

## Students vote - who listens?

### Student Senate opinions on campus issues overlooked



MELISSA BEDSOLE

it is the students' duty to pay fees now so the school and its facilities will remain in good condition. The problem is that, when administrators are working on changes for this school, the students support these recommendations. But when students recommend change, no action is taken, and students' opinions are overlooked.

The members of the Student Senate are elected to make decisions on issues for this campus on behalf of the student body. It would be impossible for the entire student body to vote on every issue that goes before the Senate, and, truthfully, most students would not want to vote each time. Whether its decisions are supported, the Senate works hard to be informed when making decisions for the student body.

These decisions are the only representations of student opinions on issues facing the campus. However, in the past few years, the opinion of the students has been deliberately disregarded in certain instances.

Many students know that last year the Senate approved Parking Area Changes Bill that changed the Fish Lot, a red lot, to blue commuter lots and the blue lots of main campus to red for on-campus resi-

dents. Many students do not realize that this bill came before the Senate in 1998 and was so disputed that it never received a second reading on the Senate floor.

Then, when the bill came before the Student Senate again last year, the votes were tied. It passed only by one vote, which required the speaker of the Senate to vote on the issue. Not only did the bill pass by just one vote, but the wording of the second bill states "that these changes be employed on a temporary basis," because of construction on Wellborn Road, Raymond Stover Parkway and George Bush Drive. The construction was supposed to occur during the current school year and is now tentatively scheduled for Fall 2001.

This change happened unnecessarily a year in advance, and suddenly this situation does not seem so "temporary" at all. While this is not a blatant disregard for the students' decision, it is a neglect to truthfully inform students of the situation at hand.

There was, however, blatant disregard with the issue of the West Campus Parking Garage Bill. The Student Senate passed a bill recommending that "the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents vote against the pro-

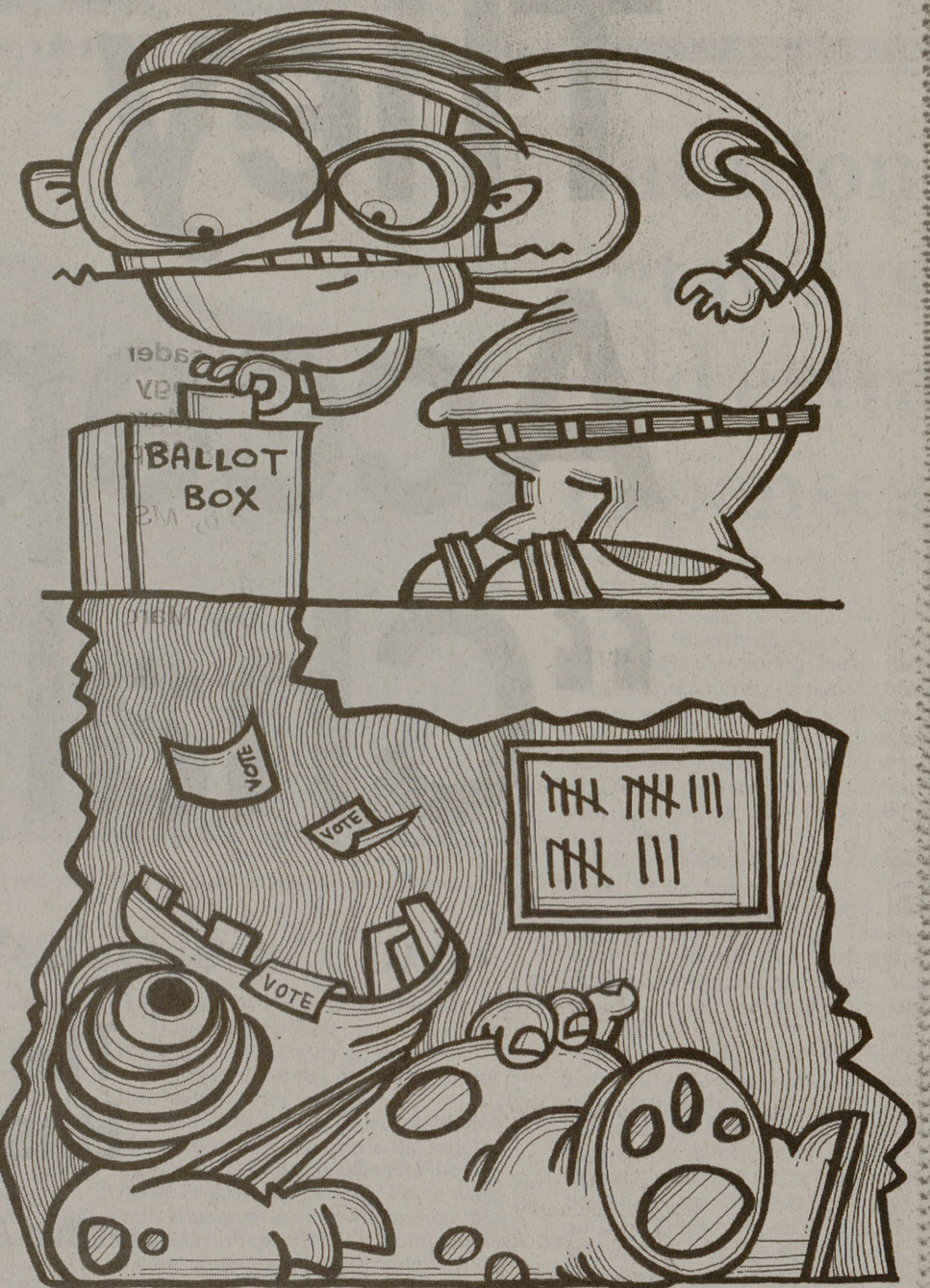
posed West Campus parking garage" as well as "reduce the amount of proposed parking permit fee increases."

The Student Senate voted against the garage in Spring 1999, and fees increased for the parking permits the next fall. It has been almost two years, and there is still no garage on West Campus.

Students have repeatedly voiced opinions favoring a change in the current Q-drop policy, but because no agreement can be made with the faculty, their opinions are overlooked, and the issue has also almost died with no change at all.

The Transportation Fee and the Rec Center Fee passed because informed students realize it is their responsibility to keep this school in good condition — and these are the students who take the time to vote. These students trust the opinions of the administrators on important issues, and therefore take a responsible part in the decision process. It is time that the administrators on this campus take some responsibility of their own and realize that they must trust the opinions of the students.

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CHAD MALLAM / THE BATTALION

## America's favorite president

### Recent poll places former President Reagan ahead of the founding father of America



MARK PASSWATERS

On Feb. 22, the nation celebrated Presidents' Day. This date is, and used to be, officially recognized as George Washington's birthday. Sometime in the last century, however, the government that Washington helped create decided that he was no longer worth giving much credit.

In a poll released last week, Ronald Reagan was named the greatest president in history; Washington came in seventh, behind the likes of George Bush and Bill Clinton. In showing such cavalier disdain for the man called "The Father of Our Country," the American people are showing their ignorance. Historical revisionism appears to be in vogue; in the case of George Washington, revisionists should be upbraided as fools. Washington was more than just a simple hero; he was a man ahead of his time.

The least Americans can do is respect and admire his legacy. Some revisionists have claimed that Washington was not much of a military leader. Some, in fact, believe he was a very poor commander; certainly, these people reason, he was not a Grant, Lee or Patton. These supposed scholars are overlooking the fact that Washington was in command of a force of farmers, peasants and businessmen who had little or no military training. Amazingly enough, neither did many of their commanders.

Washington recognized quickly that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to defeat the British army in a series of large battles with his ragtag group. Instead, he had to keep his army together and do enough damage to convince the British to end what became a very unpopular war.

It would not be a stretch to say that Washington is the reason that the United States even exists. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the role of the newly created chief executive was hotly debated. Some delegates wanted a weak leader; others, like Alexander Hamilton, wanted one similar to a king.

The compromise that the delegates came to described an executive with a good deal of power, but one who would be required to consult with other elected officials in good faith. Their model for this president was the one man all the delegates trusted and admired: George Washington.

Washington did not seek the presidency, nor did he desire to serve in that position. Upon taking office, however, Washington worked hard to be a guardian of the infant Constitution, mindful that if the American experiment failed, it might never be attempted again. He also set the tone for presidential conduct — significantly soiled in the past 30 years — noting that, "There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be brought into precedent."

Washington's administration, against the odds,

was a success. He led the country through the creation of partisan politics, and kept America out of a series of conflicts with more powerful nations like England and revolutionary France.

Many detractors rip Washington for holding slaves. These naysayers see only half of the picture. Washington could not free more than half of his slaves, as they were the property of his wife, the former Martha Custis. If he were to release them, they would belong to the male members of her family. And what could a free, uneducated black person do in 1790s Virginia? The answer is simple: become the property of another white man.

Washington treated his slaves with kindness and generosity in comparison to his contemporaries like Jefferson. He allowed them to marry — a novel concept for supposed "property" — and would not sell his slaves. He also refused to allow overseers to whip slaves. In one letter, Washington wrote of how he hoped to see his slaves be "taught how to read and write, be brought up to some useful occupation," and then freed. Washington died before he

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could attempt that experiment. Washington foresaw a conflict that would take place 60 years after his death, pitting North against South over slavery. If it came to be, Washington said, he would "move and be of the Northern." In spite of this, historical revisionists refer to Washington simply as a bigot.

In most cases, historical revisionism is the insertion of politically correct opinions in solid fact. In the case of Washington, revisionists should be strongly condemned for warping history. Washington not only led this country to freedom, but he kept the fledgling nation together through a very difficult period. For this, and for many other things, Washington should be honored by Americans above those who have followed him.

To have him share a day with Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon and Warren Harding is a disgrace. Americans should once more, in the words of James Madison, "be assured, his influence carried this day."

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## Aggie attitudes need to improve



WILL KNECHT

Aggies live in a beautiful world and attend a beautiful university, yet around every corner lurk discontent, frustration and another excuse to whine and cry. Lately there has been an increasing amount of division among the student body as individuals and organizations continue to squabble. Unless everyone can start to get along, the student body will disintegrate before anyone can stop it.

While it is impractical and completely implausible to imagine pure bliss among the student body, it is not too much to ask the students of the University to take a chill pill. Understandably, people will still be offended by something that challenges their beliefs. The goal, therefore, is to make an attempt to minimize these types of effects. In addition, people should try not to cry over spilled milk.

So Aggies for Life decided it would be a great idea to erect a monument to abortion — big deal. It did less for their cause than a more tactful approach would have simply because it offended people. Likewise, Aggies for Life's opponents scribbled coat hangers all over the campus with chalk — another great display of class. What comes next? Toilet papering one another's homes and freezing each other's undies? How about a nice

game of flag football instead? Maybe the two groups should get together in an attempt to unify and find a more suitable means of solving their problems.

Meanwhile, a barrage of bird mess is bombarding cars and passersby, not to mention leaving quite a stench. As a result, people complain. Overnight, 50 years of trees get cut down, instigating more complaints. No wonder it is difficult to be in a position of authority at this University. No matter what decision is made, someone will always be upset. Be on the lookout for 16-foot high displays of tree stumps outside the Memorial Student Center.

Another favorite complaint deals with Parking Traffic and Transportation Services (PTTS) and on-campus parking. AggieLand's newest pastime is poaching for parking spaces. Five more minutes until class starts and no parking — what does one do? Park in a yellow lot, of course. By the time the day is over, the windshield is littered with those little yellow envelopes that everyone loves to see. One for parking in a yellow lot, another for being in the third spot from the left of the entrance on Groundhog Day and another because the PTTS officer did not like the color of your car. The list goes on and on. If one is especially lucky, one will be towed.

The only logical response to this problem is to complain — students need more parking, a monorail system that links every park-

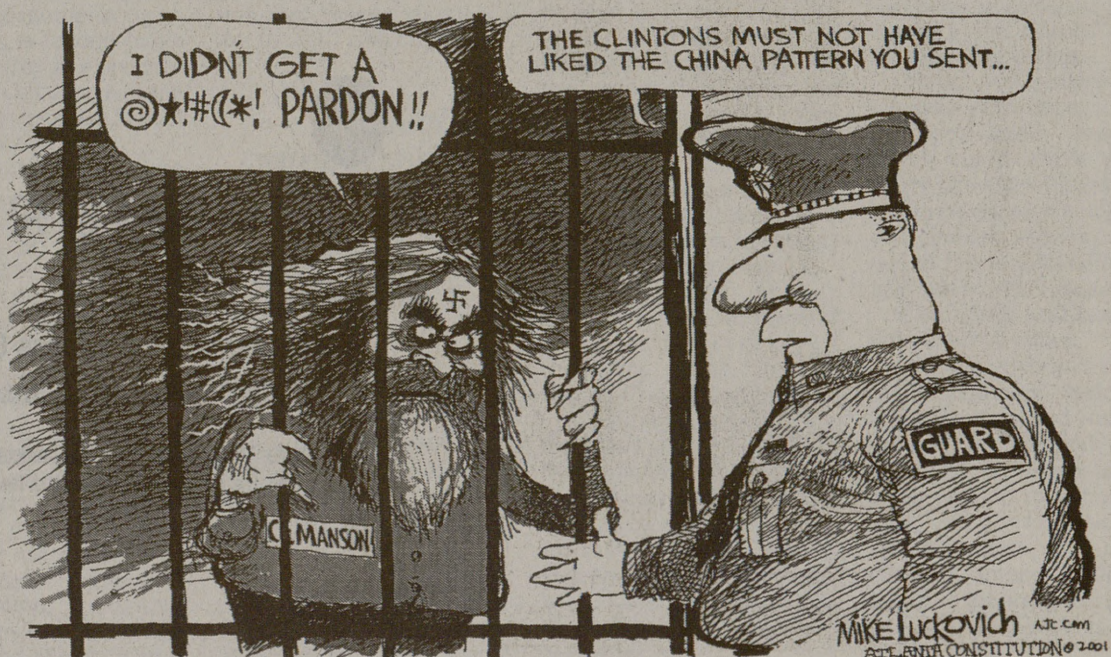
ing lot to every building on campus and refreshments on the buses. In response to these horrible inconveniences, more garages and parking spaces will be added. Surely someone will protest.

Enough is enough. Rather than searching for new and improved ways to be angry, start being proactive. Work together to find solutions to problems and disagreements, rather than thinking of witty ways to vandalize the campus. Try to be more understanding and open-minded. Realize that it is not always necessary to open one's mouth.

Instead, go for a nice walk around campus, talk to a stranger on the way to class. If it is not too much trouble, try smiling for a change. It is rather amazing how much a simple grin can improve a person's day.

Sometimes the stresses of college life and other influences in our lives will cause a buildup of anger or frustration. Sometimes one may become offended by someone or something. Most of the time one will find that it is nothing to fuss about. The attitudes on campus need to change. By working together to solve problems in a constructive fashion, students can make more of a difference on campus. Unity will improve and the spirit of the University will continue to grow stronger.

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