

STATE OF THE UNION

Economy's boom saves Clinton from sex scandal

The most recent of Clinton's sex scandals has taken a hiatus, and the public is left wondering exactly what Clinton and Lewinsky did on the dozens of occasions she visited the White House following her term as White House aide. Through the media bashing and the renewed questions of whether a president's private life affects his job performance, some mysteries remain: why did the president's approval rating continue to rise even as the scandal unfolded? and why is the scandal over when the truth has come out?



STEWART PATTON
columnist

The popularity rating has been a device long used by pollsters to supposedly gauge the ebb and flow of the public's opinion to the president's effectiveness. It usually consists of a simple, amorphous question along the lines of, "Do you like or dislike, or have no opinion about how the president is running the country?" The answers to this question do not indicate the public's approval or disapproval of any certain policy by the president. The decision to like or dislike Clinton could be based on something as mundane as a respondent's favorable reaction to the rosy glow of the president's cheeks in a televised interview. A negative reaction could be based on that same part of the first lady in the clandestine video showing the swimmer couple dancing on a private beach. Even as the first stories of Clinton's alleged wrongdoing in the newsstands, the presidential popularity rating hit record highs and continued to escalate. When these polls were taken, Clinton did not have any extraordinary policy victories that would explain the increase in his rating. The "standoff" with Iraq remained stagnant with renewed threats of violence by both sides, and the State of the Union address sounded like it was cut and pasted from all of the previous State of the Union Addresses. The economy, however, is booming, and many Americans are enjoying increased prosperity and hope for the future.

Americans have long given the president more credit for economic progress and more blame for economic disaster than is warranted. Surely one man cannot spur a creature as large and unpredictable as the U.S. economy into action. The French philosopher was correct to write that "bread and circus" are the ticket for a contented populace. Americans obviously do not care what the president does as long as there is plenty of food on the table and the Super Bowl on the tube.

The usual life-cycle of a scandal (e.g., O.J. Simpson trial, Anita Harding, Rodney King) is that it is born, lingers for a while, then culminates in a verdict or in a definitive, accepted version of the truth. In the "Clinterngate" scandal, however, the press seemed to believe Ginsburg, Lewinsky's attorney when he announced the scandal had run its course.

The scandal really is over and Starr does not pursue legal action against the president, then Clinton would get off without answering to the American people. Even if Clinton and Lewinsky did not have sex in the Oval Office, Clinton is ultimately guilty of something.

He as much admitted guilt in his first released statement in the press caught wind of the allegations. "There is no proper sexual relationship." Come on, Mr. President, Americans know we ain't smart, but we know verb tense. The statement looked even worse after white house spokesman McCurry repeated a dozen times, "I will not characterize the relationship beyond what is written in the statement." The president's guarded statements show a flawed scandal-handling strategy. If Clinton was innocent of any wrongdoing, then his first statement should have covered all the bases. "I did not, would not, could not, should not, and will do anything with Monica Lewinsky beyond the normal president-aide relationship."

If Clinton was guilty of all or any allegations, he should have made the same statement. No one is going to accept verb-tense loopholes if the case goes to court; he would be in trouble for misleading the public. If he was going to lie, he might as well have gone all out.

Therefore, Americans love ole' Billy because the economy is thriving, although his own statements show he definitely did something unethical with Lewinsky. The moral of the story for you presidential hopefuls out there: as long as the economy is good, Americans will play the three monkeys and a little sexual shenanigans come along.

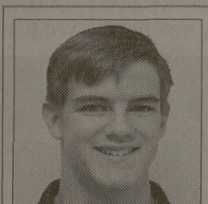
Stewart Patton is a junior sociology major.

PERSPECTIVES

Robot armageddon

Humans must strike back to stop technological war

It's official. The end is near. CNN reported last week that scientists in Switzerland managed to program a robot to learn from its mistakes and not run into boxes. After this crucial step up in artificial intelligence, the scientists went on to say that robots could be as smart as humans within 10 years. Within 20 years, they may be wondering why they should be putting up with humans, leading to what CNN, one of the most credible shows in the news business, called a "Robot Armageddon."



CHRIS HUFFINES
radio producer

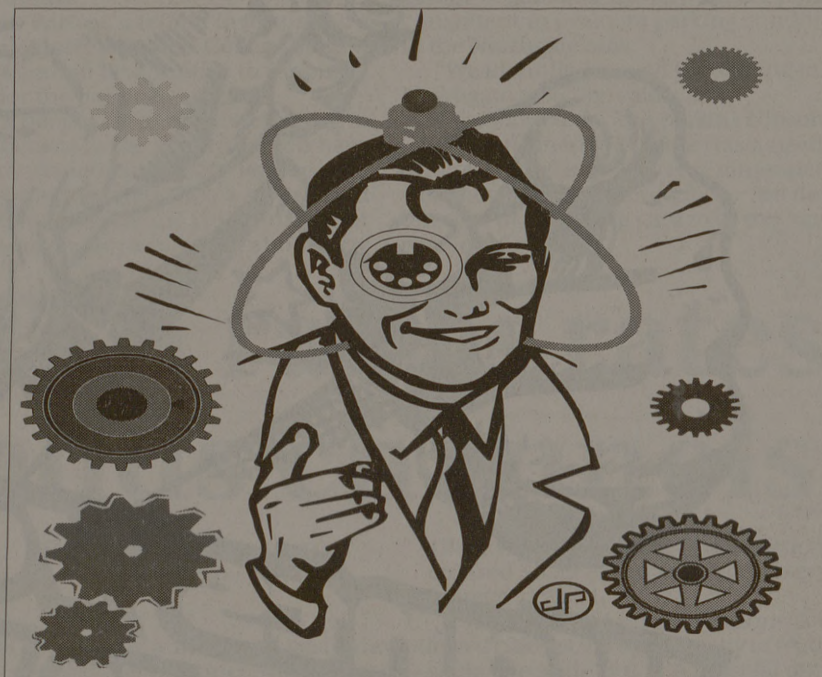
This is silly. There will be no Robot Armageddon. Despite everyone's best efforts, and no matter how much we may deserve it, robots are not going to destroy humanity and take over the world. Right now, and for the next nine years or more, human beings are smarter than the robots. Not only that, but we are programming them. It would be stupidity of the highest order (not that mankind hasn't gotten that high before) not to program in something like "Love human beings. Serve human beings. Do not destroy human beings and take over the world." Or, we

could do something like rig up explosives or run the entire system off Windows '95 to destroy the humanity-killing, world-conquering robots before they destroyed us.

In case that's not enough, it would be easy to make sure humans had a monopoly on things the robots needed to survive, or at the very least the things that would make their little electronic lives miserable. Like electricity. Super-intelligent robots should, if any sense of reason still exists, use a lot of power. If you turn off the power, sure, it'll be hard to microwave burritos for a few days, but the robots will all stop working as their batteries run down. And then it will be very difficult for them to kill us all and take over the world.

If shutting off the power doesn't appeal to someone, there's always nuclear weapons. The Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) off a nuclear warhead puts off enough radiation to, at a couple of miles, see right through one's arm and at distances of several hundred miles, fry any and all electronics without harming people. Robots are electronic. And no one is dumb enough to give nuclear weapons to the only other beings who would be able to rationalize using them. Meaning we humans will have a monopoly.

Finally, people are smarter. We'll probably always be smarter. Super-intelligent robots may be able to come to a logical conclusion to destroy humanity,



but only human beings can come to that same conclusion while simultaneously delivering the mail or driving a cab. Despite robots' super intelligence, they will not have professional wrestling, high-speed pizza delivery, or football. We will be totally incomprehensible to the robots, and they will know that, no matter how logically and carefully they plan to destroy us, it only takes one lunatic hu-

man to ruin it all. Or those meddling kids and their talking dog. Super-intelligent robots may be the next generation of technology. But there is no reason to believe this advance in technology will lead to the destruction of humanity as we know it.

Chris Huffines is a sophomore speech communications major.

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Aggie sayings promote image of stupidity

As the old saying goes, kids say the darndest things. Well, if that is so, then Aggies say the dumbest things.



JOHN LEMONS
columnist

If there is one thing common to all Aggies, it is their knack for coming up with genuinely stupid phrases and then repeating them endlessly. What is far more embarrassing, though, is we treasure these statements. We say them with reverence. We even print them on T-shirts to be sported in public.

The time has come for Aggies to reevaluate the often silly, frequently illogical and sometimes asinine statements that are the lingo of Texas A&M University.

Of course, any study of the dumb things Aggies say starts with the dumbest Aggie phrase of them all — "Highway 6 runs both ways." It is a phrase so painfully obvious, one might as well point out the sky is blue or Sully looks a lot like Lenin.

Yes, Highway 6 runs both ways, it is a highway. If it did not, it would be most inconvenient to get around town. As an example, let us imagine Highway 6 runs in one direction, say north. If one were traveling on the highway and happened to miss the last exit into College Station, one would have to circumnavigate the entire world just to get back to school. That task alone would make our hypothetical driver late for his 8 a.m. class.

Stupid phrases in Aggieland are not limited to descriptions of the local roads. The Corps of Cadets has their fair share of dumb sayings. The

Corps, for example, sometimes identifies itself as the "heartbeat of Aggieland." Meanwhile, the Aggie Band often claims to be the "pulse of Aggieland."

Apparently, the Corps has discovered some type of circulatory system within A&M. Well, if that is true, why stop at merely being the "heartbeat" or the "pulse" of Aggieland.

I say the Corps is the platelets of the blood of the pulse of the spirit of the heartbeat of Aggieland. Without them, Aggies would cease to bleed maroon, and merely bleed to death. All this talk about A&M's circulatory system does bring up one question, though. Who is the fatty plaque on the arteries of Aggieland? I'm placing my bets on Parking, Traffic and Transportation Services.

Unfortunately, this silliness does not limit itself to the Corps. Many Aggies who build Bonfire are fond of spouting off the phrase "see ya when it burns" to students who do not approve of their Bonfire-building ways. For those of you who have been on the receiving end of this masterpiece, here is its only logical response — "Good luck, you'll be so drunk at the Bonfire that you'll have trouble making out the 55-foot-tall mass of burning wood, much less finding me."

Alas, ridiculous phrases are not the private domain of students. A&M's administration indulges in them, too. Consider, Dr. J. Malon Southerland's "Chat and Chew" program. Every couple of weeks, Southerland, the Vice President for Student Affairs, shows up somewhere on campus with cookies and punch to talk with students.

It is admirable program, but it has one fatal flaw. Surely, somebody has told Southerland it is impolite to talk with one's mouth full. Perhaps the program should have been called "Chat or

Chew." But, "Chat and Chew"? Why, that is just plain gross.

Imagine this hypothetical scene from a "Chat and Chew."

Student: "Hi, Dr. Southerland. I'm Joe Aggie. There's something about A&M that's been worrying me lately."

Southerland: "Nice to meet you Joe, what's the problem?"

Student notices Southerland is chewing on a chocolate chip cookie while chatting.

Student: "Blech. Um, no problem. I've, um, got to go."

What a frightening breach of manners. Emily Post must be rolling in her grave.

Finally, let us consider the 12th Man Foundation, which is a misnomer in itself. After all, if you put a 12th man on the football field, your team will get penalized.

This year, the 12th Man Foundation is running its 12th-Mania campaign to promote Aggie athletics and the Big 12 Conference. The problem is, 12th-Mania is a dumb name.

The only word that I want to see appended to mania, is wrestle. So, unless the 12th Man Foundation plans on running a steel cage death match between Hulk Hogan and R.C. Slocum, 12th-mania will have to go.

Here is a tip for you, Aggies. When you speak, it helps to say things that make sense. The day A&M learns this lesson will be the day that ushers in a new era for this school. In the meantime, we all need to be careful to stop saying stupid things.

As for those of you who are prone to stupid statements, well, Highway 6 runs both ways.

John Lemons is an electrical engineering graduate student.



MAIL CALL

McCorvey's speech

challenges sexual realities

I attended Norma McCorvey's speech about her conversion to Christianity on Friday night. As others were, I was disappointed that she identified this conversion as the reason for her appearance.

When audience members challenged her on her beliefs about abortion, she stated that "debate" is not her reason for being there.

McCorvey attacked Planned Parenthood as "Planned Death," and a young woman asked a legiti-

mate question about her efforts to educate young people about sexual responsibility.

I believe anyone who does not see the value of efforts to prevent young people from having to choose abortion or full-term pregnancy is short-sighted and naive. Indeed, I might consider them a part of the problem, not part of the solution.

McCorvey also reported "no parents come out of Planned Parenthood," and they give you all manners of contraception.

Who's to say those who seek assistance from Planned Parenthood only want to become parents?

In an age when abstinence is often not young people's choice on sex, Planned Parenthood is to be congratulated for at least encouraging responsible sex.

Otherwise, what's the need for a Sexual Responsibility Week at A&M?

I didn't hear any such encouragement from McCorvey. While she stated that she's completely reversed her position on abortion

and implied that she can no longer be held accountable for the deaths of children, McCorvey's case changed history; I'd argue for the better. Making abortion illegal would jeopardize the lives of women who would seek abortions regardless of regulation or credential. As such, the "new and improved" McCorvey and other proliferators have a long, hard road ahead of them, because we pro-choicers won't go down without a fight. To McCorvey, I'd also say "you were right 25 years ago."

Sonia R. King
graduate student

Inspiring debate not the point of 'Roe' visit

Frank Stanford's column on Feb. 23 illustrated a blatant misunderstanding as to why Norma McCorvey did not come to speak on our campus.

Stanford expected an "informative debate" on abortion, but McCorvey did not come here for

that reason. She did not come here to argue with more intelligent, more articulate college students. There is a time and place for such debate and there are plenty of people on this campus willing to argue the Pro-Life view at any level. Those people who tried to engage in debate with McCorvey were out of line.

McCorvey did, however, come here for a very important reason. She came to share the experiences that caused her to change her stance on abortion.

While working in a Planned Parenthood Clinic, she became acquainted with a young woman named Ronda Mackey and her 10-year-old daughter, Emily.

Mackey worked next door to the Planned Parenthood Clinic in the office of a national pro-life organization. As she got to know the Mackeys, she realized that they had something that she did not have.

Through their loving witness, McCorvey became a Christian in 1994. Later, McCorvey found out that

while pregnant with Emily, Mackey had considered aborting her. It was then McCorvey came to the profound realization that unborn children are real people like Emily.

It then became clear to her that all people deserve protection and therefore mothers do not have the right to harm their children during or after pregnancy. Norma McCorvey came here to convey this message as best as she could. Perhaps Stanford would not have been disappointed had he looked past rhetorical shortcomings and listened to the real theme of McCorvey's message.

Timothy Thomason
Class of '98

Chivalry still lives on Texas A&M campus

I just wanted to inform you about an incident that occurred on Friday, Feb. 13. While I was preparing to leave from the parking lot behind Kyle Field, a student informed me that I had a flat tire. Two freshmen Corps members

were passing by, and they offered me their assistance.

They replaced my flat with the spare and would not accept payment. I would like to commend these two individuals (David from Dallas and Jay from Las Vegas) for taking time out of their busy day to help a stranger in need. Their act of kindness has proved to me that chivalry is indeed not dead here at Texas A&M.

Nicosia Herink
graduate student

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@unix.tamu.edu

For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313.