominations have been made to establish a pattern of 'affirmative recruitment.'"

"Affirmative recruitment" as suggested in Guinier's articles refers to the prioritizing of Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities when appointing leaders to balance the U.S. government, a government which Guinier suggested is not a fair representation of America's diverse population.

"Affirmative recruitment," like "affirmative action," is based on the belief that restitution must be made for the neglect and unfair treatment of minorities, for the wrongs imposed against them, due to prejudice and racism, which prevailed for so long in this nation's history, and ostensibly survives today.

Affirmative action suggests that passing and enforcing laws which guarantee equal rights and benefits to everyone — regardless of race, religion or color — is not enough. Affirmative action demands that preference be given to those people who were wronged so that they may be made equal in practice and not simply in word or theory.

Picture, if you can, that your family has been abused, ne-



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glected, treated like animals for centuries. Then, one day, the abusers say, "Sorry, we were wrong. We're now equal."

Well, the gesture may seem like a good one, but how can two parties be equal when one has the benefit of centuries of advantage? Are the two instantly equal? Are the positions of power instantly divided and distributed evenly to ensure that privilege and opportunity are available to all?

Not likely. No, the abusers who enjoyed the advantage of the upper hand for so long remain in control, no longer by written law, simply by vote. Who knows how long it would take to balance the scales when one side is empty, the other full from centuries of gluttonous bounty?

What should be done? Are those who "have" obligated to give to those who "have not"? Are those who "have not" entitled to that which they have not earned? The process of equality is a slow and tedious tug of war, we have learned.

Who has the right to what?

Well, we all have rights to the same.

Well, then who has earned what?

Must it be earned? Can't it be given?

Assigning preference to candidates simply because of their race, religion or color is tantamount to preventing people from voting because of their race, religion or color. A people's right to govern themselves should not be determined by the color of their skin, just as the color of skin should not determine who will be elected to govern.

Assigning preference to green M&M's because of their color is a silly practice based on myths and ignorant beliefs. Assigning preference to people because of their color is illegal and violates certain basic human rights and civil liberties.

Across the nation, in cities large and small, leaders from every race, religion and color have been selected to govern, to represent a diverse electorate who have chosen the best candidate, the most qualified individual to do the job.

Whether they be man or woman, young or old, liberal or conservative, the leaders of our nation must be chosen for what they can do, not for the color of their skin.

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## For a Democratic Congress, a chance at redemption

The Democrats in Congress have brought so much shame and despair to our country, and have through proactive tomfoolery and passive/negligent ineptitude, made our House of Representatives and Senate less than they were.

What follows is a newer perspective that downplays the usual examples, and goes straight to the heart of the matter.

First, and most importantly, even though we have had Republicans in the White House, a lack of cooperation from Congress has made it rather difficult to accomplish seemingly minor tasks that snowball into major problems.

For instance, it seems that in both 1982 and 1984 President Reagan asked Congress to stop allowing businesses to take large losses on paper when they had very small stakes in certain real estate investments. These people were

using losses on paper to keep from having to pay taxes on the earnings, and were using the money to pay back their loans.

Banks felt compelled to make such risky-sounding loans because if money that people were trying to spend during the time of unprecedented high inflation went for purchases and not investments, inflation would have been further fueled.

Loaning money to investors looking for tax shelters, to build shopping malls, or even to Third World governments all helped keep the inflation down during the Carter administration.

Congress seems to have not acted with near the speed in "shifting gears" for the new economic policies after the end of Carter's presidency. Then Congress seems to have done something with too much haste, and enacted the Tax Reform Act of 1986. This reduced the paper losses being counted on by investors in tax shelters much too quickly.

At this very point of the enactment of the new tax laws, banks were already suffering from Third World countries not being able to pay back loans. Also, shopping malls and de-

partment stores were suffering because people were no longer trying to get rid of seemingly "worthless dollars." It seems like the Democratically controlled Congress kicked America when it was already down.

This, along with basic ludicrous fiscal mismanagement, have helped contribute to the demise of our Federal Treasury.

There are more side effects than a weak economy because of actions and inactions by the Democrats in Congress. You see, when there is a weak economy, there is a perception by many that the government representing those fiscal numbers is weak as well.

Civil disturbances, crime, riots, and absolute chaos abound and thrive when a government is perceived to be destabilized. The recent bombing in New York City is not the original problem in and of itself; it is the perception by foreign entities that we have a weak draft-dodger President, and an ineffective Congress.

A possible solution: First of all, give Congress SIX years to clean everything up...everything.

Step 1: A debt swap: Swap out all of our existing Federal debt for 6%, non-

renewable, 50-year bonds.

Step 2: Give attractive tax credits to individuals and business who take hold of real estate and improve it and help pay the old debts to the original (or modern version) of the lending banks.

Step 3: Starting with the savings on debt repayment and interest repayment, with no off-the-record anything, make Congress have the budget in balance. They have until the end of six years to do it.

Step 4: Eliminate the personal income tax as we know it today: it is rather inefficient and is more of a power trip for Congress and government bureaucrats than it is a beneficial way of funding our treasury. If it were effective under our present system, wouldn't it be enough of a safeguard that Congress would not have run astray?

A more effective way of handling things may be to rely primarily upon businesses (since they already have to plan with budgets), along with certain types of private transactions. Then Congress would be forced to plan a budget based upon a percentage of projected business activity, and individual members of Congress who were

responsible for misrepresenting outcomes of the business climate (those who fraudulently presented unrealistic outcomes) would be imprisoned. Now we would truly be holding Congress accountable.

Step 5: Have auditors from Fortune 500 companies come in and audit government operations: and make the government entities come into conformity with the standards the auditors present to them, or else suffer imprisonment.

Step 6: The people would be the ones who set the tone for what Congress did; business would be in charge of funding it, because of the benefits of efficiency involved. People would vote on spending priorities. The debt from the six year transition would be put into 10-year, on-the-record payment schedules from issuing new bonds for the transition debts.

It is a real challenge for the Democrats who have brought so much shame to Congress to turn things around. They have made it less than it was — now is their shot at redemption.

Mark Clements is a local businessman.