

## Cutting down on pollution and politicians

One of the first government enacted environmental protection efforts was the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, commonly known as the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act has come to the forefront in East Texas, where waterways in the Lufkin area are the center of the controversy. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), timber companies have been polluting the waterways for many years. This belief is contrary to the numbers that the executive vice president of the Texas Forestry Association, Ron Hufford has. According to Hufford, forestry causes no more than 3 percent of the pollution, making EPA involvement unnecessary. Now in East Texas there seems to be politicians and companies who would believe money is better than a clean environment.



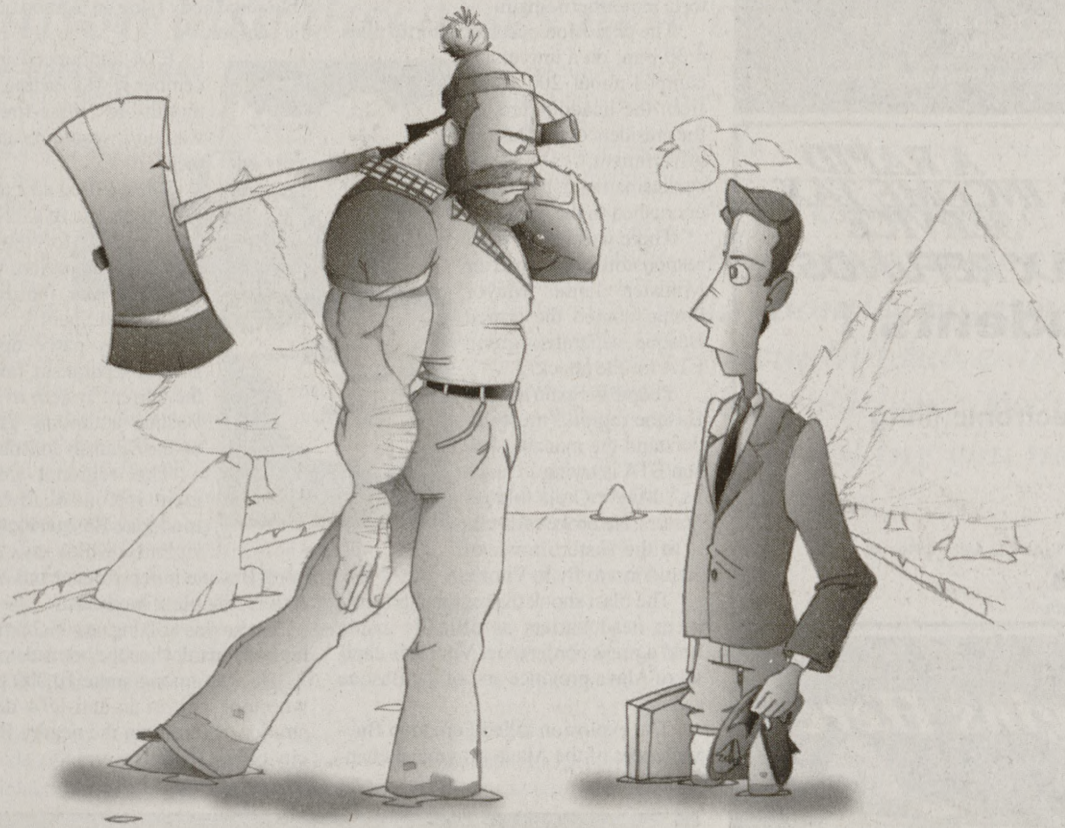
BRIENNE PORTER

**Sandlin, politicians have no place in EPA's business**

Environment so the generations to come have clean water, but with money. Sandlin believes this proposal will seriously damage the East Texas economy.

Timber is the number one agricultural project in the Lufkin area. It employs nearly 91,000 people statewide. Yet, if the water continues to be polluted and unable to be used for irrigation of crops, including trees, there will not be any trees to be cut and sold by the timber companies. This problem will hurt the economy of East Texas more than the EPA's plan will in the future. The shortsighted idea Sandlin is promoting is that cleaning the water is not important for an agriculturally based economy.

The goal of the EPA is to protect and pre-



RICHARD HORNE/THE BATTALION

serve the environment for generations to come. Enforcement of the water protection acts is an obvious step for the EPA. In 1997, Texas rivers were on the endangered rivers list, including the Rio Grande and San Jacinto river. These rivers

have been polluted and over-irrigated for many years. After several years of enforcing pollution laws and irrigation techniques, these rivers are improving. Though not all the rivers are off of that list, the future is promising.

An EPA spokesperson, Richard Hoppers, said he believes there has been a miscommunication among those involved. Many believe this plan is set in concrete, but this is not the case according to Hoppers. For the EPA to implement the program, it has to show that the timber industry significantly pollutes the water and the state environmental agency has not been able to fix the situation. The EPA is just communicating with those involved so that people can try to remedy the problem before they take control of the situation.

The waterway pollution problem is not going to fix itself and measures have to be taken to solve the problem. To declare the EPA's plan unnecessary is a rash judgment by all those involved. By immediately saying this action is not needed is to portray the EPA as a power-hungry agency looking for ways to control areas of interest. The EPA is not looking to control areas beyond their interest but it is the job of the EPA to protect, which includes preventing pollution and the clean up of existing pollution. The EPA is just following through with the job it is required to do.

Citizens like Rep. Max Sandlin are the ones who possess the belief that the environment is expendable if there is a profit to be made. Society should not follow these people's lead and abuse the environment as though it is replaceable. People cannot go out and buy more water sources if all the rivers are polluted. Americans need to take advantage of the EPA's warning and correct the pollution problem before it is too late.

Brienne Porter is a freshman chemical engineering major.

### EDITORIAL

## THE BATTALION

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## Tax cuts for students can lead to increased tuition in race for cash

Recently, the United States Senate came to a conclusion that the rest of America made a very long time ago — college is expensive.

Over two days filled with testimonies and debates from university officials from across the country, the Senate Government Affairs Committee took a look at the rising costs of higher education and decided that increased government funding for students is actually prompting universities to hike up their tuition rates.

In doing so, the Senate has begun to realize the incredible difficulty with the federal government's quest to make higher education affordable for everyone. Hopefully, the government will not shrink in the face of such a daunting task.

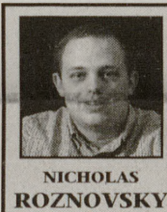
Like any other business or firm competing for dollars, colleges and universities are under the gun to provide better services and opportunities for their students. In order to collect tuition dollars, the universities must provide facilities and classes which make them a preferable choice in the minds of prospective students. To pay for those new facilities and courses, universities often have no choice but to raise tuition rates. Such is the vicious circle which drives tuition rates higher and higher.

The Senate's look at tuition increases revealed an alarming statistic: over the past ten years, average private university tuition rates have increased by 34 percent while public university rates have skyrocketed by 51 percent. In comparison, the median family income has risen just 10 percent. Dollar for dollar, a college education in the 21st century is a much more expensive proposition than it was in the '90s.

An even more alarming statistic was revealed by Stanford business professor William Massy. In a recent interview with CNN, Massy, the former chief financial officer at Stanford, estimated that a child born today could expect to pay to up to \$70,000 per year to attend the institution of their dreams.

These tuition increases have frustrated the federal government, which has just proposed spending \$30 billion over the next ten years to provide tax cuts for college students and those paying for their educations. Instead of actually benefiting students, many on the Senate committee feel these initiatives are just feeding colleges and universities that are hiking tuition rates to snatch up the new money students are receiving. "It is incumbent on us to take a serious look at the effect of this government spending on tuition rates," said Sen. Fred Thompson, chairperson of the Senate Government Affairs Committee.

Many senators are now afraid that states will raise their



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

public tuition caps, figuring that students will be able to afford increased tuition due to the larger federal aid grants and tax breaks they will be receiving. With tuition growth far outpacing aid increases, students will have to scramble for tuition money even more than have to now. Debts stemming from student loans are already a problem for many Americans. Increased tuition rates threaten only to make that problem more severe.

All of these concerns have many senators asking an important question: should the government abandon the fight to make college a reality for millions of Americans?

Absolutely not. As Senator Joseph Lieberman noted, "If college becomes a luxury that an increasing percentage of our population cannot afford, it will expand the economic divide between the higher education haves and have-nots."

In a country already too economically divided, government financial aid represents a real chance for many to level the playing field. Students with the determination and the knowledge to make it into college should not be turned away because they cannot afford the ever-rising costs of a degree. Turning universities and colleges into more of country club than they already are can only hinder society and limit our children.

More importantly, a college education represents one of the last real manifestations of the American Dream. No matter how poor you are at birth or where you come from, American society says that children can make it to college with enough perseverance and dedication to their academic careers.

If the door to higher education and the subsequent opportunities it creates is slammed shut in the faces of those without six figure incomes, then the hope and unique promise that America represents for so many will truly be dead. In a world with so many other problems, American parents need to be able to hope that their children will be able to succeed. They do not need another disadvantage thrust upon them.

For now, nothing has changed. Unable to come up with a solution to the tuition issue, the Senate contented itself with wagging its finger at the nation's universities and admonishing them to cut back on their rate increases. The government will continue to provide financial aid for deserving students. Universities will continue to raise their tuition fees. Parents and students will end up footing most of the increased bills. Such is the vicious circle we have created for ourselves.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.

## TAKING A STEP BACK

**Bonfire reports should be examined objectively**

In the three months since the 1999 Aggie Bonfire collapse, information has slowly become available to the public. The 157 statements made by bonfire workers released on Monday have helped create a clear picture of the activities that took place the morning of Nov. 18. Unfortunately, the image does not speak very highly of several A&M students working on stack.

Since the collapse, supporters of bonfire have defended the tradition very emotionally and have consistently boasted of the positive aspects of bonfire while seemingly ignoring evidence of neglect for the rules to make the event safe.

The tragedy deeply affected the campus community and the emotional reaction was appropriate. It might be too painful to admit the responsibility students hold in the death of 12 Aggies.

However, enough time has passed that Aggies need to collectively step back, take a deep breath and examine the evidence objectively.

Eyewitnesses told investigators of brownpots and redpots drinking beer on stack, obvious unevenness of the stack and no reaction to a few students concerned about excessive swaying.

In light of this evidence, it is undeniable that students need to step up and take some responsibility off the back of the administration. Critics around the nation have been harsh on the administration for allowing students to run bonfire with few strictly enforced regulations. Students were upset that much of the coverage after the bonfire collapse referred to them as reckless teenagers. If A&M students want to prove they are responsible adults, the proper ac-

tion is to admit where rules were ignored and mistakes were made.

No matter what the Bonfire Commission concludes, the fact will remain that rules were broken. According to engineers studying the collapse the stack was over the 55 foot limit, workers were drunk and leaders were being careless about the unevenness of bonfire. Even if the leadership of bonfire is not ultimately to blame, Aggies still should recognize the safety guides that were overlooked. Otherwise, these same mistakes are likely to reoccur.

Bonfire will never be the same. Regardless of the outcome of the decision for the future of bonfire, there will be strong changes. These changes will be meaningless in the future if students do not show courage and admit where they presently failed.



MIKE LUCKAVICH  
ATLANTA CONVENTION 2000

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