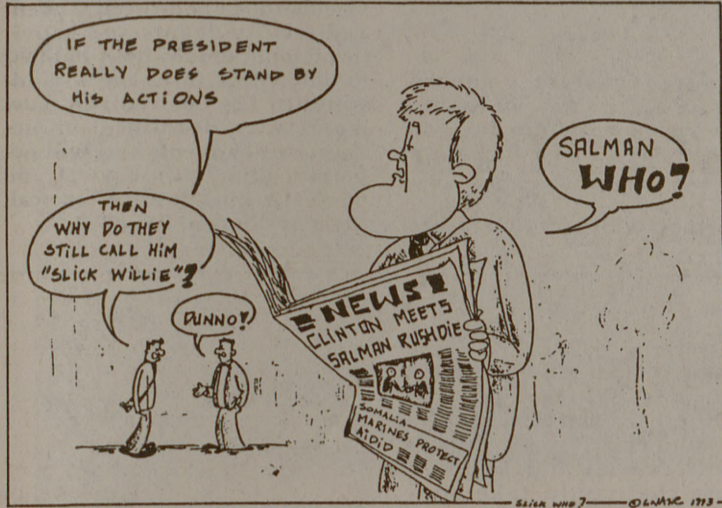


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EDITORIAL

Food Services

Audit must review reassignments

The Texas A&M administration has taken a step in the right direction with its upcoming review of the Department of Food Services. However, it hasn't gone quite far enough.

The audit will not be complete unless it examines the controversial reassignments this semester of the department's top three officials. A&M Interim President E. Dean Gage, however, said the review will not address the unexplained removal of these well-regarded, award-winning administrators.

The decision to omit personnel matters from the review seems even more outrageous since it follows a Student Senate resolution calling for an independent look at both the department and the changes.

The administration still has not given students and faculty a straight answer about the Food Services shakeup. Accusations and implications of personal conflicts between the three employees and Robert Smith, vice president for finance and administration, demand attention.

Smith, whose office oversees the department, developed the proposal to privatize the operations of the Sbis Underground

Food Court. The three Food Services officials — Lloyd Smith, former director; George Nedbalek, former business manager and Col. James Moore, assistant director now on indefinite sick leave — opposed the privatization plan.

Students, alumni and professional groups have questioned the propriety of the reasoning behind the changes. Dr. Richard Floyd, interim director of Food Services, claims any investigation into the changes would be detrimental to the department.

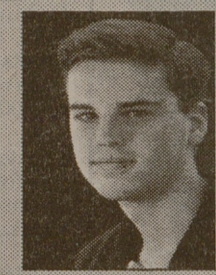
This charge seems rather ridiculous in light of the fact that management policies will form a major focus for the review. If the recent changeover at the top of the department does not reflect official policy, then exactly what determined the need for the personnel reassignments?

Only an impartial observer could produce reliable information to dispel the concerns expressed about the recent developments.

University administrators should support a review that not only looks at Food Services' strengths and weaknesses, but also addresses the personal politics affecting that department.

Talkin' about my generation ...of apathy

'Who cares' mentality keeps college students inactive



ELIOT WILLIAMS
Columnist

The synchronization of clocks in Zachry, the amount of fuel used on Bonfire or the decreasing number of "Howdies" heard on campus. What will be the vital issue in the spring?

Smart money is on the annoyance of bike riders on campus, but I'm still partial to the MSC hat policy. Sad as it is, these are the issues we at Texas A&M find most pressing.

Traditionally, students our age drive national politics. In the 1950s the baby boomers moved ever so slowly out of the prude traditions of the 30s and 40s. The 1960s was the decade of the hippies, who fought against a war in Vietnam, and of their friends who were sent to fight the war itself. The 60s also made racial integration a reality on campus. 1970 marked the continuation of the free love generation with an emphasis on rebellion.

The 1980s can probably best be called a time of facing reality. Students were again introduced to the work ethic of the 1950s. After seeing the free-lovers of the 60s and 70s forced to get a job to be successful, a generation of yuppies took the cultural-political spotlight. Then we came along.

Although we are still in the early stages of the 1990s, it is clear that we have accomplished little. Perhaps our most noteworthy accomplishment is the recognition of AIDS as a disease to be avoided at all costs — but this

feat is basically attributable to our desire to survive.

What will we contribute to national politics? The way things are going, the 90s is the generation of apathy. What will they call us, the apathies? Maybe the "Who cares?" generation. Regardless, the precedent we are setting is a dangerous one.

Few of us pay much attention to politics or current events outside of the sports and fashion pages. Our turnout at elections is horrible. We seem to be content leaving politics to the politicians, which is probably the worst way to handle the nation.

How many of us had heard of Bosnia or Somalia before this year, much less could find them on a map? How many could find them on a map today? It's sad that this is the legacy we are leaving to the nation — what's even sadder is how the politicians use our apathy.

The reason college students have been important in the past is our ability to mobilize. We work closely packed in classrooms of 50 to 100. We see each other every day and have club and organization meetings weekly. In short, we have the time and human resources to move national politics.

With the growing popularity of the Internet computer network, we have easy access to students at other universities in the nation — or world for that matter. It is unfortunate that we are failing to use these resources.

The Aggie Democrats and College Republicans will argue that they provide grass-roots support to their parties, but all they do is blindly follow party doctrine. How's that for a world-class free-thinking university? The other politically active organization on campus has only one concern, the legalization of

marijuana. We are wasting our abilities.

The Constitution was written to create a government to protect Americans from foreign invasion. The Bill of Rights was written to protect Americans from that government. Today, 40 percent of every dollar earned in this country goes to the government, and we do nothing about it. Regardless of your political affiliation, no one can possibly justify this kind of taxation.

We sit idly by while that percentage is increased. President Clinton has already raised taxes — and made them retroactive at that. He had said he will provide universal health care, which translates to an even higher tax burden and governmental regulations so immense it might as well be socialized medicine.

Politicians know that they do not need our votes to win an election, mainly because we don't vote. They can raise our taxes to increase social security benefits. They can safely raise their salaries because they know that we, traditionally the most influential age group, are apathetic.

We must wake up and start paying attention to the world. The nation depends on our generation to protest when the government gets out of hand. We are failing in our duties as Americans and students. Worse, we will pay for our inaction.

How long will it be before the government consumes 60 or 75 percent of our economy. If we continue to feed this growing monster today, we will have no choice but to feed it later. We must overcome our apathy and fend off the attack on the nation's citizens.

Eliot Williams is a sophomore electrical engineering major



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Are Americans ready to exchange gun rights for safety?

I like so many others who live under the umbrella of suburban and rural security, used to oppose gun control because of my distance from our nation's firearm epidemic. Then a few things happened.

Young men, acquaintances of mine at my high school in San Antonio, began adding semi-automatic pistols to radar detectors and CD changers on their list of automobile accessories. Parties became dangerous, even those thrown by affluent white suburban high-schoolers.

I listened to one too many accounts of gas station attendants being murdered, including a clerk who was shot five times in the chest and screamed at to get up and open the register while his lifeblood poured onto the floor as he begged for an

ambulance.

Finally, my best friend and his girlfriend had pistols put to their heads in front of her house for the five dollars they had between them. His girlfriend's only mistake was not fleeing town when the city ruined her neighborhood with a low income housing project (a similar one is scheduled to be built in my area next year). They are lucky to be alive.

Where did these guns come from? Few are purchased from reputable dealers, but instead from an enormous river of unregistered and stolen firearms which flows unhindered through our cities and schools.

The black market for guns is by no means a static entity, and herein lies the reason no American gun control measures work. States, cities, and even development projects have separate and vastly differing laws restricting or permitting the possession, sale or manufacture of guns which are useless against the illegal supply.

If all firearms were banned in New York State, for example, an illegal gun dealer would simply visit a neighboring state with lax gun laws for his supplies.

Measures of smaller scope, such as city-wide bans, are even less effective. But what if no state in the Union could offer a gun dealer his wares?

Unlike narcotics, which are comparatively simple and inexpensive to make, readily concealed, and can flow like water through our borders from foreign countries, guns require skilled labor and so-

If every handgun manufacturer in the country were shut down, it is unlikely that assembly lines would pop up in people's garages to fill the ensuing demand.

phisticated machinery to manufacture.

If every handgun manufacturer in the country were shut down (which will never happen), it is unlikely that assembly lines would pop up in people's garages to fill the ensuing demand.

Guns are traceable. Many hundreds are confiscated by every major metropolitan police department in the country and

usually destroyed. The size of the black market handgun pool would eventually dwindle to the point where their use in crimes would be significantly reduced.

The theory that there will always be a supply of something if there is a demand may hold true for drugs, but the supply of guns can be curtailed in this country since the majority of firearms owned by Americans are made by Americans, and it is unlikely that any industrialized foreign nation (say, Germany) would allow its gun manufacturers or dealers to smuggle their products through U.S. customs, assuming they could and would want to.

I can hide a million dollars in uncut cocaine in a large suitcase. A million Uzis would be a bit trickier. As for demand, rockets and grenades would make handy tools for the arsenals of city gangs and drug offenders, and they are cheaper and easier to make than a handgun, which is, believe it or not, a precision instrument.

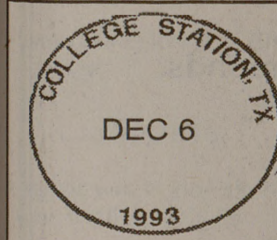
Yet why are there no drive-by shootings committed with rocket launchers? Because you can't buy them legally anywhere, anytime, in the U.S. On the other hand, I can waltz into the TWC gun show in San Antonio and with enough cash, buy

a .50 caliber Browning machine gun (a far deadlier weapon), or an Uzi, or a whole host of military copycat semi-autos which can be converted to full auto with the right know-how. I knew people in high school with the right know-how.

Everyone is sick of comparisons between the U.S. and Canada, but gun control is one area in which they excel. Into their uniform criminal code, they enacted an extremely strict firearm policy in 1978. All automatic weapons were banned, handguns could only be purchased for use in shooting clubs, occupational purposes and rare cases of personal protection, and hunting rifles and shotguns required a police permit and a background check. As a likely result, annual firearm homicides in Canada since 1978 have dropped 38 percent.

Gun control will work if we really want it to, but do we? Would you be willing to sacrifice one of your current rights to achieve safety? It seems the answer, at least at this school, is no.

James Atkinson is a freshman mechanical engineering major



MAIL CALL

More food for thought on our Food Services

As a member of Texas A&M Food Services, I attended the Dec. 1 Student Senate meeting. I was appalled at their lack of foresight and the insensitivity displayed in

their quest for the "truth."

I have complete trust in the administration's informed and decisive actions to replace our former directorship. The Senate's unrelenting attention to all past details shows no respect for TAMU employees or administration.

I am confident they will find that the reassignment of the three gentlemen in

question was the kindest act to have come out of this situation.

Margo Reese
Supervisor IV, Food Services

University of Texas fights privatization

Here in Austin, our student union is being sold. On Oct. 29, the Union staff and the Student Assembly president announced that the Union Board would decide upon dismantling the Union Dining Services for private food outlets on Dec. 3. Though the students have overwhelm-

ingly voted against privatization four times in recent years, the SA president said there would be no student vote, since "... (a referendum) would only give the opposition time to organize."

Where is the student in our Union? The UDS was created by students when they were sick of the dorm food served by the University Food Services. Franchising would create a Food Mall supported by student fees over which we would have no control. The Texas Tavern, a traditional "watering hole" would be replaced by Chic-Fil-A. 450 workers will lose their jobs, at which some have spent 20 years and support families with.

The administration has shown that student opinion is not their concern, so we have had to show them that they

should be concerned. We have organized a group to fight this robbery: Students and Workers Against Privatization (SWAP).

Thus far, we have had two rallies and gathered 1,000 petition signatures in two weeks. Although we continue to argue logically against privatization, the issue is the democratic process being subverted.

Student Unions are also being privatized at UT Dallas, Prairie View A&M, and the University of Houston. If our two campuses could harness just a smidgen of the energy we both expend on Thanksgiving fighting this together, our unions will be Student Unions.

John Hitzfelder
Graduate student, University of Texas