

THE BATTALION
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Self-centered societies stumble, survive

Despite numerous problems, social improvement is possible

It was exasperating, frustrating and annoying. As I rolled my bike to the other side of campus, I silently cursed the workers who had ripped up the bike rack in front of the Reed McDonald building.

The fact that the workers were making a repair on a domestic hot water line, work that would benefit many who use and work in the building, didn't really seem important. What mattered to me was my inconvenience. What mattered to me was the fact that my carefully calculated schedule was being thrown five minutes behind by having to search for another parking space for my bike.

In this petty example, we are introduced to the major deterrent to forming a perfect society — me. The world is full of them. Me is a private entity who is interested in advancing his or her personal interests. Which does not mean that me is a helplessly selfish and conceited individual.

Rather it means, according to Paul Heyne's Economic textbook "Microeconomics," that people will act in ways that yield them the largest net advantage.

Amazingly, the world functions pretty smoothly in spite of the vast number of personal entities motoring about in search of the largest net advantage. But, as is expected with a large number of different objectives, we often meet with conflict.

Controversy lives in the opposing viewpoints that make up a society. Groups of people that adhere to the same sorts of philosophies often find it beneficial to coordinate manpower in order to advance their particular agenda.

Thus, society is full of opposing groups such as, Democrats and Republicans, Pro-choice and Pro-life groups, Non-regs and Corps members.

The list goes on and on, just read Mail Call sometime. If there are all these different objectives circulating through society, how do we decide which idea or philosophy is the correct one for society to adopt.

If we listen to Rush Limbaugh, a right-winged doctrine of government deregulation and anti-abortion laws will miraculously cure the ills of society. But, if we listen to Rep. Ron Wilson, a liberal philosophy that embraces affirmative action and universal health care is the answer.

So, what is the answer? Opposing philosophical arguments such as right- and left-winged political doctrines have been argued for centuries, yet poverty, crime and racial discrimination still plague society.

And, considering almost everyone would enjoy life more without these kinds of social ills, all the me's in the world

have a vested interest in ridding society of them.

So, why hasn't it happened? The answer is simple. Because in abstract philosophical conversation almost everyone is in favor of the common good, but in every day life the reality of individual objectives take precedence. We all want common good, but we want it the way that yields us the most personal good.

Maybe this makes the members of the human race sound like a bunch of blood-sucking scavengers just waiting to feast when the weak fall. Most people realize that society couldn't function if people were unwilling to help each other. But, according to another theory of Economics, people are most willing to be helpful when they have some incentive.

There are many examples of mutual advantage in every day life.

Ask yourself why people write off contributions to charity on their income taxes. Or why politicians listen to lobbyists.

These ideas of personal and mutual advantage are of

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course generalizations, and they do not rule out the occasional random act of nonproffiting kindness.

However, addressing issues such as why social ills continue, and will probably always exist, requires generalization. Primarily because social ills are created by a large number of people who may or may not agree that they are contributing to the downfall of society.

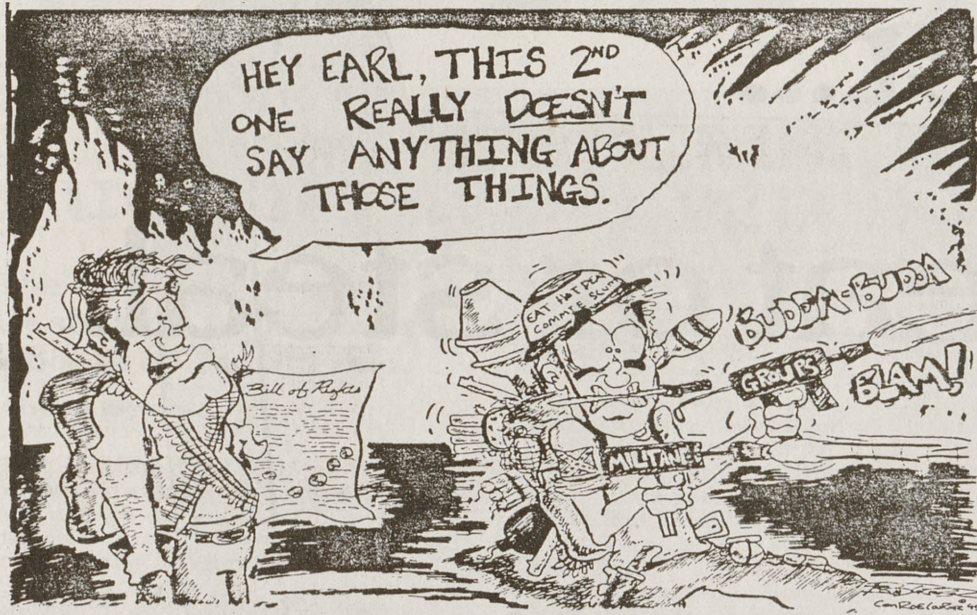
Singular criminal acts are punishable because the culprits, through the justice system, are forced to pay the price for their actions. Thus the victims are offered a small degree of retribution.

But, how do we offer society retribution for pollution, for instance, when we are all polluters?

On the basis of this conclusion, one might think that working to improve society is useless. And of course that is absurd. Improvement is always possible, it is perfection that is often out of reach.

If we realize that society will never be exactly what we want, if we learn to compromise, the world might seem a little brighter.

Jenny Magee is a junior English and journalism major



MAIL CALL

Media often presents truth out of context

Unfortunately, Amy Uptmor only told part of the story in her May 1 column about the media being beneficial and without "mind control."

Uptmor either missed or ignored "real life." Media indeed have a significant ability to mold public opinion and unfortunately, this power is sometimes used to incriminate and not to educate.

I will refer to the very coverage of the tragic Oklahoma bombing she mentioned. A coverage of the incidence itself was certainly needed. What was inexcusable was spreading speculations and premature accusations under such extremely tense circumstances.

So-called experts on terrorism and talk show hosts literally fueled public hysteria. Everyone felt free condemning Muslims and Arabs using bigoted terms.

Examples? Here are only two: Steven Emerson said in a commentary in B-CS Evening News, April 19, that the bombing was done with the intent to inflict as many casualties as possible, and that this is a Mideastern trait.

The New York Times, April 20, made a guess as to why terrorists may have been in Oklahoma City: Some Middle eastern groups have held meetings there, and the city is home to at least three mosques.

These irresponsible media actions lead to numerous threats and actual violence against Muslims around the country.

Muslim students were harassed; shots were fired through the window of a mosque; many mosques received bomb and death threats; Muslim women wearing scarves were afraid to appear in public.

Yes, we should blame individual people for it, but people would not react so violently had they not been misinformed, even instigated. The proof? All this carnal ended as soon as the real culprits were identified. The problem is not really about media presenting lies, but more dangerously, about presenting the truth out of context.

Imad Bayoun
Graduate Student

MSC Film Society's free showing follows rules

The MSC Film Society of Texas A&M will be presenting a free screening of "French Kiss," a film with Meg Ryan and Kevin Kline, on Thursday May 4, at three p.m. in Rudder Auditorium, sponsored by Evian Water.

I am writing this letter, however, not to advertisement our film, but to inform you about ticket distribution for the screening. The film company has asked us to restrict seating to this event to 600 people. 150 tickets will be distributed through the MSC Box Office at 9 a.m. the day of the screening.

The remaining 450 tickets will be handed out at 2 p.m. outside the MSC Box Office. Tickets will be distributed on a first come, first serve basis. There will be a limit of two tickets per person per valid A&M ID. This means that each person can pick up two tickets — and only two tickets with an A&M ID.

In the past, many more people than 600 have shown up for our free screenings and we have had to turn many people away. We just wanted to take this opportunity to explain why we must turn people away.

We are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause you.

Danny King
Class of '94
MSC Film Society of Texas A&M

A&M honesty sets good example for visitor

Being a Longhorn, visiting my best friend here in Aggieland, I was extremely impressed by the kindness shown by two Aggie gentlemen. My purse was left on the curb outside of TCBY last Saturday night. Having search frantically and unsuccessfully, around and in the car, I called home (Austin) to have my credit cards canceled. I was shocked to find that an Aggie had already called long-distance (to Austin) to report my purses' safety and location. Not only were all my purse contents present, but they were reported and returned in less than an hour.

I'd really like to thank them for going out of their way to make a potentially disastrous end on a good note. Their integrity and promptness should be commended. I don't know how the scenario would have ended if it had occurred in Austin, but surely folks from both schools can learn a thing or tow from these guys. Thanks again.

Julie Marquis
Impressed Longhorn

Media made big deal out of superficial facts

I am writing this letter in response to Jim Pawlikowski's article on April 28. I agree completely with the majority of the content, but with one exception. In his article he mentioned that accused car bomber Tim McVeigh is a white Gulf War veteran. As a white Gulf war veteran I hate being grouped together with that of an accused terrorist. I further strongly believe that if Tim McVeigh is guilty of his accused crimes he should get the death penalty, however, what was the point of mentioning the fact that McVeigh is also a white veteran? Once again the one-sided liberal media finds a way to portray veterans in a negative manner.

There are over 300 active duty military veterans attending Texas A&M. Majority of them are white males, many of whom served in the Gulf War. We do not go around taking our frustrations out by blowing up buildings. Veterans here have organized to educate our ungrateful generation's attitude towards the military and its superficial judgments can harm everyone, especially veterans that are your fellow classmates.

Steve Pryor
Class of '97

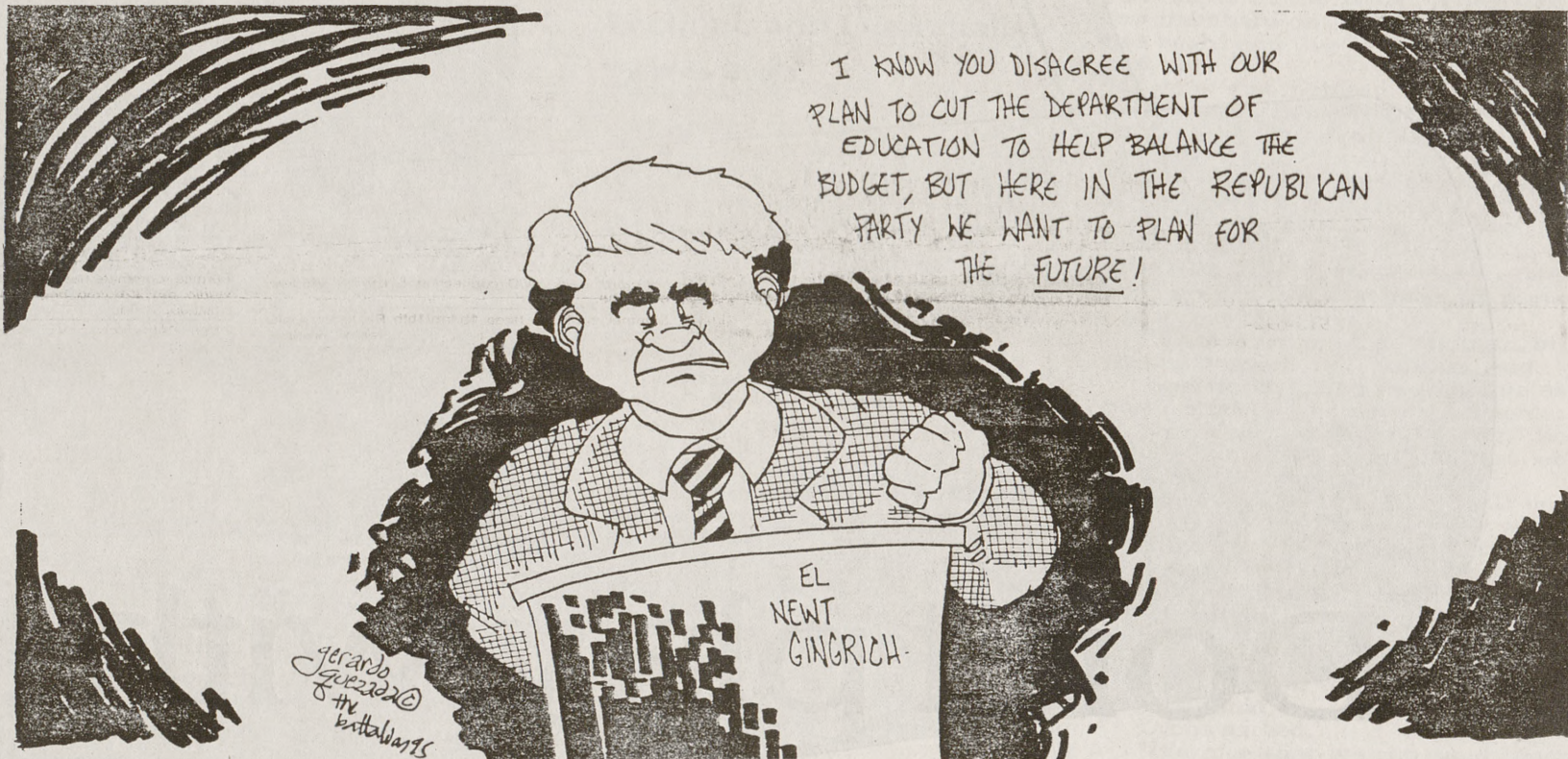
Sick students should seek second opinions

I enjoyed Dr. Cohen's article in the April 25 Battalion about mononucleosis. She described the symptoms fairly well.

I have gone to the clinic in BCS, as well as Beutal, many times since September with the same symptoms Dr. Cohen named for mono. Neither of these places tested me for mono — I received the standard 10 days of penicillin. Even after I was drained of energy and my antibiotics did not change my tonsil or gland size, neither tested me for mono, until I asked them, both clinics ran five-minute blood screens and told me I was perfectly healthy. I finally went home to my regular physician who did an extensive blood screen to find that I did, in fact, have mono, which was only getting worse because I did not know I was really sick, so I did not take time to rest.

The moral? Students: if you think you're sick, please get a second or third opinion. Don't risk your health, grades and happiness because one doctor told you that you were healthy.

Jennifer Henderson
Class of '97



Finals call for better discipline

With the grim specter of final exams breathing down the backs of our necks at last, we are forced to confront realities that have been lingering in the distance for the majority of the semester.

In other words: "I've got six finals that are scheduled on only two separate days, two on Friday and four on Wednesday. I'm going into shock."

I need a 62 on my English final to make a C, but that's going to be hard because the highest grade I've made in there so far is a 56.

The walls are caving in, and the roof is leaking. I'm tired, and I've got the jitters. Help me, somebody help me."

(Crying ensues).

Oh good gracious, get a grip pal.

Finals time has that unique knack for driving people insane and inspiring some of the rudest, crudest, strangest, meanest, crudest, preposterous, vilest behavior known to man — or to be politically correct — known to woman and man.

Anyway, what I'm trying to say is that we've all got to take these damn things. We are all under stress.

Let's not make the situation any worse by behaving like a tribe of raging idiots, dancing around a small campfire with nothing but thongs on.

Such radical behavior unnecessarily adds to the anguish and pressure already thrust upon yourself and thrust upon the stress-overloaded community around you.

So don't act a fool.

Through the course of thinking about the week ahead, I came up with a set of guidelines to follow during finals to make the week run as smooth-

DREW DIENER
COLUMNIST



ly as possible for not only you, but for your fellow Aggies.

1.) The free phones located in the Sterling C. Evans Library were placed there for a reason. Do not stand around and gab on the phone with your boyfriend/girlfriend over an extended period of time.

"I miss you sugar bear ... Hush little baby don't say a word, honey's gonna buy you some pizza rolls."

There will probably be people standing in line waiting patiently to call someone for notes or books or information pertaining to finals.

2.) When you are stomping through campus like a militant activist carrying the burden of generation on your back, smile at the people you pass. Such courteous gestures would really make for a kinder, gentler campus during finals time.

The people you pass are just as stressed-out as you are. They've got to make 107s on their chemistry tests to pass the stinkin' class too. So loosen up, remove that stale chip on your shoulder and love thy neighbor.

3.) Eat before your test. There is nothing more annoying than attempting to compose a decent essay on "Post-Modern East Asian Subgenius Thinkers" while the person sitting next to you is digging through a bag of Fritos, slurping on a Blow Pop or chowing down on a big, wet, juicy pickle.

4.) Finals is not the time to drop a psychological bomb on a fellow student whom you may share a strong friendship or affair of the heart with. Wait until after finals to break up with your boyfriend/girlfriend or tell your best buddy that you flirted with his

or her partner at many junctures over the past semester.

Finals provide all the trauma a human soul can take without unwarranted emotional distractions — especially the emotional distraction of knowing that your girlfriend found someone new without telling you about it, and that someone new is your best friend.

5.) This is for all of you Internet junkies who have no life and really don't care about finals. There is a limited availability of computers on campus. Many of your fellow students have papers that are due during finals.

I know you have a right to sit on your butts and cruise the net like Matthew Broderick played in "War Games," but it would be nice if you could locate your heart out there in Cyberspace, and let a more deserving student use the computer.

"Damn, that Diener is a condescending bastard isn't he?"

And last, but not least ...

6.) Fortunately I do not live on Southside anymore, or on campus for that matter, but I feel for the poor souls who have to contend with the annual parade of trash can explosions that go on in the Quad.

I have no idea who the perpetrators are, and I'm not pointing any fingers except maybe my middle one. The point of the matter is that for two years I had to put up with these annoying explosions that would relentlessly occur each and every night, all through the night, during finals. It's stupid.

Grow up. I heard reading Playboy is an alternative way for young males to entertain themselves.

Drew Diener is a junior English major