

From new texts to buybacks, bookstore can't control prices

Every student at Texas A&M has been in one, if not both, of the following situations:

• It's the beginning of a new semester and you've just come back from break. Classes start soon and it's time to do the dreaded deed: buying textbooks. After fighting the crowd to pick out the needed books, not finding any used ones and waiting in a long line to get to the register, it's now time to actually purchase them. The cashier rings them up and the total comes out equal to about half the national deficit.

• The semester ends and it's time to sell back the textbooks. You've been waiting all semester long to sell that one book that is so hated. After waiting in a long line, it's finally time to sell it. The problem: either the books can't be bought back or they'll only give you peanuts for it...

That damned bookstore, they just stick it to the students! As a customer of the Texas A&M Bookstore, I have faced these situations. As an employee of the Texas A&M Bookstore, I've had to tell people how much their books will cost or for how little they will be bought back.

Everyone always complains about the bookstores but, at the same time, no one ever tries to find out a reason for why things are the way they are. We are content to just blame the messenger.

There are so many assumptions made that it was time that someone found out exactly what goes on and why.

CHRIS S. COBB

Columnist



The first question is about the prices of books — Why do they cost so much? "The reason for a book's price is due to the extensive research, royalty, development and marketing costs associated with their individual production," said Gary Spearow, general manager of the Texas A&M Bookstore. In other words, the publisher determines the price, not the bookstore. Sure, but the bookstore just jacks up the price, right? According to the Association of American Publishers, only 25 percent of every new textbook dollar goes to college

bookstores. This money goes to cover the stores' expenses on freight, personnel and operations. The rest of the money goes to the publisher and author. As for used books, their price is determined by the price of new ones and adjusted accordingly.

Another question often asked concerns the availability of used books: Why aren't there ever any? "If there are new editions of books being published or a faculty member chooses a title that's never been used before, no used books are available for us to sell. We try to make as many used books available as possible by buying back as many as the time frame constraints between semesters will allow us," said Barry Waters, textbook manager of the Texas A&M bookstore. Also, used books are put on the shelves first. If there

aren't any, it's because other students already bought them all.

This answer leads to the last question, the one that causes the most anger: Why doesn't the bookstore ever buy back books for a decent amount of money? There are two ways for books to be bought back, either at retail prices or wholesale prices. Books bought back at retail receive the most money and will be sold for the next semester. Wholesale books are not bought back by the bookstore, but rather by a wholesaler who determines the price. All books cannot be bought back at retail because of the law of supply and demand.

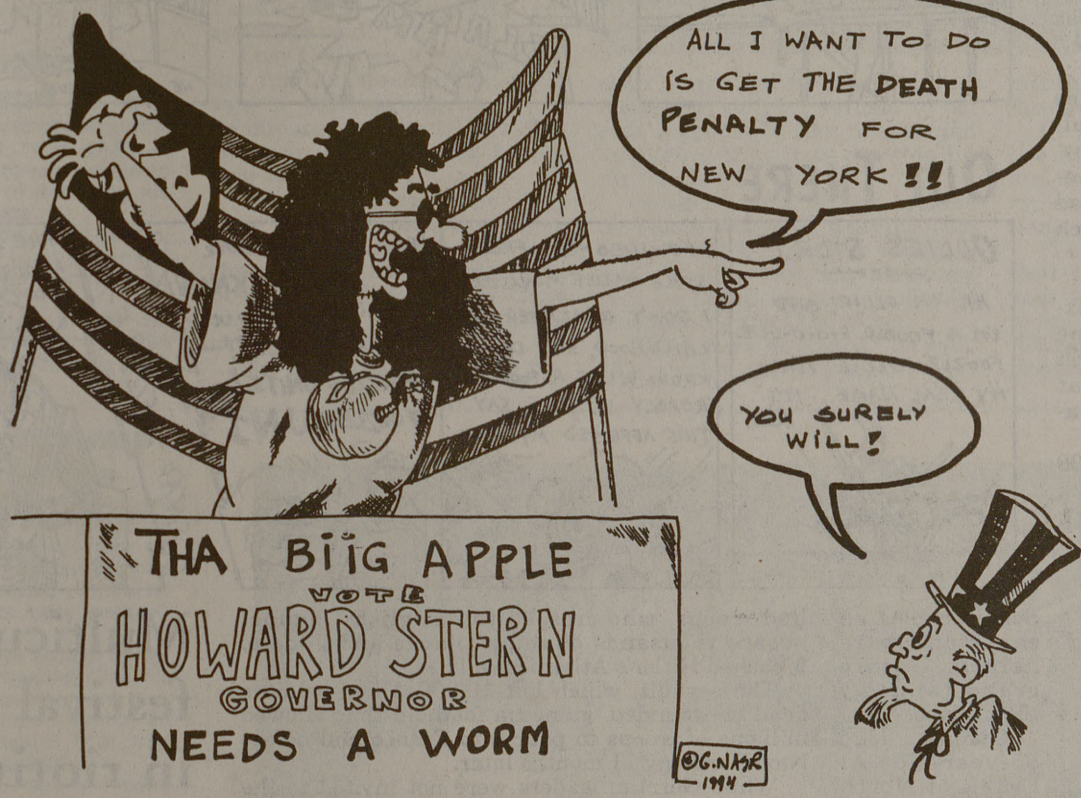
There are too many books being sold back for them all to resell at retail. Likewise, the wholesaler pays according to how many it has already bought back. This explains why the amounts change.

One common reason why books cannot be bought back at all is that publishers will come out with a new edition of a book. Another is that a professor may decide that a different book should be used. Or, the professor will not be teaching that same class the following semester. In these cases, the book may not be bought back.

The bookstores are not out to get anyone and most of the time it's not their fault for much of what happens. The faculty of Texas A&M decides what titles will be used, the publishers decide what editions will be available. The people wearing name tags in the bookstore have no control over either group. Believe me, no employee takes a chauffeured limousine to work.

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EDITORIAL

Protecting public trust

Rostenkowski should have stepped down

U.S. Rep. Dan Rostenkowski was indicted last week on 17 felony charges that included embezzlement of government funds, mail fraud and obstruction of justice. He automatically lost the chairmanship of the House Ways and Means Committee the moment the indictment was returned. In response, Rostenkowski said, "Truth is on my side."

Truth aside, Rostenkowski should have resigned from his committee post on his own, well before the indictments were handed down. The public good depends on the smooth workings of the government.

For the sake of protecting the office he holds, Rostenkowski should have removed himself from responsibilities beyond his duties for his Chicago constituency while he dealt with any charges of ethics violations or illegal activities.

If the truth is on his side, then Rostenkowski would not have harmed himself by stepping down from the chairmanship.

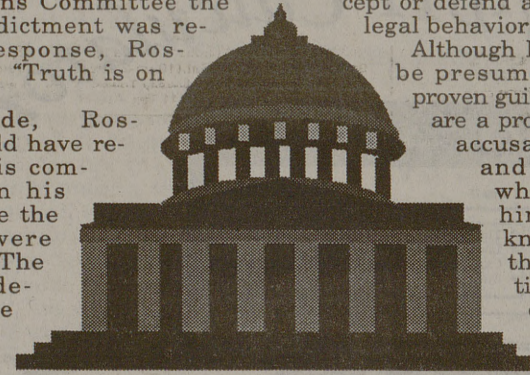
By steadfastly clinging to the powerful position, he has attached the shadow of his personal problems to the

workings of the federal government. Such behavior can only damage public confidence in the government and the integrity of Congress. If America's leaders are going to keep the public trust, then they cannot appear to accept or defend any unethical or illegal behavior.

Although Rostenkowski must be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the indictments are a proper response to the accusations of unethical and illegal activities which have hounded him for months. He knew and understood the rules, yet allegations indicate that he chose not to abide by them.

The indictments claim he used public funds for personal gain, lavished gifts bought with government money on pals and cronies and put ghost employees on his payroll to kick back paychecks to his office.

Rostenkowski is widely respected as a veteran lawmaker with the ability to make things happen, build political coalitions and effectively steer legislation through the House of Representatives. Yet, he is still a public servant, and those talents do not exempt anyone from the obligation to put the public trust ahead of themselves.



Entertainers glamorize smoking

Medical experts, celebrities send out conflicting messages

Talk about pressure. I have never seen a country go so hard on a specific group of its own citizens. A Congressional committee is considering legislation to ban smoking in all buildings utilized by ten or more people at a time. Another House subcommittee is thinking of a \$1.25 tax on each pack of cigarettes sold in the United States. The commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, David Kessler, has indicated that he would use his power to classify nicotine as a regulated drug if given the chance. Florida and Mississippi were the first of several states that have initiated lawsuits against tobacco companies, claiming that the companies should be liable for the medical expenses incurred by citizens with smoking related diseases. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders has issued a report that nicotine is as addictive as heroin or cocaine.

Okay, but didn't Mel Gibson look cool with a cigar in "Maverick"? Wasn't Sharon Stone sexy with a cigarette in "Basic Instinct"?

While mass media sends us an anti-smoking message, the entertainment industry sends us the opposite. Dennis Leary, Andrew Dice Clay, the characters in "Reality Bites" and "Basic Instinct," to name a few, don't just glamorize smoking. They are high-grossing industries. Even if parents of teenagers don't smoke, their movie and music idols do.

The harmful effects of smoking do not seem to apply to our celluloid and video heroes. It is true that the visual



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instances of people smoking in films and on television has decreased dramatically since smoking came under heavy fire for its health risks, but there are still areas of popular

entertainment where smokers are spokespersons. Maddeningly, it seems the more controversial the film or the film star, the more attractive his or her habits become to young followers.

The media is trying especially hard to convince us that smoking is morally reprehensible, sinful and dangerous. Perhaps this is the wrong way to prevent young people from picking up the habit. There is no better way to make an activity attractive to adolescents than to convince them it will irritate someone. Come on. You remember when you were 16 and it was cool to put cherry bombs in the toilets, do doughnuts in your father's Oldsmobile or sneak cigarettes behind the gym. James Dean was not a teenage idol because he got good grades.

Growing up in America is a constant struggle of making the team, getting accepted into the peer group, getting invited to parties and aggravating your parents. There are those few awkward years where doing something mischievous puts most American kids in the "in" crowd. To many young people, this mischievous thing is not only wrapping houses with toilet paper for homecoming, but to sneak a cigarette with your date. People of the younger generation often hide their smoking habit from parents, perhaps believing that parental disapproval is related somehow to getting sent to the principal's

office for throwing erasers in class.

From personal experience, I can tell you I started smoking again several times after trying to quit. I went to a movie to escape my own friends who smoked, only to find my screen heroes looking very cool dragging on a cigarette, often during a glamorous activity or after sex. Worse is the hypocrisy of banning cigarettes from domestic airliners, then showing John Wayne puffing his way through World War II throughout the in-flight movie. People who smoke are herded into inconvenient little areas or cast out altogether, while movies and music continue to reinforce the image of the young rebel looking cool with a cigar and a beer. No matter how many times we are reminded how unhealthy it is, the glamour is still there in the movies and videos.

If the anti-smoking movement is to succeed, there has to be a widespread rejection of smoking by teenagers and their role models, not just authority figures and politicians like Henry Waxman, a congressional leader in anti-smoking legislation. Regardless of their message, David Kessler and Joycelyn Elders are rarely role models, unlike Mel Gibson and Sharon Stone.

If you know a smoker, you may think that it is simple to convince them that what they are doing is bad. For most, quitting requires a behavioral change and is most successful if there is no peer group reminding reformed smokers of what they are missing. Pay close attention to how smokers respond to your chastisement for their habit. Younger people might think the more flak they get, the cooler their vice.

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Restaurant couldn't compete

I am a local restaurateur who would like to say THANK YOU to the Aggies, faculty, and staff of Texas A & M University. I appreciate your patronage for the past two-and-a-half years. I have enjoyed serving and meeting each and every one of you, but as of May 12 I will be closing my doors due to the franchises that will be going in on campus. I do not feel that I can survive as a small

businessman against big companies that can undercut me and out-coupon me. Don't get me wrong, I do believe in free enterprise; but myself and other local restaurateurs did not have a fair opportunity to go in on campus. Over a year ago I began a petition of protest against A&M for the privatization of food vendors. I was overwhelmed by the support I got from students, faculty, and the Aggie Mothers organization. I would like to point out the main objective that I expressed to the student council when I met with them at our TRA meeting — that this is not Houston or Dallas with a million-plus population, this is a community of 100,000: 42,000 students and 20,000 faculty and staff that make up the majority of these two towns. Myself and other small businessmen depend on this community to survive. When the time comes when Aggies (the core of this community) don't have a traditional place to dunk their rings, then maybe someone will realize that the businesses and com-

munity that has always supported the University means nothing to the University that has gotten greedy, and would rather be self-contained and isolated from the local community.

Spanky (Danny Dodd)
Bryan

Student feels effects of crime

You never realize just how much crime there is in the world until you are a victim of it. The deaths of Reginald Broadus and Crystal Miller really hit home and made me see just how unfair the world can be.

Crystal was my roommate my freshman year and we continued to remain close friends. I will never understand why we were robbed of her presence, because she had so much to give to this world. She alone changed my life. Not only did she

teach me not to judge people because of their skin color, but she also taught me the true value of friendship. I will always remember her taking the time to excel in everything she did, yet she always made time for those who needed her. Crystal was a beautiful and loving person and will be greatly missed.

Nixa Delrie
Class of '95

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