OPINION THE BATTALION OPINION

ECH TALK

Laution: speed bumps

ruising the Information Superhighway not without obstacles

ave you ever been greeted by this
">" symbol? For those who are not
active e-mail users, allow me to
lain that character's significance.

y of the programs people use to acis their e-mail accounts automatically
one of these "right carrot" marks to
beginning of each line of any message
gived from someone and forwarded on
omeone else. If that person forwards
message again, another mark is added
an beginning of each line. This process
tinues as the message is sent from
son to person until there is an annoystring of them like this:

ADAM

COLLETT columnist

tt the beginning of each and every line. If you receive a meste thus adorned, then you are the proud recipient of a piece ommunication that has passed through approximately 324 people before arriving at your virtual door.

A fair portion of these forwarded e-mails seem to be humorous at ture. They include, "Three NEW Dirty Jokes," "The Top 47 gic Tricks Involving a Brown Colored Pencil," "You might be an bian Knight If...," "Aggie Jokes Volume XIX," and all of their

While slightly annoying at times, the funny e-mails seem to be early tolerated, probably because they allow college students office workers to appear to be hard at work on their computations in fact they are goofing off. The real scourges, then, are much than letters and their seemingly more palatable actually more misleading) cousins, Internet hoaxes.

Internet chain letters appear to be descended from convential mail chain letters. A chain letter used to arrive in your

bside mailbox with a message to the effect of: "You have been

t this letter/note/greeting for luck/love/friendship. Please

il it to 3/20/437 of your closest friends.

of you do, then you will be rewarded with good luck/true

o=/a new truck. If you don't, then great

m/misfortune/hangnails will fall on you. If you are Bill Clines, then three more people will testify against you."

I have my own theory that these letters originated in and were litated by the United States Postal Service in an effort to get any repeople to buy obscure stamps like the "Classic Toaster" selection. However, these messages more likely started with a few losers wanted to demonstrate their ultimate power over the lible. The same power-hungry lunatics likely brought the praction to the medium of computers.

itional component of appearing to be have some kind of lemate purpose. First, there are the virus hoaxes, with such marten warnings as, "If you open an e-mail message titled 'Indult Grandmother,' a virus will erase your hard drive, turn your board pink, and triple the number of dust bunnies under your l." While still believed by many, media coverage has increased public awareness that most of these warnings are shams.

What has not received as much attention is a second variety, olving sad stories about terminally ill children and charitable lations. In these e-mails, a small child who is dying of cancer,

Internet hoaxes, while still sent via the chain format, have the

A slight variation contains the same story but with the proon that some charitable organization receives three cents every person who receives the message. Apparently, some pple have nothing better to do than to sit around making up y sad stories just to see how far their chain letter will go. The e-mail like this that I've seen most frequently over the tew years has been about a child named Jessica Mydek, h the funding going to the American Cancer Society (ACS). I

cemia or lung disease has a wish that a message of hope and

contacted the Brazos County ACS about this chain e-mail "fund raiser" last February. The response: "That is a complete hoax." As of October 1997, neither the ACS nor the American Lung Association did any fund raising via chain e-mails.

While Internet providers and other technology-related services and organizations try to help spread the word about what and what not to believe, the ultimate responsibility remains with the user. Users need to be wary of the e-mails sent to them; if there's a chance that a letter is legitimate, then by all means they should verify that by tapping into that agency or organization's web site, or calling their 1-800 number. Users can also get information about various Internet hoaxes and urban legends at the following websites:

at the following websites:
• http://www.urbanlegends.com/

• http://www.snopes.com/

• http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~msteele/virushoax.html

http://kumite.com/myths/

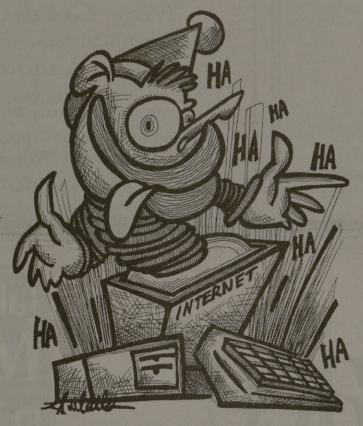
http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html
 But, if they don't have time to verify that the effort is legitimate, then they should not forward it, because they may end up harming the legitimate fund raising activities by the organi-

zations they are trying to help.

Computer users everywhere, including A&M students, need to be more responsible about their e-mail usage. While those who unknowingly forward false good cause chain letters deserve some (but not much) slack for attempting to do the right thing, evil-doers who crowd our in boxes with curses and blessings deserve nothing but scorn. Regardless; both perpetrators need to be better informed.

So take heed and share this information with nine of your closest friends...or else.

Adam Collett is an educational administration graduate student.



AMPUS CONNECTION

exas A&M misses "world-class" status

exas
A&M is a
worldwo



CZELUSTA columnist

going to the columnst columnst

what, then, are the characteristics of on world-class university," and does as A&M satisfy the criteria that war-

will offer the following as an admitize ly incomplete, yet essential, list of dards by which to gauge the success and ailure of Texas A&M:

Does this University produce gradubelow s who are prepared to be leaders in the ir careers, as well as productive and the icerned citizens in general?

*Does Texas A&M provide an intellectuchallenging environment to students, hinside and out of the classroom?

*Is Texas A&M a place that facilitates the ation of new ideas and original thought?

*With regard to the first criterion, Texas

*M undoubtedly lives up to its renown

*S 5 5 1 supplier of the crucial b.s. component

of education. Through various activities, offered by diverse groups ranging from the Unicycling Club to Student Government, Texas A&M provides students with the ability to communicate, the opportunity to improve teamwork skills and a profound sense of belonging to a community that is larger than themselves. The tools students acquire through extra-curricular involvement are certainly a necessary facet of a balanced educational diet.

It is at this point where the discussion of leadership ends and consideration of intellectual issues begins Texas A&M's success becomes much less clear. An honest dose of introspection reveals Texas A&M falls short of the "world-class" mark, particularly with respect to the second and third criteria listed above. In terms of its status as an intellectual community, Texas A&M is an unrepentant failure.

Although this University does not possess a faculty on par with the Ivy League, the University of Chicago or Berkeley, or arguably even the University of Texas, the blame for intellectual underachievement does not rest primarily upon the shoulders of professors. Texas A&M's faculty is more than decent and continues to improve in many respects.

Culpability can instead be assigned to students. Speaking in general terms, and recognizing that there are exceptions to every generalization the relative premiums students place upon various aspects of their educational experience need to be readjusted. The most significant things in the minds of many Aggies are not consistent with the establishment of an intellectual environment and the development of a community where ideas are challenged and thought occurs in progressive fashion.

Students seem to be so preoccupied with parties, drinking, dating, extracurricular activities, traditions, sporting events, popular television shows, adherence to re-

ligious or political ideologies that remain largely unquestioned, etc. that there is very little room for an intellectual culture to develop amongst the clutter of students' shallow pursuits. Learning, it would seem, is something that takes place almost exclusively in the classroom and on the night before the exam.

If you remain unconvinced of this, then accept this challenge:

Carry a notebook with you for a full week and record in it the subject of every conversation that you engage in or happen to overhear. Review this list at the end of the week. Notice the topics are as repetitive as asking how a friend's break was or if people like their classes. Notice how shallow most conversations tend to be, revolving around similar events and circumstances, seldom probing any truly new ground. Notice also the scarcity of idea exchanges, the infrequency with which substantive assertions are questioned, the dearth of intellectual discourse.

Having performed a similar exercise myself, I found the results quite disconcerting. It may be I am uniquely surrounded by buffoons or I am somewhat shallow and prone to buffoonery myself, but I did discover the dominant culture at this University is bent upon insignificant subject matter and never-ending repetition of ideologies and thoughts covered with the dust of age and wrinkled with use.

It would be best, after cataloging these old ideas, to leave them upon the shelves of memory. This unfortunately is not a common practice at this school, and thoughts of a more forward-looking nature are thus stifled.

Texas A&M is not a world-class University. It will never be, unless we take it upon ourselves to make it so.

Jesse Czelusta is a public service and administration graduate student.

PERSPECTIVES

Liberal government trend brings America closer to socialist system

The liberals are coming, the liberals are coming, and in many cases they are already here.

As a matter of fact, the political environment in the world's most powerful nation is more liberal now than at any point in history.



LEN CALLAWAY columnist

The problem with liberal political policy is that it catches on and spreads like a plague until the political state is in such an anxious state of near-socialism that eventually conservative policy must be readopted.

The term "socialism" has always been scary to Americans, but if one takes the time to realistically and rationally analyze the recent and not-so-recent proposals and policies adopted by Democrats under the flag of the Clinton Administration, socialism certainly seems to apply.

Recently, the Texas Comptroller and notorious Democrat John Sharp, announced a plan under which every student who can maintain an 80 average in a Texas high school could receive one year of college tuition from the state for each year successfully completed in a Texas high school.

The plan sounds great for students, but here are a few things to think about: First, what will a degree from a socialized Texas higher educational institute be worth if every kid in the state has one? The degree would become the norm and would be like a high-school degree is now. In other words, this program will actually devalue college degrees. Second, under a 1992 tax code change made by Clinton, all scholarship monies are considered income and are subject to taxation.

So as it appears, students would get the money for college then be forced to pay a federal income tax on the money. Sharp's plan benefits the students and the federal government, but the plan takes money from the State of Texas without any consideration to the state.

When Clinton traveled to Brownsville recently to talk about the importance of education, he was accompanied by the local U.S. Representative. On the surface, this seems to be normal political protocol.

That is, except for the fact Clinton came to speak about education and its importance while the representative, Solomon Ortiz, is a high school drop out. Ortiz was forced to take over a family leadership role after the death of his father and received a GED in the Army, but never felt strongly enough about education to get a college degree.

During the trip, Clinton said he planned to institute an educational Individual Retirement Account (IRA) under which funds could be withdrawn for educational purposes without being subject to taxation, yet, in keeping with his 1992 change scholarships are taxable as income.

Clinton and his band of liberal schemers, philanderers, damage control experts and doctors of deception have effectively managed to contradict themselves in almost every category of U.S. politics, and now, just when it all seems to be unraveling around them, the American people get to look forward to another brilliant plan of evasive action from the man with the "pocket veto to go."

The examples are endless; most of Clinton's partners in the Whitewater scam are behind bars, he and Hillary were caught with over one hundred FBI files, Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones and now the intern-turned-Pentagon-employee on tape.

Clinton should have appointed legendary porn stars John Holmes, Ron Jeremy, Shannon Tweed and Jenna Jameson to his Cabinet. Shannon Tweed and Jenna Jameson could have been Attorney and Surgeon Generals respectively and Ron Jeremy would have made an excellent Secretary of the Interior.

Between that group and Dick Morris, Clinton could have had his own little Nevada-style brothel.

Only the most militant and radical liberal will tell the truth about the ultimate end of liberal political policy. The object is to remove any semblance of a class system from the United States. That is the key behind the logic of the scholarship and IRA policy discrepancy. Monies are deposited into IRAs by parents and grandparents who deserve a break because they work hard, but scholarships are provided by companies and wealthy people giving endowments to their favorite institutions. Simply because the companies and wealthy philanthropists are deemed "rich" and are alleged to be living the "easy life", the students who benefit must pay the tax.

That is also the reason wealthy Americans are financially punished for controlling their own destiny and carving out a place for themselves and their families in our modern society. By financially punished, I mean of course, that wealthy Americans are forced to pay a much higher rate of tax than those that have not invested the time and drive necessary to become extraordinarily successful.

The liberal tax system, in effect, rewards people with tax breaks for not being successful.

America was founded at least in part on the notion that people could live here and become what ever they wanted to become. They could become as big as they wanted to be, have the largest life possible, but the environment has changed so that those that really live the American dream are vilified and portrayed as lucky do-nothings who have everything dropped into their laps. They are punished by Clinton's government.

Have we forgotten about the free enterprise system and the notion of capitalism? It is not up to the state to pay for higher education. It is up to those that want a higher education to be an entrepreneur and find another way to pay for their education, or it is up to parents to take the time and interest to make certain that they can help their children with college.

Americans have become comfortable allowing the government to do as it pleases and are shocked by nothing.

They are not shocked by politicians that use fifteen different lies to cover the same truth.

They are being led around like dogs on a leash by their government and their president while the majority of citizens do not care.

How pathetic.

Len Callaway is a junior journalism major.



MAIL CALL

Democratic flyer offends, capitalizes on scandals

As an informed student of political science at Texas A&M University, I find it appalling that a respected student organization such as the Texas Aggie Democrats can in good feeling post an advertisement for a meeting capitalizing off the troubles of a young woman, Monica Lewinsky, to recruit for their organization.

Lewinsky, in my opinion, has been caught up in one of the worst scandals facing the American presidency, and to use her face as a recruitment technique on this University is beyond reproach.

Not only is this an unprecedented ac tion taken by a University organization, it concerns me that there may be legalities involved concerning a numerous amount of postings of someone's picture all over campus.

If Lewinsky was consulted first L

If Lewinsky was consulted first, I withdraw my complaint, but if not, I feel an apology should be issued on behalf of your organization to this campus and Lewinsky and her family.

Robert C. Ferguson Class of '01

Negative attention ignores organization's contributions

The Southwestern Black Leadership Conference is developed and organized by A&M students dedicated to the advancement of all student leaders. It has freely provided this campus with opportunities to experience dynamic speakers such as Dr. Nai'm Akbar and Julian Bond.

SBSLC has developed programming over the years that includes workshops, networking opportunities with other student leaders, as well as exposure to leading corporations through its career fair. Besides the executive staff of current A&M students, who work for a year prior to the actual conference, SBSLC recruits over 100 A&M students to volunteer as hosts.

PLEASE SEE MAIL ON PAGE 8.