

Tobacco emphasis shadows hemp use

The Camel lost his job, the Marlboro Man has to face an early retirement and indoor cigarette ads and promotional materials only will be seen in history books and museums from now on.

The big, fancy tobacco settlement is in, and the nation is still waiting to see what effect it will have on the nation's economy. Tobacco companies are responsible for a lot of capital-gathering hands — everyone from bankers and pickers to the guy who drives the truck to drop off patrons at the local corner store.

It could be argued that cigarettes are a staple item for many Americans, and therefore are pretty stable in the marketplace, much like butter and milk. The new agreement, although hurtful to tobacco companies, clears the path to make new "agreements" with liquor and beer companies as well.

It looks as if the consumer doesn't have a choice anymore when it comes to products that might prove harmful to his or her own health.

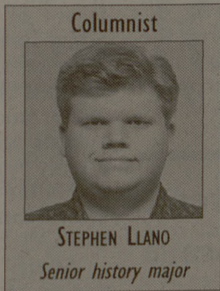
If the price is too high because of all the legal mumbo-jumbo, consumers might start to make the market lucrative for foreign cigarette companies.

Besides forcing tobacco companies to pay \$50 billion over the next 25 years, \$2 billion if the youth-smoking rate doesn't decline 30 percent in five years, there are also provisions for what governments, both state and federal, can and can't do regarding the manufacture and sale of tobacco.

The government can order a change in cigarette ingredients any time it wants to, but it cannot ban or reduce the amount of nicotine per cigarette until 2009 — good news for the nicotine dependent who doesn't like those funny looking patches.

As usual, the federal government can blackmail the states who don't wish to comply with these new regulations by withholding funding and grants. Of course, they are free to enforce stiffer laws than the settlement prescribes.

The most interesting element of this revenge-angled agreement between activists and producers rests something else the government is able to do: Government must encourage policies that give tobacco industry incentives to develop and market "safer" products, according to the agreement, available on USA Today's Web site.



Columnist

STEPHEN LLANO
Senior history major

"Safer" products — if only left to the realm of tobacco — doesn't leave much room for the government to assist any new development.

The best thing to be done for the tobacco companies is to legalize the production of hemp.

Yes, hemp, that trendy little weed that is usually associated with

a life far more evil than Joe Camel or the Marlboro Man. Usually, the economic aspects of hemp are ignored.

Currently, hemp is the trendiest weed in American history. Hats, shirts and other paraphernalia made of hemp sell extremely well. Since it is not legal to grow it in the United States, the market comes entirely from imports. If it were legalized, the market could make up to \$30 billion dollars per year for Americans.

A very interesting Web site run by the Boulder Hemp Initiative Project lays out the advantages of commercial hemp production for Colorado. But this could be an interesting way for tobacco companies to cope with tremendous legal pressure and still save and create many more jobs, as well as get a corner on a new market.

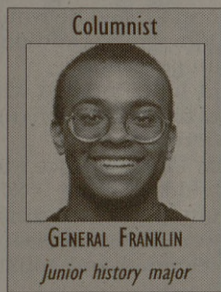
For all the moralists out there, hemp is not marijuana. Hemp is just the plant stalk itself, minus the portions that are used to make joints. Hemp can be used to make anything from rope and paper to plastics and some experimental fuels. As a weed, hemp requires no pesticides.

The estimate is approximately \$860 per acre — over twice what cotton, soybeans, corn and wheat yield currently. True, some of this is due to the high demand and low supply for a trendy fashion material, but the government is mandated to help tobacco companies come up with a safer product. Paper products are about as safe as it gets, and much cheaper to produce, giving companies such as Philip Morris Inc. a competitive edge once again.

To keep hemp illegal for such commercial ventures seems like a poor decision when there is an entire industry needing help in a vicious judicial environment. These companies need to be given a new market in order to start fresh if efforts to phase out cigarette production continue. Hemp is a new, safe industry that the government owes consumers to open — minus that occasional paper cut.

No vacancy available

Hotel-convention center must not burden taxpayers



Columnist

GENERAL FRANKLIN
Junior history major

The city of College Station should only proceed with plans for a hotel-conference center if concrete evidence, not wishful thinking, can guarantee no undue burden will be placed on taxpayers.

The main reason for the project is for the city to capitalize on growing interest that some groups have in holding conventions in our area.

Additionally, the city hopes that business and events generated by Reed Arena and the George Bush Presidential Library will warrant the need for the hotel and meeting facilities to accommodate more visitors.

The city must proceed with this proposal before risking \$6 million of city funds, because the potential for new business is merely that, potential. Without any real boost in tourism and business, a new conference center could have adverse consequences for the taxpayers.

The city is currently proceeding wisely by authorizing a feasibility study to determine the market potential for the proposed hotel project at Wolf Pen Creek.

Even if Chuck Carroll & Associates, the firm commissioned to do the study, finds a need for a new complex, its findings only represent an estimate, not a guarantee.

The analysis cannot insure a steady stream of business to keep the hotel and conference center financially viable.

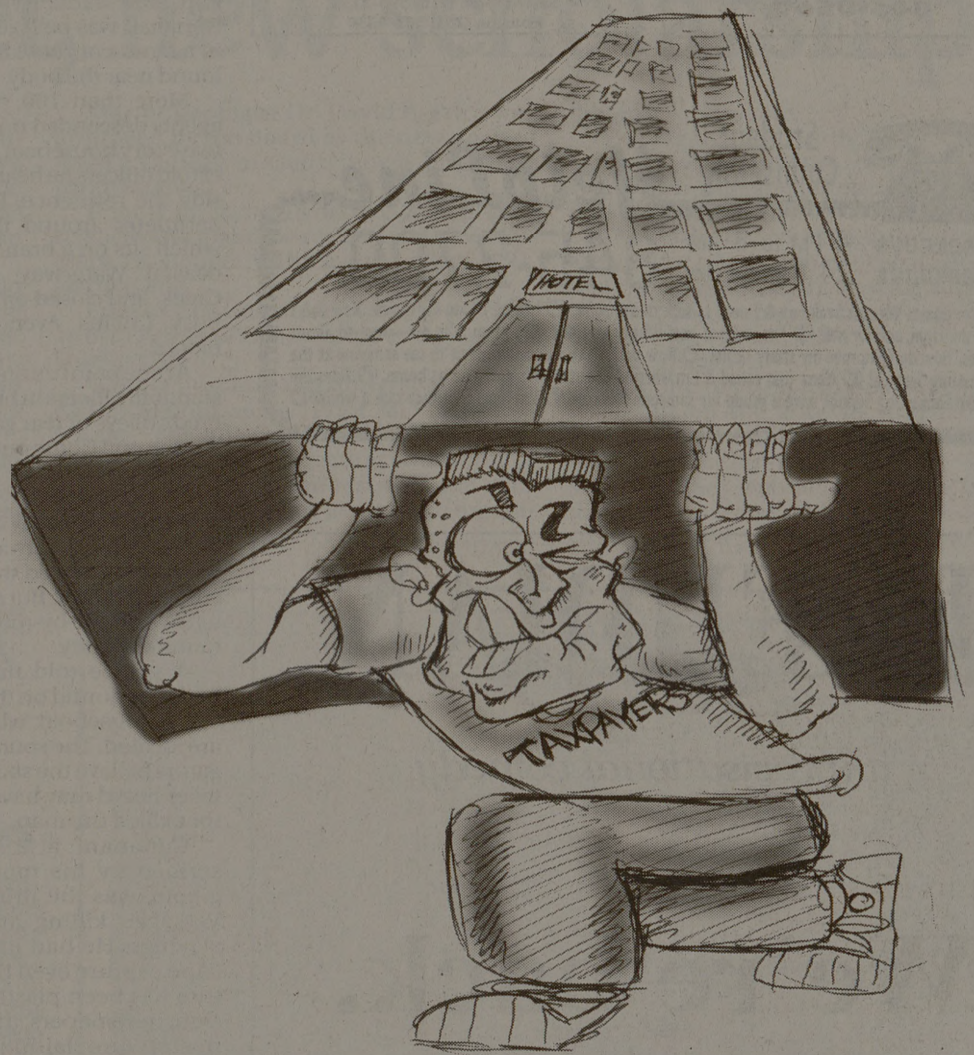
According to Mayor Lynn McIlhane, many new opportunities for conventions and other engagements will blossom with the addition of the new facilities.

While opportunities may exist, they are too few and too distant from the horizon to provide any secure and steady activity for the center. First the city must devise ways to increase tourism and business, then concentrate efforts on the infrastructure, private and public, to meet the demand.

The potential danger with the convention center is that the city will encounter problems acquiring new engagements and conventions. The city of Houston has learned its painful lesson with the fiasco concerning the George R. Brown Convention center. You build it, and they may not come. Like Houston, College Station taxpayers would bear the wasted costs of maintaining a vacant convention hall.

The necessity for a second large hotel in the area seems questionable at the moment.

McIlhane said cities of comparable size to College Station have three major hotels that manage to thrive harmoniously. College Station is unique because it is a college town whose revenues vary with season. Therefore, a more substantial rationale is needed to justify a new hotel that could withstand the area's frenetic pattern of business.



If the city and the Wolf Pen Creek group can devise better ways to draw visitors to the area, perhaps greater hotel space would be merited.

Current evidence seems to demonstrate a slight excess of hotel space. Baren Hobbs, president of the College Station hotel association, said hotel occupancy has been in decline for the past four years.

Furthermore, area hotel businesses have been forced to increase rates to keep up with inflation.

In this stagnant environment, the city must have more than optimism to avoid the disaster of over-saturating the market with flailing businesses, causing a strain on all area motels and hotels.

The entire process of planning the hotel complex has preceded the economic spurt to justify its construction.

The city should delay any plan for a hotel-conference center until actual evidence of greater demand on present facilities surfaces. Market forces will eventually lure private sectors into initiating a plan that is independent of the government, thereby reducing any risk to the citizens of the College Station.

Meanwhile, current facilities in this area should be used to host engagements which

will promise to deliver more revenue to the local economy.

Although somewhat plausible, the "build it and they will come" theory of hotel advocates can be financially disastrous if the complex cannot generate the funds to keep it self-sustaining.

The city must attain a certain degree of prosperity from current hotel and meeting facilities before undertaking a large public investment into a convention center.

Once heightened interest in the College Station tourist and convention center blossoms, the city should proceed with development to accommodate the new demand.

Currently, the combination of a slow market and idle businesses do not suggest the need for a new conference center.

The city should pursue the proposal with deliberation allowing for full consideration of risks as well as benefits for taxpayers.

The city's focus should include enhancement of present economic activity to attract new businesses and tourism without posing a strain to taxpayers. Once the demand materializes, then and only then, should a project of this magnitude proceed.

A&M students must prepare for new millennium, change

Complacency fosters apathy, and apathy leads to the disintegration of the desire and will to succeed. It is too easy for people to fall into common patterns in their lives. The "normal and familiar" become the only thing they know, the only thing they are willing to accept; tradition becomes accepted as Gospel, and nothing is ever allowed to change. These individuals feel that anything that stands in opposition to their beliefs and opinions is wrong and should be wiped from the face of the earth.

When people reach the point when they are unwilling to accept others who have different views of the world, they fall one step down on the intellectual and evolutionary ladder. Blind acceptance and uncompromising views only allow for the hindrance of others' freedom of expression and thought.

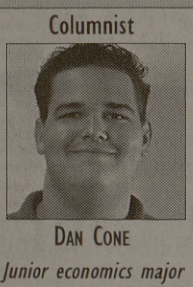
No example proves this point better than the outlook that many Aggies take of the world. Old Army demands that you have to love Texas A&M or leave. It demands that tradition be followed to the letter, and that the only way to think and live is by "Old School" values.

Those who refuse to accept new organizations and individuals who refuse to conform to the A&M mold and continually look only to the past for the ways they should act and believe hinder the progression of A&M into the future. Refusing to allow new Aggies to adapt traditions to mold to the realities of the coming millennium only keeps A&M stuck in the past.

Too much progress is bad for society, but too little progress is even worse. Radical change will result in the collapse of society, because when too many things change at one time, anarchy becomes the result. Too little change and a stagnation of society makes people complacent and unable to react when new ideas are introduced.

So many things can be learned if people are permitted to think freely, without the fear of retribution by a conformist mob. At A&M, people are handed traditions and expected to accept them or leave.

This places the University in a very unique situation. The purpose of receiving a higher education is to expand students' minds and allow them new and challenging thoughts. Some people are expected to dis-



Columnist

DAN CONE
Junior economics major

agree, but disagreement is more important than blind acceptance.

When people hold the same views of how society should work, how people should live their lives and think in the same ways about the direction society should travel, they soon run out of original thoughts to add to society; they become stagnant and trapped in a world that is obsolete. The refusal to permit new thoughts becomes the catalyst for their downfall. If any branch of thought in society reaches the point where everything has been said, and every thought explored, then that portion of society becomes dead weight.

A&M, fortunately, has not reached the point where the student society has become stagnant and dead, but it is safe to say that it is in neutral. As much as it is necessary to proceed into the next millennium with a purpose and a unified sense of itself, A&M must find itself first. The University is going through an identity crisis. A&M is the third largest school in the nation and is still trying to act as if it is the little technical college it was at the beginning of the century.

New people are entering the school and asking themselves, "Why should I accept everything that the Old School says?" These are the people who will define the University in the coming millennium. Only after old Ags and new Ags find common ground will A&M find a place for itself in society. The school has to overcome the image of "hicks and CTs only." This will be difficult, since there are still many people at A&M who believe this to be, how the school should remain.

I am a third generation Aggie. My grandfather was in the Class of '17, and by the middle of the 1960s, he believed that A&M had become too liberal and had been taken over by communists. Fortunately, his "Old School" view of A&M was mistaken. Texas A&M cannot be a slave to its past. The rich history of traditions and sense of family is an important trademark of the school, but it can't be all for which the University is known. Times change, people change and so must the University. If A&M refuses to accept this fact, the new millennium will only bring the death of this institution as a place of higher learning. No one wants to learn a methodology that is stagnant and dead in a society that is on the verge of rapid and extraordinary change.



MAIL CALL

Parking citations mean big hassle

In response to James Wallace's July 21 Mail Call:

After reading what some of you whine about, all I can do is hope that you grow up before you graduate. I spoke to the municipal prosecutor for Galveston County about parking, so get out your calculators and pay attention.

Defendant X gets a parking citation. It costs a mere \$10, if paid within 20 days.

Defendant X does not pay the citation, and after the 20 days a \$10 late fee is added.

Defendant X still does not pay the citation, and a warrant is issued for his or her arrest — warrant fee approximately \$20.

Defendant X is arrested (this does happen) and goes to jail. Bond is set for between \$100 and \$200. This bond is refunded if he or she shows up for trial.

Defendant X pays approximately \$10 in court costs.

If Defendant X was arrested from his or her vehicle, then there are also impounding and towing charges to get the vehicle back.

I guarantee you, judges will not be too kind with excuses such as, "I know it was a 30-minute parking place, I only had to work 8 hours." Yes, the real world has 8 hour days.

My advice, if you insist on parking where you want and

when you want, then carry a quarter so you can call your attorney.

Tracy Martin
Class of '98

Not all UT students wish to bash A&M

In response to Cris Angelini and Rob Dunn's July 23 Mail Call:

I felt it was necessary to comment on the response sent in by the two "UT students" and apologize to A&M for their words.

Although I don't have a problem with them voicing their opinions on the matter, they handled it in an extremely rude fashion. They do not represent the majority of us in Austin, because most of us are not inconsiderate a—holes.

In the future, I hope The Battalion will be more selective before printing responses such as these two people who only serve to make other schools look bad. The issue with moving Reveille's burial place has absolutely nothing to do with UT, so why print a Mail Call that is only trying to piss off some Aggies? Trust me, we don't care. Have a nice day.

Brian Swick
University of Texas

A&M student pens poetry for Reveille

This poem was sent in response to recent deliberations over moving the Reveille gravesites at Kyle Field:

"The Tunnel, the Love, the Whoop No More"
Another tunnel will soon fall silent,
Unlike the one before.
This time greed will do more damage,
Than the guns on Corregidor.
So that a few can ride in comfort,
We will lose so much more.

Say Goodnight to the 12th Man's fiery breath,
when the crowd begins to roar.
Say Goodbye to the pride and joy
BQ's feel,

Unleashed on the field they adore.

The beat, the pulse, the whoop no more.

Let's forget our love ones buried at rest,

Rewarded for service to see the score.

Whose peace will be disturbed not once but twice,

Never again to see the score.

How will our ladies know victory has been won,

No yell leaders, no band will out-pour.

The decision was made by only a few,

The sacrifice ... we must all endure.

The tunnel, the love, the whoop no more.

Anonymous Aggie

Editor's Note: In the July 23 issue of *The Battalion*, the opinion column on Corps and fraternity problems was written by John Lemons, not Jack Harvey.

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

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
013 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu

For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.