

Tobacco industry faces uncertain future

Dateline 2005. In a bold move this week, the Liggett Group, the country's third-largest marijuana company, announced they were jumping into the scented marijuana market, which until now has been dominated by the R.J. Reynolds Co.

Columnist



Mason Jackson
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But unlike Reynolds, who has found success with outdoor scents like Pine Forest and Ocean Breeze, Liggett will be taking a cue from the perfume industry and make designer scents. Proposed celebrity scents include "Bong Water" by Woody Harrelson and "Paranoia" by Calvin Klein. The Liggett Group, as you might recall, played a large role in the criminalization of tobacco and the legalization of marijuana. In 1997 they released a series of internal documents to settle lawsuits pending in 22 states.

The rest of the tobacco industry fought hard to keep those documents sealed, claiming attorney-client privilege. They were successful in 20 states, but judges in Mississippi and Illinois released all the documents on the grounds that the lawyers had engaged in fraud by helping the industry conceal the health risks of smoking.

The documents revealed what everyone capable of thought already knew. Liggett, along with every other tobacco company, was fully aware of tobacco's health risks as far back as 1951.

In a private meeting in 1965, tobacco executives briefly considered the moral and ethical implications of selling something they knew was detrimental to the health of consumers.

One of the executives was recorded as saying "Come on, what do I look like, a freakin' nun? Besides, what they don't know won't kill us."

This set the stage for 30 years of lies and deceit fed to a hypocritical public that chose to believe the tobacco companies were onto something in that 1972 study of four people who recovered from chicken pox after they began smoking.

These documents proved to be the smoking gun that did in tobacco (not to be confused with the smoking gun which was the centerpiece of a miserably inept cross-promotional tie-in with the NRA).

By late 1998, the public outcry was so loud that Congress was forced into action. They criminalized tobacco in November 1998. In February 1999, after three months of putting up with cranky ex-smokers, it was decided that everyone just needed to "chill-out," and marijuana was legalized.

The tobacco companies, who had survived up to this point by invading and pillaging small South American countries, immediately brought in consultants from Amsterdam to oversee the transition to the joint-making business.

The 2000 residential elections were seen as pivotal when conservative Texas governor, George W. Bush, staged a come from behind victory after the discovery of the Al Gore-Martha Stewart sex tapes. But Bush was not able to get any legislation passed because Sen. Simpson (Rep. California) diverted all congressional resources into the search for the real killer.

Now the marijuana industry sees nothing but smooth sailing ahead with newly elected President Richards and particularly with Vice-President Cheech. Incidentally, ex-President Bush Jr. says his presidential library is going up next to his dad's, and the name of the University will be officially changed to Texas A & M & George & George University.

Liggett says its future plans include rolling out something similar to the popular Marlboro Miles promotion, where customers send in proofs-of-purchase in order to receive cool "Gear," like books on how to lower goals to fit a current level of achievement. Market analysts see this as a positive move in an industry which caters to the consumer.

America, you've come a long way baby. Let's see where the next eight years takes us.

Hello...Hello...Hello?!?

Telephone registration complicates student life

"Welcome to the Texas A&M Student Information System. Enter an action code now."

Columnist



John Lemons
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Aaargh! It's that voice — the voice of A&M's phone registration system. It is the voice that rewards students after enduring hours of busy signals to access the system. It's also the voice that taunts potential registrars with the unhappy news of blocks or full classes.

It is the voice which, come tomorrow, will bring out the worst in students. Registration is a semiannual trial for students. Although registration has been upgraded, improvements need to be made to transform the experience from a major nuisance to a simple exercise.

First, the voice must go. The wretched voice actually has a name. The folks at the Student Information Management System Project SIMS Administration, the group which oversees phone registration, call the voice Mr. Vocom.

Vocom's unnatural, dismembered, slightly tinny voice betrays the welcome he grants upon starting registration. Vocom is cold, uncaring and impatient as he commands students to enter action codes or continuously press the pound key. He also is slowly being phased out by the perky sounding female voice which currently greets students upon entering the registration system. Although an improvement, the new voice is still grating.

The system needs a more charming voice. Perhaps, famed radio commentator Paul Harvey would be willing to act as the front man for phone registration. It would be pleasing to hear his nasally, staccato voice proclaim, "This is Paul Harvey, stand by to register."

Phone registration's most frustrating problem is the difficulty of getting into the system. This is a problem created by students. Each night, there are approximately 2,000 students fighting for 127 available lines on the system. What's worse is all

2,000 students try to register at exactly 10 p.m. as registration begins. The result is a constant busy signal for the majority of students attempting to register.

Don Gardner, associate registrar for the University, said students unnecessarily worry about classes filling during registration. "Everybody thinks, in their mind, they need to be the first one on," Gardner said. "They think everyone is trying to get their classes."

The truth is there are so many classes available, it is unlikely that students will lose classes by waiting an hour or two to register. Unless a student is a senior registering the first night of registration, classes have been available to others for days.

When it comes to registration, students are imbeciles. By fighting to register, students wreck havoc on the phone system and their own nerves.

Their actions defy logic. When students are dismissed from class, they don't all try to walk out the door at the same time in the desperate thought of being left behind.

But, like a mob of students, the registration frenzy also can be dangerous. In April of 1995, the registration system failed, but students still tried to access the system.

Larry Malota, project director of SIMS, said the calls disrupted College Station's phone network. "We caused some very delayed dial tones," Malota said.

These delayed dial tones prevented calls from reaching Columbia

Medical Center, an area hospital. Although the phone registration system is impressive, students need another option. Our increasingly wired campus deserves the option of registering by computer, in addition to registering by phone.

Computer registration would offer campus geeks and technophiles the option of registering without being subject to Vocom's droning. By opening up computer registration, more students would be able to see which classes are available as they register. Furthermore, students would be able to choose classes

without waiting for verbal prompts. Malota said the registrar has approved the initial development of a computer registration system.

"We won't be seeing this (computer registration) until Spring '98," Malota said. Registration is A&M's most miserable shared experience. From Vocom's mechanical voice to inevitable traffic jamming of the system, students can expect a heinous experience every semester. Someday students will simply be able to sit down at their computers to choose classes, but for now, "Did you forget to press the pound key?" is all they'll hear.



Editorial round-up

San Antonio Express-News on the federal response to flooding:

The Clinton administration has asked for \$2 billion in supplemental disaster relief funds to help rebuild communities in California, the Ohio Valley and the Pacific Northwest ravaged by recent floods.

Last year, flooding in the Northwest and East cost taxpayers \$501 million. In 1993, when the Mighty Mississippi overflowed its banks, Congress paid \$5.7 billion.

This annual rite occurs because people build and live in flood plains. They try to put down roots where Mother Nature says they shouldn't.

That is nonsense, but government makes it easy.

Local governments authorize zoning and land use in flood plains. The federal government provides flood insurance and disaster relief.

And the Army Corps of Engineers has boasted, for a century, that it can tame the mightiest rivers. The solution is easy, a Corps of Engineers official in California recently admitted: "Keep people out of the flood plain."

How? Congress is mulling legislation that would make broad federal policy changes to move people from flood plains. Direct buyouts are an option. So are incentives to local governments that do not allow building in flood plains.

People should not live and developers should not develop in places that flood. There are land uses for flood plains — say, Park-

land — that are more suitable. Paying disaster relief makes members of Congress heroes back home, but it is just another budget buster that needn't be.

Austin American-Statesman on HB 3508:

House Bill 3508 by State Rep. Tommy Merritt, R-Longview, has as its stated purpose the promotion of energy conservation. To that end, Merritt proposes that the state Lottery Commission sell coupons ... which the holder may use to get out of a speeding ticket.

The basic idea is that when a citizen is stopped for speeding, he merely hands the officer one of the coupons and goes on his way, ticketless.

Where does energy conservation come in? A spokesman for Merritt

said that exceeding the speed limits by more than 10 miles an hour burns fuel at an accelerated rate.

The bill is fine as far as it goes, but why stop at speeding coupons? How about ... coupons for bald tires, faulty brakes, for busted turn signals? For a heftier price, Texans could have coupons that allow one armed robbery without penalty. There could be a Drew Nixon coupon to get out of a prostitution sting.

The coupons could become so popular that the legislature could abolish all taxes. And all in the name of energy conservation.

The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal on gangs:

As street gangs continue to become a more serious problem in America, it is becoming more obvi-

ous that gang members have a growing contempt for society. Perhaps nowhere has this contempt been more evident in recent months than in the Rhode Island federal courtroom last week in which a member of the Latin Kings gang stood up, unzipped his pants and urinated during his trial.

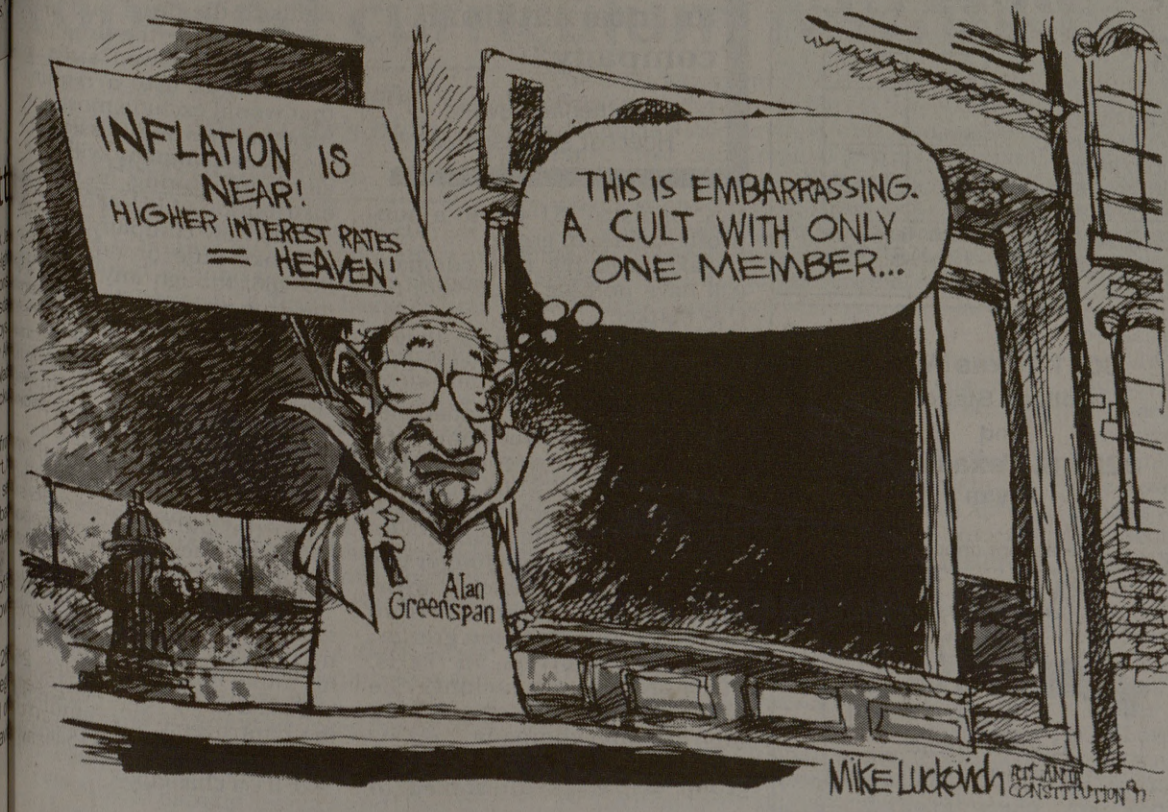
Federal marshals pounced on 22-year-old George "King Animal" Perry, and removed him from the courtroom.

The outrageousness of the act concerns us much more than its seriousness. Perry is one of six gang members who were being tried for murder, extortion, drug dealing, carjacking and other offenses. Public urination and indecent exposure are minor crimes in comparison.

But the fact that he would do that in a court of law with a jury present — even though his back was to them at the time — speaks volumes about his lack of respect for the court and his disdain for societal values.

Human life and values held dear by normal members of society are scorned by gangs. So, as gang members continue to treat society with contempt, society should react in kind.

This should be reflected in tougher laws and higher law enforcement priority's being placed on gang activity. And it must be reflected in our jury verdicts. We must not passively accept into this country the intrusion of gangs and their contemptuousness of decent values.



MAIL CALL

Theory of evolution lacks truth, evidence

In response to Dr. Hale's letter on Apr. 8 on evolution.

Evolution is a religion for those who defend it.

Evolution is not a sound scientific theory because a theory, according to *Olmsted Chemistry*, "is based on experimental observations, and the goal of a theory is to explain some set of experimental results." Evolution is presented as a theory, even though it is unsupported by any experimental evidence. This is not science. This is a leap of faith.

The "same, stale, inaccurate arguments" about evolution are not so

inaccurate. They are always the same because evolutionists tend always to give their same unsubstantial arguments for evolution.

For example, throughout the history of human kind, there has been no transitional fossil found that can stand under careful scrutiny as actually being a transition between species. There have been some that evolutionists hail as key transitions, but when these fossils are reviewed, they have been shown as either a specimen of specific species or an extinct species.

There is no fossil that is clearly transitional which has been found to date. If over human kind's hundred years of archeology, these fossils have not been found, is it not unreason-

able to conclude that these fossils do not exist, perhaps because the animals themselves never existed either? Evolutionists, however, hold religiously to the belief that these fossils do exist, because their entire "theory" depends on their existence — according to Darwin.

Dr. Hale resorts to the argument of rapid change. This is only a cop out for evolutionists trying to salvage a theory that has no known supporting evidence. Lizards cannot sprout wings.

Daniel Huang
Class of '00

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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