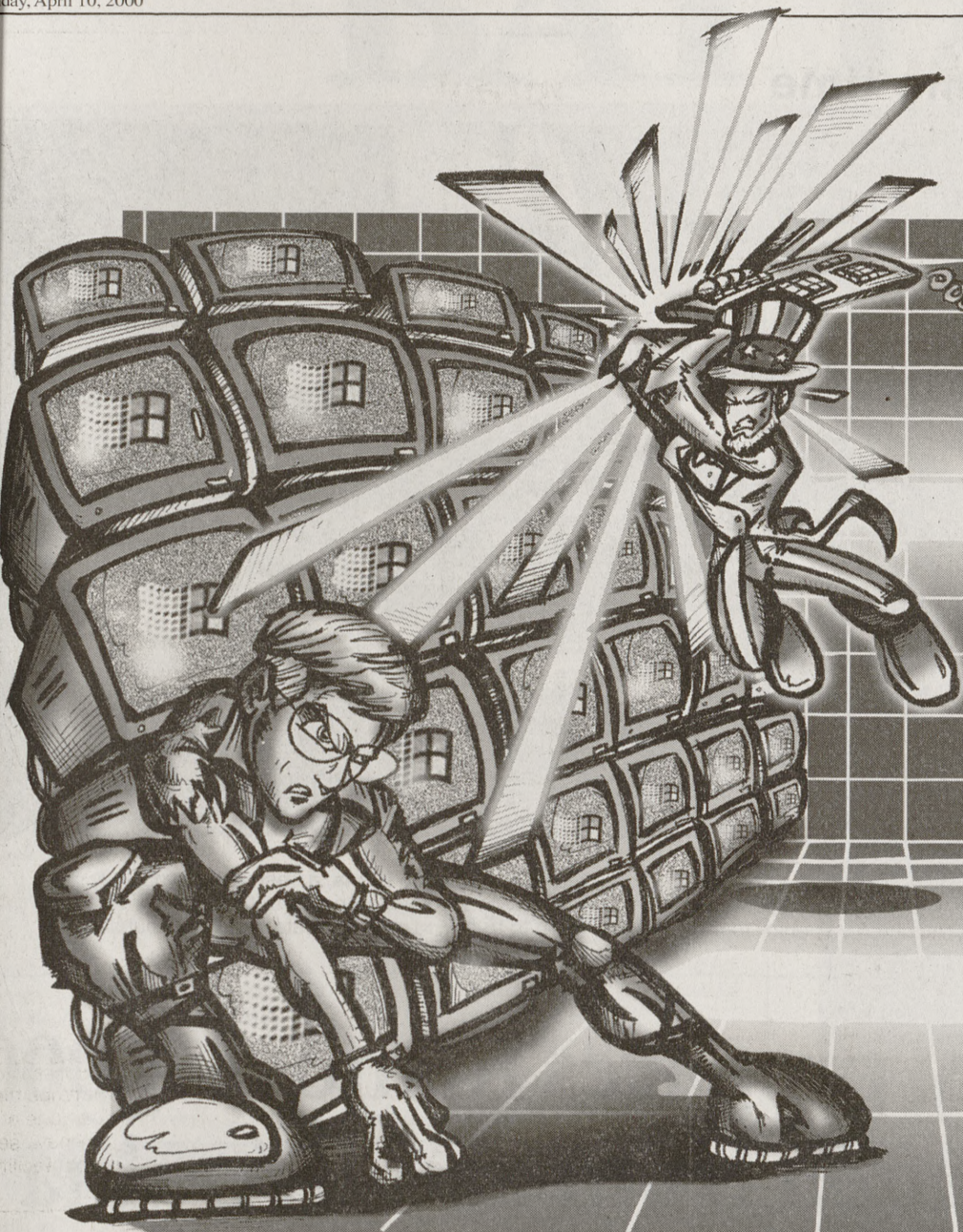


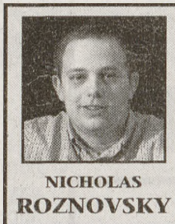
Baby Bills

Even if split, Microsoft will continue to dominate.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

Last week, U.S. District Judge Thomas Jackson found that Microsoft, everyone's favorite corporation to hate, was guilty of abusing its position in the personal computing business and using unfair tactics to maintain its advantage in the field.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

Jackson's 43 page ruling follows another issued by him last year that said Microsoft had applied undue pressure on its competitors in an attempt to stifle their product development.

Although they will probably appeal the judge's findings, Microsoft has basically been found guilty of violating the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. The same legislation which broke up John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil and created the Baby Bells now threatens to do the same to the techno-empire of Bill Gates. Whether or not Microsoft is divided into smaller companies, it is certain the company will face some sort of sanctions for its behavior.

But what does that mean for the average American? Absolutely nothing.

If history is a guide as to what will happen in the Microsoft affair, not much will change for the common computer user. Splitting Microsoft into several companies will just allow it to continue its market dominance under the guise of legality and fairness in two separate entities — one continuing to develop and market operating systems while the other would be limited to the realm of software applications.

The prospect of the split has failed to earn any rounds of applause from Microsoft's competitors. Is there any real chance that a Microsoft offspring devoted entirely to application development would not cater to the Windows operating system? Microsoft's successful competitors do. Even the competitors admit that due to the market dominance of Windows, creating applications to run on those platforms is the only way to stay in business.

So in the end, the current Microsoft strategy of creating programs to run on its operating system will remain intact, even if the software has to come from an office in Boise, Idaho instead of Seattle. The only real difference the average computer user might notice is a hit in the pocketbook — unable to bundle the programs with the operating system like it does now,

Microsoft would have to charge for them separately.

And do not forget that many of the companies that Microsoft has been accused of victimizing have only risen to prominence due to their associations with Microsoft. Having made it to the big time, they now also want to be able to make or break the emerging technology companies of the world. In doing so, they seem to have forgotten their own desperate scrambles to make partnerships and alliances with Microsoft just a few years ago.

Although attempting to protect the consumers of the United States, the federal government has a bad habit of making things worse for the average taxpayer. The break up of AT&T and the subsequent creation of the "Baby Bells" created a system of miniature local telephone service monopolies throughout the United States. Only recently have a number of state governments stepped in to encourage competition in these areas, including Texas.

In attempt to head off possible monopolization, the airline industry was regulated by the federal government for a number of years to encourage the entry of new competitors and the general equity of the marketplace. Once again, consumers paid for it in extremely high air fares.

When the government deregulated the industry in the late '70s, ticket fares dropped dramatically overnight. Although air travel became much more accessible for the average citizen, competition was stifled as smaller airlines found it impossible to make into the larger markets which the larger, more established airlines controlled. In recent years, the major airlines have formed an informal price cartel, matching each other's fares in an attempt to maintain an even playing field amongst themselves. In all of this, consumers have had no actual choice in the matter.

Apparently, the federal government has no better idea how to regulate the dynamos of industry than the next guy.

Yes, the evil empire of Microsoft might be split into several smaller kingdoms, but, in the end, each will remain the master of its particular domain. As long as Microsoft, or its successors, is able to create products which address the needs of the average consumer that are of equal or greater quality than its opponents' products, its dominance will continue. The average consumer will not care. Nor will the average competitor, as long as they can continue to ride Microsoft's coattails to huge profits.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.

College experience empty at Online U.

Let's take a peek into the future. Imagine a school where the dress code is last night's pajamas, where one would not face traffic or trains trying to get to class and where there is no way to be tardy — students would have class when they please. Just how far into the future (or dreamland) does this school exist? Maybe not as far as most think. Software billionaire Michael Saylor has been sailing the seas off the coast of St. Bart's recently, daydreaming ideas for an online college to be constructed in the very near future. Although there have been ideas for an online college in the past — Saylor's plans are big and the money he has agreed to put up for the project is the biggest yet.



MELISSA BEDSOLE

Michael Saylor has pledged \$100 million to create a nonprofit "Online Ivy League quality University." The idea is that this institution would be free to offer this opportunity to people of all economic statuses. Although this seems like a fair attempt to eliminate the economic barriers that divide our country, this "pretend" college will only create an even bigger injustice than ever before. There is no way that the quality of academics can be the same online as it is in a classroom, and, even if it were, to compare online courses to the college experience is ludicrous.

Saylor's biggest idea is to develop an "all-star" experienced group of individuals to serve as the instructors for these classes. Bill Clinton and Henry Kissinger have been cited as professors in these plans. Just think, there could be an entire class on "Lying to the American People," "Adultery" or "How to Survive an Impeachment!" The problem with this idea is not that anyone doubts the knowledge of President Clinton, but that the experience of being President of the United States should not make him more qualified than a professor trained specifically for this duty. The idea that his authority overrules the training required for such teaching positions is offensive to many current college professors.

David Noble, a history professor at Toronto's York University and a big critic of distance learning said that "Saylor's naivete is breathtaking." Carole Fungaroli, an English professor at Georgetown University describes this idea as "the quintessence of counterfeit education."

The only argument worthy for supporting this "all-star" faculty idea is the importance of the lessons learned by experience. And this is precisely the argument against this online college. If four years of courses were all that college was about — then by all means let students do it in their pajamas. But this is not the purpose behind the college experience.

Obviously, here at Texas A&M there is a great deal of focus on becoming an Aggie and developing the camaraderie that makes Aggieland famous. But even on campuses where Aggie Spirit does not fill the air, the relationships and activities in a college student's daily life is the base of life's greatest lessons.

If all students had to do was go to class for 12 or 16 hours a week, life would be a lot easier. But it would be completely unhealthy and detrimental to their lives. Students need to interact with others, get involved in their schools, work together in group projects and learn how to deal with professors on a mature level.

Has anyone ever heard of people skills and social skills? They are not usually learned by reading books. Everyone knows how much easier it is to write your best friend a letter telling them everything you do not have the courage to say, but where does that put you when you have to see them face to face? And that is just for a friend.

Does anyone actually think that students can interact with professors by using chatrooms and emails for four years and gain the qualifications necessary to enable them to walk into an interview and successfully get a job? No way! All-star faculty or not these students are not going to be well-rounded in any way.

Saylor was inspired by his own experiences of receiving a full scholarship to college and "wants to make a comparable opportunity available to all." Although this billionaire reaching out to "the little folks" is a nice fairy tale story, it does not really seem that this is a good solution to solve the monetary injustices that plague the world outside of his mansion. Technology can take us a long way but this idea might be better left on the drawing board for a while. Carole Fungaroli sums it up the best: "It's the same as sex on the Internet. You can get it online, but it's not as good as in person."

Melissa Bedsole is a sophomore general studies major.

Program aimed at non-existent problem

Big Brother is wearing pink. In North Carolina, and coming soon to a school near you, the Pinkerton Security Agency has begun a for-profit program called W.A.V.E. (Working Against Violence Everywhere). W.A.V.E. proposes a program to train junior high and high school students to recognize the signs of violence in the schools and allow them to call a toll-free hot line to report incidences of possible violence. These reports will then be forwarded to the schools. Hopefully, this setting of student against student will prevent another Columbine incident. Unfortunately, this program is not only based on pseudo-science and political correctness gone awry, it is unconstitutional and too easy to abuse.



CHRIS HUFFINES

First, this program's premise is only one study short of nonexistent, and even then, W.A.V.E. takes the findings of the study significantly out of context. The study is by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice, and strongly notes that stereotyping behavior is detrimental to violence prevention. While the study is certainly complete, there are several reservations expressed in the study that W.A.V.E. completely ignores. W.A.V.E., however, ignores this. In addition to some rather stereotypical language, such as "feeling disrespected" as a warning sign for violence, W.A.V.E. stereotypes the violent teen. Those with potential for violence apparently enjoy hurting animals, announce plans for hurting others, are members of gangs, or increase drug or alcohol use. Of course, all of these are completely out of context. For example, one of the warning signs of others is failing to acknowledge the feelings

or rights of others. Tragically for the teen who cracks a racially insensitive joke in a moment of bad judgment, he or she has now been labeled as violent and can be turned in, according to W.A.V.E. guidelines.

Even worse, W.A.V.E.'s entire premise for existing, that there is an epidemic of violence in the schools today, is flawed. According to the FBI reports, violence by teens, especially Columbine-style violence, is actually decreasing. The problem is minimizing. Just because a few incidents of violence happened and then spawned hysteria across the country, there is no proof of a wave of violence descending on the schools. W.A.V.E. is not necessary.

In addition to weak justification, W.A.V.E. is blatantly unconstitutional. In operating as it does, being taught and operating in conjunction with the schools, this program violates not only freedom of speech and association, but it also violates privacy rights.

First, in allowing students to turn in other students for their words and their friends, the government entity here (the school) is allowing others to be punished for saying things and for meeting with a group of people. This same level of oppression was used against the likes of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and the United States' Founding Fathers. It is a wonder that Gandhi especially did not open fire in his high school. In addition, W.A.V.E. violates the right to privacy, by allowing others to peer into the lives of fellow students, with government approval. That, in and of itself, perhaps violates the fourth amendment also.

In addition to constitutional violations, the system set up by W.A.V.E. lends itself to abuse. The phone system is a 1-800 number that routes callers to a worker who takes down information and then anonymously

transfers to report to the appropriate school. The progress of abuse will probably be as follows.

First, only the "different" kids will be reported. Then they will be reported to excess, no doubt because of the stereotypes and lack of context. Then, the popular kids will be

to not only the law, but the common sense of the American people.

W.A.V.E. is based on faulty premises, and will pass even faultier premises on to the students it is supposedly training.

Even then, the execution of the program is unconstitutional and will



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

gin to be turned in, anonymously, of course, as revenge for offenses either real or imagined. Eventually, everyone will begin turning in everyone else, and the system will break down. The anonymity of the system, supposedly a benefit, is actually the biggest liability.

This system is an atrocious affront

be abused into ineffectiveness. America is reducing the violence on its own. This country does not need Pinkertons and does not need to set students spying on their classmates to eliminate violence in their schools.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communications major.

MAIL CALL

Ends not able to justify means in FDA tobacco regulation issue

In response to David Lee's April 6 column.

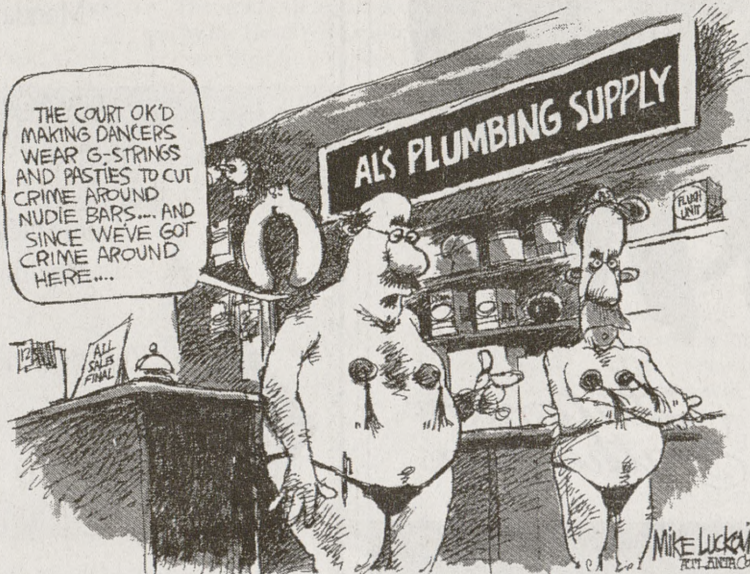
A disturbing comment was made in Lee's column — "the Supreme Court should have concentrated on the 'ends' ... rather than the 'means.'"

In solving various situations, the questionably beneficial "ends" have never been able to justify any "means" of a doubtful nature.

The court was justified in waiting for an explicit statement of the FDA's role, just like the pro-choicers are justified in calling for a more specific bill banning partial birth abortions.

Besides, caffeine and alcohol also alter the structure of the body, so are we to expect the FDA to save us from ourselves with regards to those substances as well?

*Kristin Luthringer
Class of '01*



MIKE LUCKAICH
FOT. JERRY CHRISTENSEN/2002