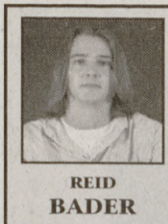


Failure of policy

American Legion, United Nations support lifting of Cuban embargo

The 82nd annual American Legion Convention passed a resolution on Sept. 7 to encourage the United States to lift the 38-year-old embargo against Cuba.



REID BADER

The American Legion should be praised for taking such a stand against the policy.

The embargo is a source of suffering for the Cuban people and has prevented the transition to a democratic government.

Ironically, the embargo was intended to have the opposite effect in both of these instances.

Numerous international organizations to which the United States belongs also encourage lifting the embargo.

The United States first imposed an embargo on Cuba in February 1962, in response to Fidel Castro's confiscation of privately owned properties and other assets.

The original goals of the embargo were to compel Castro to open Cuba's economy, to establish democracy and to force Castro to relinquish power.

After almost 40 years, the embargo has been witness to many periods of tension between the United States and Cuba, such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Cuban missile crisis and the Elian Gonzales saga.

The United States should lift the embargo immediately. The embargo is not accomplishing its goal of a "peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government and respect for human rights," according to the U.S. State Department.

Evidence from a report by Dr. Richard Garfield and Sarah Santana

in the American Journal of Public Health reports that, while the embargo is meant to promote democracy, it is instead decreasing respect for human rights.

The report goes on to say, "The embargo is shown to make the supply of essential goods more costly, more difficult, and more time-consuming to procure and maintain."

By making important goods, such as medicine, more expensive and hard to find, the U.S. is making Cuban citizens turn to Castro for help.

As the American Legion's national commander, Al Lance, said, "If we're going to forgive Vietnam and trade with them and we're going to forgive China and start trading with them, why shouldn't we do the same with the people of Cuba?"

Therefore, the U.S. policy can be viewed as one of Castro's best propaganda tools.

The American Legion is not the only organization that supports the elimination of the embargo. Other world organizations, including the United Nations, encourage an end to the policy.

By a vote of 155-2-8 in 1999, the United Nations decided that the United States policy against Cuba violated international law because

"the extraterritorial effects of which influence the sovereignty or freedom of trade and navigation of other states."

This is the 10th year in a row that the United Nations has urged the United States to lift the embargo.

The American response was that the embargo's purpose is to "promote peaceful change in Cuba," in the form of democracy.

However, no examples of "peaceful change" in the country were cited over the 38-year period.

Pope John Paul II also encourages the United States to lift the embargo.

During his visit to Cuba in 1998, the pope said, "Economic embargoes ... are always deplorable because they hurt the most needy."

Most importantly, the embargo is a double standard in policy. The countries of China and Vietnam have strong communist regimes in power, yet China has been given Most Favored Nation trading status by the United States.

As the American Legion's national commander, Al Lance, said, "If we're going to forgive Vietnam and trade with them and we're going to forgive China and start trading with them, why shouldn't we do the same with the people of Cuba?"

If the federal government follows this advice and lifts the embargo, much will be accomplished.

There will be the opportunity for American businesses and individuals to invest in and expand the faltering Cuban economy. Ultimately, the global community will have one less reason to view the United States as an international bully forcing policy on some, but not on others.

Reid Bader is a junior political science major.



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

No pay, no way

Striking teachers nationwide illustrate poor wages in secondary education

For many students, the first few weeks of school are meant for them to settle in and get to know their teachers.

However, in Buffalo, N.Y., the first weeks have been a mix between canceled classes and picketing teachers.

Educators walked out after negotiations between the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) and the Buffalo Independent School District (BISD) stalled.

The disagreement over teachers' pay and health insurance concessions emphasizes a growing problem in many towns and cities throughout the United States — instructors are not paid enough for the work they do.

While many, including first lady Hillary Clinton, argue that the teachers need to be in the classroom instead of on strike, these teachers have been working without a contract since June 1999.

The critics fail to realize that the blame does not fall solely on the teachers.

Teaching is an important and influential job. Many people do not realize how poorly many educators are paid.

According to J.S. News and World Report, "The average starting teacher earns \$25,012 a year, and, even after 20 years, a classroom teacher rarely makes over \$50,000."

When compared to other jobs that also require a four-year degree, teaching has one of the lowest starting salaries.

Meanwhile, a degree in computer science will earn a person, on average, \$36,964.

U.S. News goes on to say, "The Education

Department estimates that America will need 220,000 new teachers a year for the next 10 years — compared with 150,000 a year in the recent past."

This shows that America needs teachers and needs to pay enough to keep them.

According to Newsweek, 20 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years.

Many teachers see now will not be there within the next few years.

Students are ultimately left with a stream of new and inexperienced teachers.

From new friends to more responsibilities,

the world changes daily for children. They should be able to depend on their teachers.

By giving teachers increased salaries and benefits, schools can ensure one stability in these students' lives. While people contend that teachers should not strike because it hurts the students, striking should not be the only option teachers have.

Federal and local authorities need to work to raise the budget for teachers salaries.

Many politicians, including presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush, have been pushing the idea of better education.

The Buffalo teachers' strike is the beginning of a problem that will continue to grow.

Already, educators throughout the country are becoming disillusioned and leaving the profession in search of salaries that can support families.

Teachers in Philadelphia are also working without contracts and threatening to go on strike if agreements are not worked out.

These teachers are trying to continue working, but still fighting for what many see as reasonable raises and compensations.

If the local school districts could work with the idea that they should do what is best for the students, schools would become better environments.

By relieving the stress of money troubles, these school districts will have more productive teachers.

The best way to keep teachers and entice more to the profession is to offer competitive salaries.



BRIENNE PORTER



Brienne Porter is a sophomore chemical engineering major.

Mail Call

Displeasure with proposed condom dispensers

In response to Stephen Metcalf's Sept. 15 article.

Margaret Griffith, chairwoman of the Texas A&M HIV/AIDS Committee, states "health vending machines" in residence halls that distribute "condoms ... and other common medicinal items" are to combat the problem of sexually transmitted diseases.

Since when have condoms cured diseases or relieved pain? Such are the attributes of "medicinal items."

I find the suggestion of condom dispensers in residence halls disgraceful. It falls below the Aggie standard.

Are we — as leaders of the new millennium — going to place latex penis covers in University vending machines to fit the convenience of sexually immoral students?

I chose Aggieland as my place of higher education because it is different. Many of its students are persuaded to reject the liberal, short-sighted and amoral norms of American society.

The suggestion from Griffith fails to demand a solution to the real, underlying problem of premarital sex.

This will only help feed the moral dissolution of our student body.

Carson Weber
Class of '01
Accompanied by 18 signatures

Justification for Olympic financing

In response to Nicholas Roznovsky's Sept. 18 column.

Roznovsky missed the point of corporate sponsorship of the Olympic Games.

He did not mention that the money the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) receives from companies such as NBC and Coca-Cola is the very money that funds the USOC.

While every other national olympic committee in the world receives at least partial funding from their national governments, the USOC remains a private entity.

Not one dollar of tax money goes to support the USOC or the athletes that compete under it. Without such corporate sponsorship, the USOC would cease to exist.

The USOC is proud to be able to say that "America does not send its athletes to the Olympic Games, Americans do."

Unless people are willing to contribute some of their own money to the cause, I suggest they be less critical of the fundraising strategies.

Christopher Shull
Class of '02

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

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