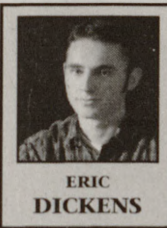


THE GREAT DEBATE

Student government a voiceless group with no real authority in University matters

Student body underrates effectiveness, necessity of student government bodies

Two administrative events this semester have drawn harsh criticism and a hostile reaction from many students at Texas A&M. A proposed increase in the Student Recreation Center usage fee and the closing of Aggie Alley to the general public have both been criticized by students.



ERIC DICKENS

Furthermore, the effectiveness of Student Government Association (SGA) has been brought into question. The SGA, who many feel should serve as a watchdog for the interests of the student body, has been seen as lax and not in touch with the wants of the students they represent. Unfortunately, this argument takes for granted the idea that SGA has any power in these matters at all.

SGA is the home of a variety of beneficial organizations that work to improve life at A&M. Groups like Muster, Replant and CAR-POOL are all shining stars of SGA's executive council. However, these programs do not lend any real credibility to student government at A&M. After all, what do planting saplings and driving some lost or inebriated Aggies have to do with student government?

No, the trouble with SGA lies with the after-school rehearsal antics of Student Senate. This body stands out as a voiceless, powerless charade of a governing body filled with useless activities and dead-end bickering.

Student Senators regularly work long hours, not because they are hard at work for the student body, but because they have wasted their time with endless, asinine debates. While the students are getting good practice at window and plucked out of the window in her child restraint was not hysterical at all. She was in control of herself," Ruth Stafford, who was rescued after when ambulance arrived.

Texas A&M's Student Senate is an annoying little dog, yipping at the pant leg of real authority. There is a hierarchy of authority and sway at this University, and Student Senate is in the basement. For evidence of Student Senate's lack of say-so in the academic affairs of Texas A&M, one can look at the two previously mentioned events.

The proposed increase in the Rec Center usage fee amounts to \$7.36 for each student per semester. Even small-time fee increases like this one need student input, but that input does not need to come from the Student Senate. The issue is still in front of the senate who are voting on whether it should be on the spring semester election ballots as a referendum.

Basically, the Student Senate who are supposed to represent the student body are debating whether students should even get the chance to decide for themselves on the fee increase.

This is bureaucracy at its worst. Following a true democracy tactic of bringing the issues to the people, the University should cut out the meddling middle man and just propose the increase to the student body.

An even more obvious example of the non-existent authority Student Senate has at A&M is found with the closing of Aggie Alley. The decision was proposed, debated, and carried out by the Athletic Department. By not even opening itself to student input, the Athletic Department and its director Wally Groff have demonstrated the value they have for student senate's voice.

The decision angered several student senators who proposed a resolution — which is little more than an empty commentary typed on official stationery — condemning the Athletic Department for not consulting students before they made their decision.

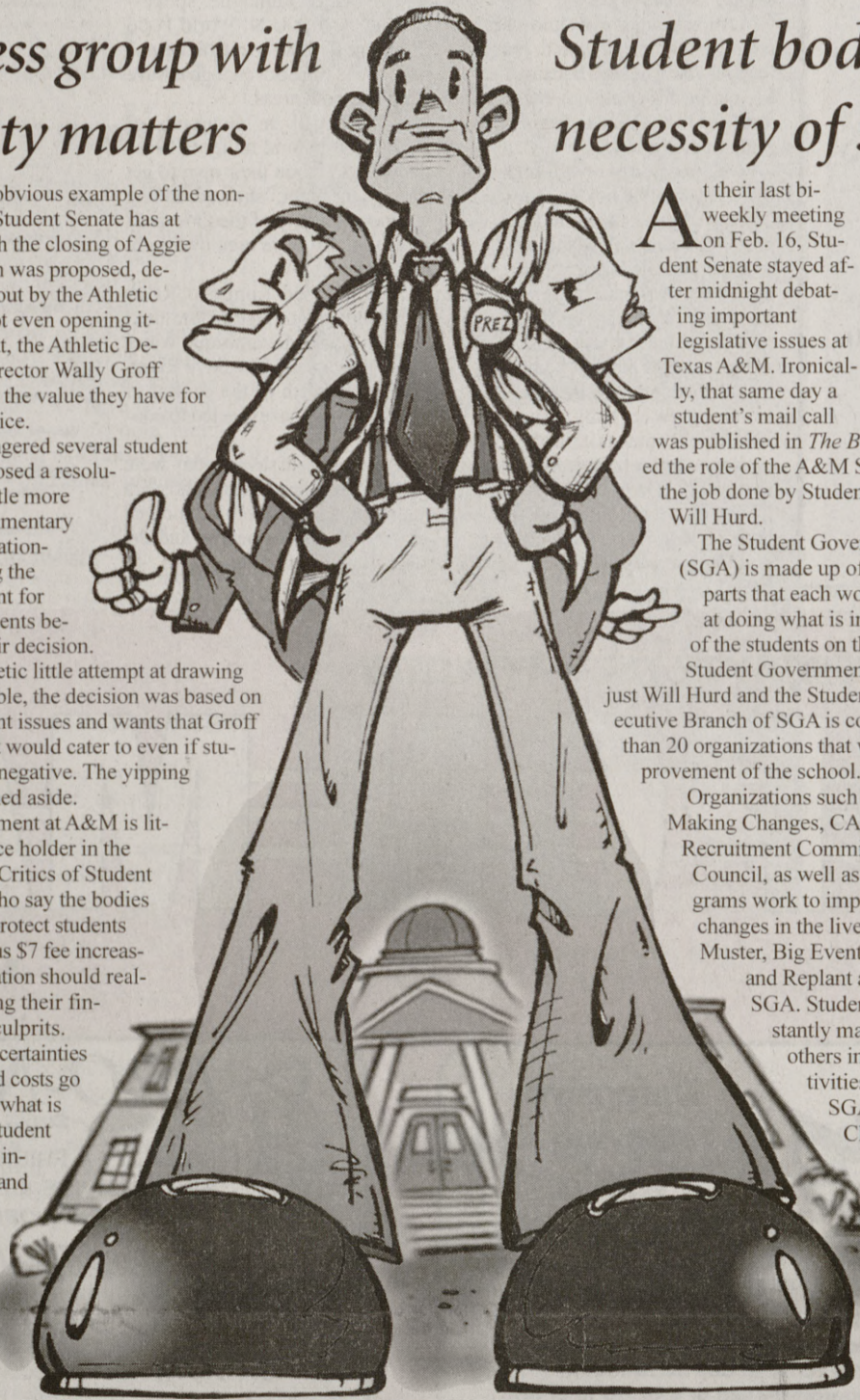
While this pathetic little attempt at drawing respect is quasi-noble, the decision was based on Athletic Department issues and wants that Groff and the department would cater to even if student response was negative. The yipping dog has been brushed aside.

Student government at A&M is little more than a place holder in the chain of authority. Critics of Student Senate and SGA who say the bodies do not effectively protect students from the treacherous \$7 fee increases of the administration should realize they are pointing their fingers at the wrong culprits.

There are a few certainties at A&M — fees and costs go up, departments do what is best for them and Student Senate overrates its influence as a mover and shaker in the world of academia.

Power and authority at A&M are held by people like University President Dr. Ray M. Bowen and Associate Provost Ron Douglas, not some freshman poultry science major who stays up past midnight debating minor details of resolution to tell the Athletic Department it is not happy.

Student Senate is one dog with no real bark and very little bite.



At their last bi-weekly meeting on Feb. 16, Student Senate stayed after midnight debating important legislative issues at Texas A&M. Ironically, that same day a student's mail call was published in *The Battalion* that doubted the role of the A&M Student Senate and the job done by Student Body President Will Hurd.

The Student Government Association (SGA) is made up of many different parts that each work extremely hard at doing what is in the best interests of the students on this campus.

Student Government is not made up of just Will Hurd and the Student Senate. The Executive Branch of SGA is composed of more than 20 organizations that work toward the improvement of the school.

Organizations such as Texas Aggies Making Changes, CAR-POOL, the Aggie Recruitment Committee, Traditions Council, as well as Freshman Programs work to implement positive changes in the lives of Aggies.

Muster, Big Event, Parents' Weekend and Replant are all part of the SGA. Student Government constantly makes efforts to get others involved in their activities. Events such as SGA Highway Cleanups, Big Event and Replant are focused on getting Aggies together to work on the improvement of Texas A&M. How can anyone truly believe that Student Government is not an essential element of this campus?

Recently there have been plans for an outreach program to promote the services and role of Student Government on campus. Plans include a kickoff at Rudder Fountain to get people involved with the outreach and understand the potentials for all students to get involved in this school.

When students who are not a part of SGA hear about issues such as fee increases, they usually dis-



MELISSA BEDSOLE

prove of the job being done by these organizations. There are complaints made by people who are uninformed of the issues and merely read the headlines of topics that have been worked on and discussed for months.

These people only hear what it is going to cost them right here, right now and ignore the reasoning for the action.

The latest complaint over the Student Recreation Center Fee Increase is completely an uninformed opinion. If there is no fee increase for the Rec, there will not be a Rec Center for very much longer. Maybe it was budgeting; maybe the Rec is much more popular than first anticipated — either way it needs more money to continue.

Students are not necessarily expected to understand the legalities and importance of a fee increase right now — that is why there are elected student representatives.

It is the job of these representatives to make these kinds of decisions based on their informed opinions, and anyone that truly feels their opinion is informed and not represented on this campus has the right to run for elections.

Many students claim that the decisions made through student government are not always representative of the opinions of the student body. But, the student body does not always take the time to voice their opinion to anyone other than the person sitting next to them as they read the newspaper.

These students need to contact their senator or simply walk into the Student Government office, where there is always someone ready to answer questions or hear an outside opinion.

Constituency Days, times designated for Student Senators to meet with the people they represent, occur once a month. These events may be taken lightly by those passing by, but the results are analyzed and evaluated by each individual senator. Thinking that one opinion does not matter on this campus will never result in anything.

A student on the Academic Operations Committee (AOC) made the suggestion to move the application and notification deadlines for new freshmen to earlier dates, and this change was made. This difference puts the A&M deadlines closer to those of other schools in the Big 12, making this school competitive among its peers. All it took was one student's suggestion.

Whether or not everyone always agrees with or approves of the decisions made by Student Government representatives, no one can deny that they work very hard at the jobs they do. They are not the students who sit in classes complaining about the different changes on this campus. They are the students who work and to change things to make a difference on this campus.

Melissa Bedsole is a sophomore general studies major.

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Houston Rodeo has no right to ban displaying of Confederate flag

As of today, flying the stars and bars of the Confederate flag over the state capital of South Carolina is perfectly legal. Meanwhile, displaying the same symbol at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is out. Go figure.

Beginning at this year's show, participants are forbidden from displaying the flag because it has been deemed a divisive, politicized symbol" by show officials. In previous years, the Confederate flag had always been a common sight at the show's concerts and in the barbecue cook-off areas.

Granted, show organizers are making a sincere effort to shield minority event-goers from being offended. Other than having negligible historical significance, the Confederate flag has no place in today's society. It is the enduring symbol of backward ideals and inbred ignorance.

Numerous stereotypes may come to mind at one mere glance of the flag —

images of toothless white trash singing Dixie, burning crosses, slavery — the list goes on and on.

Naturally, the prospect of turning off many of the show's minority attendees is immense — to display the flag in the presence of African-American

event-goers would be no different than displaying the Nazi flag in the presence of Jewish event-goers.

Having said all that, however, it is perfectly obvious that the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is sticking its nose where it does not belong. As

politically incorrect and insensitive as it would be, event participants should have the right to display the Confederate flag in the open. If they want to make fools of themselves in displaying their "southern pride," then let them. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo should do away with their act of censorship immediately.

As reported by the *Dallas Morning News*, the ban was instigated by an onslaught of phone calls complaining about the open display of the flag by show contestants and vendors. Leroy Shafer, assistant general manager of the show, said the organization decided a month ago to start enforcing their rule concerning expression of political and religious views — a rule that has been ignored in previous years. As of last week, barbecue cooking teams were asked to take down any Confederate flags outside their tents. Rodeo officials pointed out 67 Confederate flags among the 256 teams.

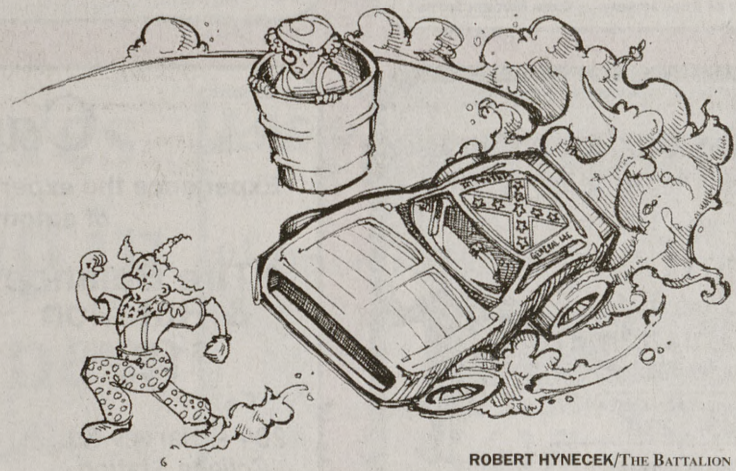
The show's motivation for the ban should also be called into question. Obviously, the decision to ban the flag is extremely opportunistic — the NAACP's fight to have the states of South Carolina and Mississippi remove the stars and bars from their flags has been all over the headlines for the past year. An NAACP-led boycott against South Carolina tourism is still in place and drawing heated arguments from both sides of the debate. It is very possible that show organizers are playing off of this attention in order to make the show seem more "minority friendly." While this is a somewhat commendable gesture on the show's part, there are many other courses of action that could be taken — options that do not go as far as suppressing the free expression of show participants.

"If it causes uneasiness or offense, we don't want it in our show," Shafer said. "We pride ourselves as being a celebration of heritage, culture and ethnicities."

No offense, but Shafer's line of reasoning is seriously flawed. A livestock show and rodeo is hardly a place that is brimming with heritage, culture and ethnicities in the first place. Is it commonplace for a livestock show or rodeo to hold something along the lines of an ethnic fair or a race unity rally? Yeah right. NASCAR has more diversity. The bottom line is that in eliminating a small nuisance, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's organizers may have opened a bigger can of worms.

It should not be their place to limit the speech of event participants. Granted, only a total buffoon would take unabashed pride in displaying a flag that symbolizes the suffering and oppression of an entire race of people. However, it is their prerogative to do so and no one should have the authority to tell them not to. If they want to look stupid, let them.

David Lee is a junior economics and journalism major.



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

Online note services go against teachers' wishes

response to Julia Recindus' Feb. 23 article.

While I realize there is disagreement on the pros and cons of notes companies that pay money for class notes without the permission of the instructor, it is in any case less than useful to not be accurate about the intentions and practices of these businesses. Thus, the note-taker mentioned in your article who stated that the majority of professors would like the notes simply not telling the truth, but engaging in deceptive advertising.

In actuality teachers from across the country have overwhelmingly spoken out against unapproved notes posted against their wishes. Among the criticisms are most strongly the inclusion of commercial notes companies into

the dignity and respect that characterizes the relationships between teachers and their students.

Unapproved notes do not just damage professors' rights to teach, they also severely hurt students' rights to learn and the accountability and responsibility they may and should expect from their qualified instructors.

Notes companies, after all, are run by people totally unqualified in matters of education and have no academic expertise in the subjects they deal with.

Furthermore, while the private companies posting notes to derive profit through Website advertising say that the notes are a student's interpretation, the notes are never that. To be useful for other students, the notes are meant to be reflections of what a professor said in class. Why else would anyone look at them at all?

At the same time, the notes rarely are accurate, as research has revealed that many

of the notes contain numerous mistakes. Or is it perhaps the students' "interpretation" to get money for posting bad notes?

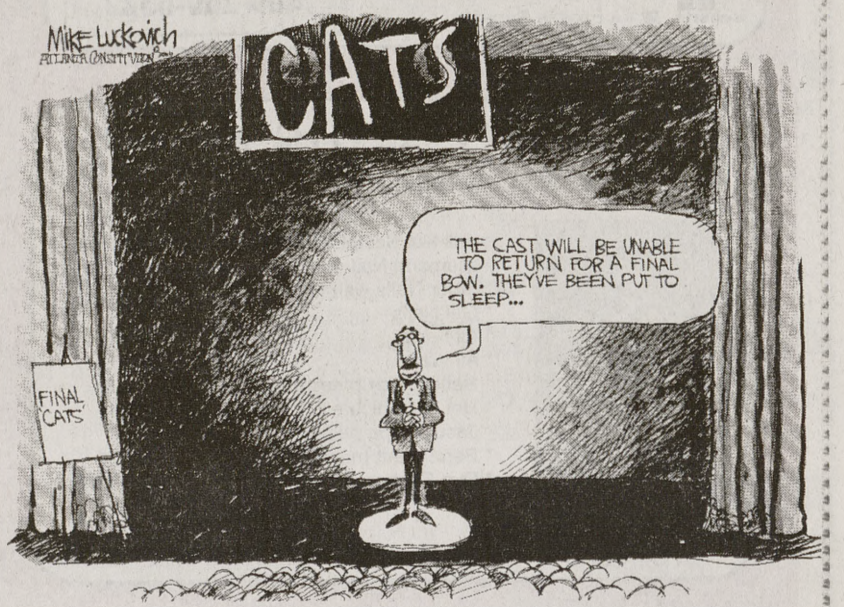
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