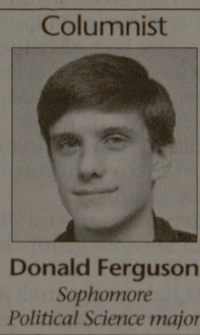


Clinton's bridge in need of repair

Medicare, college tuition and education suffer another four years

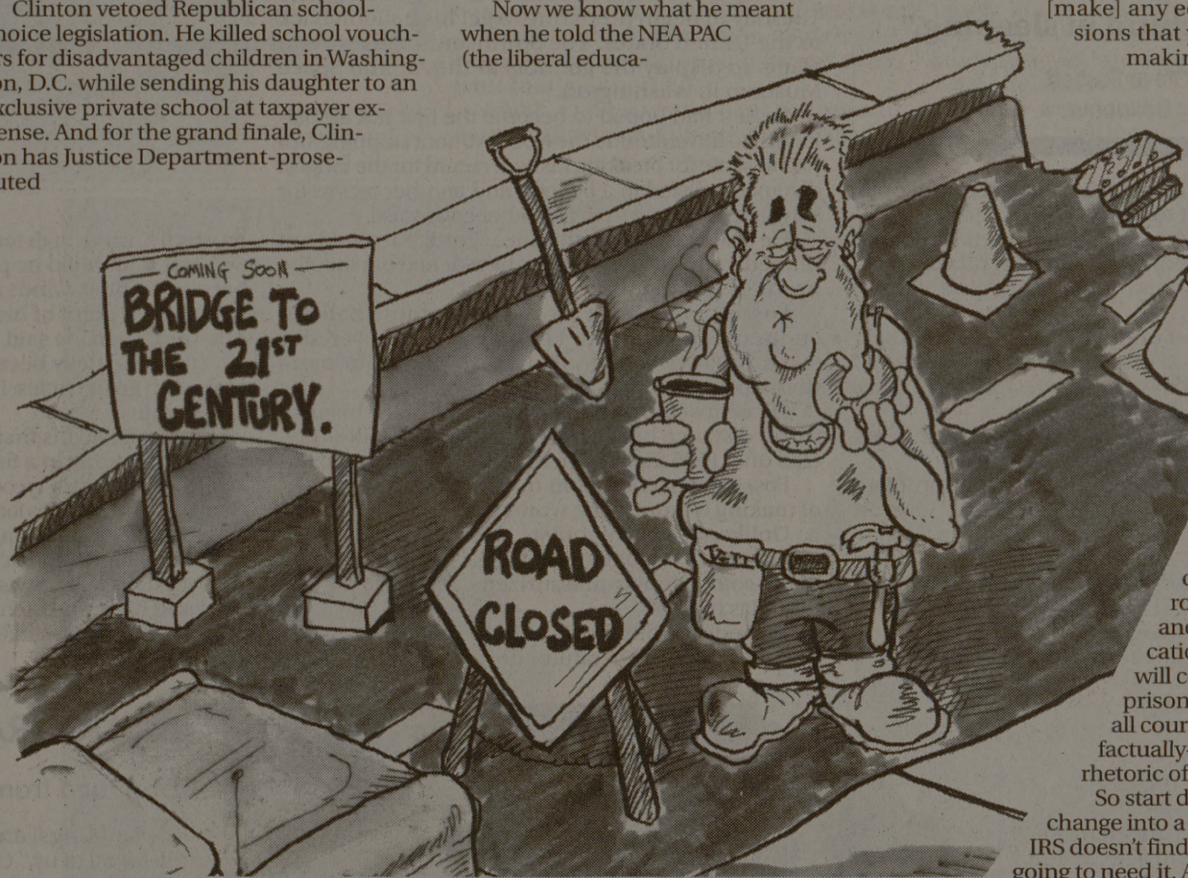
With President Bill Clinton in control of the White House for another four years, everyone better get ready across his "Bridge to the 21st Century," because you're the ones pulling the wagon. All of us, except freshman who make it to the year 2000, will graduate into a Clinton administration work force. For those who loyally clutched Clinton/Gore placards and stayed up late to watch our Vice-President do the Macarena, prepare to be disappointed. Bill Clinton's 21st century is not as rosy as he predicts. Throughout the campaign season, we heard Clinton incessantly rant, "Republicans cut Medicare," followed by his pledge to save the institution. Truth be known, Republicans proposed to reduce the rate of Medicare's growth (which is three times the rate of inflation) by 7 percent while increasing overall funding from \$4,800 per beneficiary in fiscal year 1996 to \$7,200 in fiscal year 2002. Strangely, this reduction in growth, erroneously termed a "cut" by Democrats, is 0.8 percent less than the 7.8 percent reduction proposed by Clinton in his 1993 health care plan. Clinton defended his bigger reduction at an October 5, 1993 meeting of the American Association of Retired Persons. He said, "We propose to let it go up at two times the rate of inflation." Only in Washington do people believe no one can get by on twice the rate of inflation.



Donald Ferguson
 Sophomore
 Political Science major

To further his speech, Clinton said, "when you hear all this business about cuts, let me caution you that is not what is going on." Someone has been caught with his consistency down, and it isn't the first time. Republicans drafted a plan to save Medicare for our generation. But now, you see what happens when Bill Clinton's political aspirations cross paths with protecting future workers. Think of it as a hit-and-run. Paying for college looks even worse. While Republicans were increasing student loan funding by nearly 50 percent from \$24 billion in fiscal year 1996 to \$36 billion in fiscal year 2002, Clinton vetoed a \$2,500 tax credit for student loans, along with the Republicans' \$12 billion increase in student loan funds. He then went on the campaign trail, labeling the largest increase in the history of the student loan program a "cut." Clinton said he was proud to have vetoed what would have been more money in your pocket. He then proposed to tax investments into prepaid tuition funds. This means less financial aid and a fatter tax bill for students. So much for thinking about tomorrow. Elementary education will not fare any better. Students in a Milwaukee, Wisconsin school-choice pilot program score 5 percent higher in reading and 21 percent higher in math skills than similar children in Milwaukee's public school. One would think Clinton, "The Education President," would be ecstatic at the

result. Well, he is far from it. Clinton vetoed Republican school-choice legislation. He killed school vouchers for disadvantaged children in Washington, D.C. while sending his daughter to an exclusive private school at taxpayer expense. And for the grand finale, Clinton has Justice Department-prosecuted claims to care about school kids. Now we know what he meant when he told the NEA PAC (the liberal education bureaucracy which contributes millions to his campaign and just happens to oppose school choice and school vouchers for the poor). He said "I won't [make] any education decisions that you're not a part of making. I won't forget the people (the NEA) who brought me to the White House." I guess we can't have "little Johnny" learning to read if it means ending "Big Government." It makes one wonder where Clinton's priorities are. He must keep them in his wallet. A bankrupt Medicare system, college costs skyrocketing even faster and failed public education system which will continue to imprison children — this is all courtesy of the suave, factually-challenged rhetoric of Bill Clinton. So start dropping spare change into a jar and hope the IRS doesn't find it, because we're going to need it. And for those who so lovingly slapped a Clinton/Gore '96 bumper sticker onto their Geo, stock the medicine cabinet with aspirin, because it'll be a four-year hangover.



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EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorial board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors. Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

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UNITY & FOCUS

Leadership conference encourages unity, raises awareness, and provides inspiration

Words of contemplation and insight were spoken at the close of the ninth annual Southwest Black Leadership Conference this weekend. One student "gained a greater sense of direction" and an awareness of the impact he can have within his community. Another defined his parting insight as a "sense of obligation to educate others toward greater achievement." Yet another, firm in purpose, declared "somebody else will be helped and strengthened by my life." These comments reflect the immense pride, empowerment, inspiration and knowledge that such an event instilled in the hearts and minds of its participants. This conference is important because it provides a forum for African-Americans to discuss solutions to problems within their own communities. An event this noteworthy attracted speakers such as former Washington, D.C., mayor, Sharon Kelly Pratt, and civil rights leader Julian Bond, who both emphasized the importance of defining minority issues to achieve a broad unity throughout

all of American society. The concept of this leadership conference evolved at the University of Texas, but when UT could not host the conference, it was moved to its current and permanent home, Texas A&M, in 1989. The purpose of the gathering is threefold: to raise awareness and insight of issues within the African-American community, to promote empowerment and inspiration through unity, and to promote an understanding of minority concerns in the context of broader society. During the conference, students attended workshops on African-American history, values, and culture. In this intellectual environment participants were able to challenge and evaluate the merit and validity of ideas as they confronted provocative issues such as affirmative action, education, media, and racism. The speakers also articulated the obligation of students to maximize their use of knowledge when addressing difficulties in life because, as one student proclaimed, "Knowledge is not power. Power is the application of knowledge."

Debit system quickly leads to debt

Aggiebucks are convenient, but dangerous

Captain Kirk noticed the coin slots on the newspaper stands. His expression turned to concern. "They're still using money," was his response. In the movie *Star Trek IV*, the crew of the Enterprise had to deal with the unfamiliar concept of currency. But if Kirk and his crew landed at Texas A&M, they might have come to a different conclusion. Today, the futuristic vision of a cashless society has already been with us for a while and, thanks to the Aggie buck debit card system, is a reality for students. The debit card system makes buying textbooks to Big Macs painless, quick and convenient. Many times students have said, "Oh, I'll just use Aggie bucks — it's not real money." The convenience of Aggie bucks is something that students use in significant numbers. According to Dale Witenhafer, Debit Card Administrator, 25,000 to 27,000 students use Aggie bucks — roughly two thirds of the student body. And the system keeps expanding. Recently, McDonald's and Inspirations have joined the fold of businesses that accept Aggie bucks for goods and services. All off-campus bookstores also accept the debit card. "Quite a number of businesses have inquired [about Aggie bucks]," Witenhafer said, "But most hold off. Right now we're looking at changing how Aggie bucks work, so we can't guarantee the equipment for more than a year." The cost of getting your business in the

Columnist



Stephen Llano
 Senior History major

system is about \$2100 for installation (Hope that TCA cable doesn't read this column). With such a sizable investment up front, coupled with the lack of a guarantee, this high installation cost is a stumbling block for small businesses. "We haven't considered it yet," said Tara Sopasakis, part owner of Burger Boy. "We're a very small business and we wait to see how things are going before we leap." If Aggiebucks continue to expand only to businesses that can handle the cost, local small businesses would definitely suffer from a lack of student income. McDonald's and Inspirations did their homework and decided the Aggie bucks system was the way to go for them. On the surface, the card is really taking the place of a cash transaction. Putting up such a large sum for just another way to accept cash seems foolish. That's where convenience comes into play. After reviewing my receipt for my textbooks this semester, I noticed something interesting. Right there, in bluish dot-matrix and white, was the fact that I paid over two dollars for a single subject spiral notebook. How could my better shopping sense be usurped this way? After thinking back over my academic

career, I remember comparison shopping for textbooks only once. Ever since then, I used Aggiebucks for that purpose. It seems that in the name of convenience I forgot one of the basic economic duties of the consumer: to buy at the lowest price. When using Aggie bucks it can be very easy to lose sight of the fact that cash was paid up front on that account. And economically, if businesses don't see any reason to be price competitive, they won't lower their prices. Unfortunately, it's all too easy to swipe that card without thinking about making a real economic impact on the community. Even if you save only a couple of dollars, it's still money in the bank. And on a national scope, with the recent introduction of the check card, a debit system of sorts, as well as being able to pay with an ATM card at the grocery store, it will be in everyone's best interest to keep abstract electronic money as mentally concrete as possible. Currently, large transactions occur daily without any currency physically exchanging hands. We will see less and less of it as we graduate, move into the job market and begin to make large purchases. Convenience is not something wrong. But thinking about every purchase in a responsible way is the only way to preserve a true free market system. A cashless system isn't wrong, it just takes more careful consumer consideration.

It seems that in the name of convenience I forgot one of the consumer's basic economic duties: to buy at the lowest price.



MAIL CALL

Aggie spirit helpful in G. Rollie White
 As the coach of the Texas A&M Men's Basketball Team, I wanted to thank you for your support at our Texas game. The electricity generated by the student body was a motivating factor in our team's performance. You can imagine how difficult

it has been for our players, especially in light of the effort they put forth over the last three heartbreaking losses. We are really three plays away from being 3 and 1. We recognize that the bottom line in sports is to win. You can never forget that fact. I have total confidence in this group of young men. I would ask you to continue your vocal support.

You as a fan will be a difference maker for us as we move through the rest of our schedule. The "true spirit" of Texas A&M is really based on the emotional involvement of the student body in the various activities on campus. I hope that you will "keep the faith" and continue to give our team a chance to capture your support. Tony Barone
 Head Basketball Coach
 Texas A&M University

Ebonic vernacular is weak solution
 When I opened the Battalion on Friday to the Editorial Section and saw another article extolling the virtues of Ebonics (the current catch phrase for a type of black ethnic slang), I was ready to read yet another inane, banal, poorly-written column on why this new form of making concessions to and excuses for, the degenerated state of education in this country should be implemented. However, much to my surprise and dismay, I was mistaken. The article was exceptionally well-written with the intelligence the author clearly reflected. Furthermore, to the general reader, the validity of testing Ebonics programs seemed to be substantiated with various citations of evidence of its success. To the naked eye, this a very convincing argument. But don't be fooled into believing tripe, simply because it is served in an appealing

manner — it still remains tripe. The fact of the matter is Ebonics is not a foreign language, it is a form of vernacular. Ebonics is no different than Texonics, Arkansanics, East Coastonics, or Hispanonics. What it is instead, is a message to the black community that they are not intelligent enough to speak and learn standard spoken English. Furthermore, it basically says the American school system is giving up, no longer making the effort to teach, because it is not worth the time it takes to educate our youth. Whether blacks' test scores are a result of poor teachers, cultural challenges, or the lack of demand in American schools to achieve and conform to some basic principles and codes is definitely worth investigating. However, to even insinuate that further concessions and pan-

dering to underachievers in American schools should be considered, strikes a direct blow to those working to achieve true equality in this country. The school system in this country is in desperate need of repair and I, as a taxpayer, would be willing to go to any length to hear any viable suggestion to reach this goal. However, lowering expectations further and attempting to falsely boost scores to ease the conscience of the black and white community by designing and creating a curriculum around common street slang is absolutely ludicrous. Please, give all those involved a little more credit. Ebonics is doing no one any favors.

Garrett C. Higley
 Class of '97