

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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EDITORIAL

DENYING DEREGULATION

Students must voice concerns about deregulation at forum

Tuition deregulation is perhaps the most criticized educational idea of the year, and for good reason. The concept would shift the cost of public higher education from state tax dollars to students' pocket books. This would likely place the expense of attending Texas A&M out of reach of many middle-class students who do not qualify for financial aid. It would also remove tuition-setting power from elected representatives and give it to an unelected board of regents. Unfortunately, Texas lawmakers don't seem to have the students' best interests in mind.

State Sen. Florence Shapiro has submitted legislation providing for boards of regents to raise tuition "an amount not to exceed three times" the level students are currently charged. Rep. Geanie Morrison, chairwoman of the House higher education committee, has submitted a bill that would empower boards of regents to set tuition levels and require that schools provide increased financial aid to low-income students. Rep. Fred Brown, who represents the district that includes A&M and its students, has proposed the most atrocious bill of all. It allows boards of regents to set tuition at any level, without interference from elected officials.

Tomorrow, at 6 p.m. in Rudder 301, students will have a chance to voice their opinions on tuition deregulation at a Student Government Association sponsored forum. Aggies should attend this forum to ensure that the student leaders who serve them represent their views, and make sure that the leaders they vote into office this week agree as well. Tuition deregulation is not inevitable, and students and elected officials alike must work to stop it in its tracks.

THE BATTALION

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebatt.com. No attachments.

BLAME THE PARENTS

Parents' hiring practices led to Smart abduction

The nation rejoiced this month when Elizabeth Smart was returned to her family after being snatched from her bedroom nine months ago. Her small community in Salt Lake City, Utah, celebrated in jubilation at Liberty Park, the same park where a candlelight vigil was held the day after Smart was abducted. But this is where the happy story ends.

There is a darker side to the case of Elizabeth Smart. It begins and ends with her parents, Ed and Lois Smart. They have tirelessly and defiantly fought for the safe return of their daughter, yet it is hard to pity a family who has no one to blame but itself for the tragedy that has haunted it for the past nine months.

Parents have a responsibility. A parent is responsible for rearing a child to the best of his ability so that the child will be able to understand this horribly complex world in which he lives. Parents silently pledge to protect and guard their children from any harm that may endanger them.

What parents do not teach their children to avoid talking to strangers, or to accept things from people they do not know? These common sense lessons are taught to children to protect them from becoming another kidnapping statistic. They must have the ability and knowledge to act should they ever find themselves in a threatening situation.

Ed and Lois, who themselves are well beyond the ages of simple children, have no excuse for disregarding common sense. Some may describe them as



MELISSA FRIED

compassionate because they selflessly try to take care of the disadvantaged by offering work. However, in they do so at the expense of placing their own children in danger.

Imagine a crowded downtown sidewalk. A man stumbles forward asking for a small handout. This same scenario happened to Lois Smart.

Instead of simply giving the man a

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few dollars, she invited the man to earn some extra money by helping her husband repair the roof — at her home — while her children were there.

What a wonderful world this would be if people could unquestionably trust everyone they encounter. Unfortunately, they can't. The man who Lois Smart invited home turned out to be Brian Mitchell, the same man who abducted Elizabeth Smart.

In a report in The Salt Lake Tribune, Lois Smart said, "He seemed like an awfully nice person," and later added that she was never able to gather much personal information about the man.

How naïve can the Smarts possibly be?

But this is not the first time the couple has brought home a drifter. Not too long before Brian Mitchell, there was Richard Ricci. Ricci was hired as a handyman to do odd jobs around the house. It was not until Ricci had been dismissed for stealing from the family that his past criminal record of burglary, aggravated robbery and attempted murder was revealed.

Naturally, the Smarts were shocked. In a June 2002 article on CNN.com, Ed Smart characterized Richard Ricci to seem "nice enough."

It seems as though the Smarts continue to fall into the same trap. Their compassion to help out "nice people" has stung them not once, but twice, and will continue to do so unless they open their eyes. Bringing individuals into their home without any concern for their background and character has left them prey to misfortune.

There is no doubt that the Smarts tell their children not to talk to strangers. It's time these parents practice what they preach.

Melissa Fried is a sophomore international studies major.

MAIL CALL

Antiwar protesters going too far, war a necessary evil

I am troubled that some Americans do not share my same respect for others and the property of individuals or the state. It seems that some of these antiwar protesters have no regard for their fellow citizens and are willing to trample on others' rights just so that they may be heard. They forget that we are entitled to our opinions as well. I realize that many people will argue that burning the American flag is an act of symbolic speech and should be protected as free speech. However, that flag is an icon, a symbol. It represents America and the freedoms that we all are entitled to and enjoy.

It also represents those who risked it all to preserve those freedoms. I feel that no one should show such disrespect for our fallen heroes. I also find it ironic when these "seekers of peace" burn old glory as a part of their rallies and demonstrations because in a sense, they are destroying the very thing that represents their right to have their own opinion.

I realize that war is a terrible thing, and I wish that none of us would ever have to experience the horrors of it. Even so, the reality is that when all other means have been exploited and diplomacy has been blocked again and again, nations must go to war to defend those who cannot. Other nations must also ensure that murderous regimes abide by rules and regulations. Sometimes war is necessary and is the only alternative. Who of you Americans would argue that war is never necessary? Well, then you might want to consider changing your place of residence because this nation gained its independence through war. Or you might try telling thousands of Jews to go back to concentration camps because we made a mistake in fighting a war against Hitler. Or try telling a mother who saw her child used as a human shield by a dictator's personal army that she must simply live with it.

Regardless of your viewpoint on whether war is necessary or if Saddam should have been gone a long time ago, you should show your support for our troops. You must show compassion for these men and women who are risking their lives in fighting for our nation. Pray for them and their families. Pray that the Lord will bring our soldiers back home safely. Also He will give the leaders of our country guidance and wisdom as they make difficult decisions each and every day.

Proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free...

Curtis Copeland
Class of 2006

Students can send packages to troops amid security concerns

Recently, The Battalion has printed a number of letters to the editor for and against the current war in Iraq. Both sides have expressed respect and concern for our troops overseas. However, what's the best way to show support for our troops? In the past it was possible to send care packages and letters addressed to "Any Service Member." However the world has changed, and amid security concerns the Department of Defense and the United Service Organizations ask that such anonymous packages not be sent. Instead it is possible to send an e-mail to the men and women of the military via the USO and the Department of Defense using OperationDearAbby.net and DefendAmerica.mil/, respectively. For other ways to donate time and/or money to support out troops, go to www.usmcmccs.org/news/supporttroops.asp.

Regardless of your feelings for the political powers that be, our troops abroad need to know that they haven't been forgotten by the American people. It takes less than five minutes to send a message of support, even if it only says "please come home quickly and safely." Those five minutes of your time can make the day of a lonely pfc stationed in unfamiliar territory so many thousands of miles from home.

Kelly Soltysiak
Graduate Student

Bush can't ignore economy during war with Iraq

In response to March 21 mail calls:

This is getting out of hand. I full-heartedly support peoples' right to protest, and you are right that those brave men and women of the past did fight for the right to protest, but for protesters to have the nerve to call themselves patriots, that is the real joke here, not these protests.

As far as the tax cuts go, I suppose it is hard to believe that something as complex as the U.S. government could possibly multi-task. It's as if you think the functions of the government should just come to a halt and all attention should be paid to the war effort. The only problem is that if that were to happen, you would cry about us not dealing with anything else. Having nothing positive to say, all you do is criticize the government and its leaders while at the same time not offering any solutions. It's not about tax cuts as you would make it seem, it's about not liking the current administration. Justin Hill's answer to everything: It is all the Republicans' fault.

Finally, you asked what we are sacrificing here.

That's an excellent question, thankfully, the answer is very little. I have the luxury of sitting over here and so do you, because there are many hundreds of thousands of brave men and women willing to make the sacrifice for me. That may sound selfish, but its the same way things have always been, the many find reward in the sacrifice of the few. I have never served in another area, but many of my family members have, and many of my friends now are, and one question that they have never asked is "What did you sacrifice?" They would rather just hear thank you and be on their way.

I fully support my president, my country, and the brave men and women of U.S. Armed Forces. I pray for them all, and hope for a speedy return. I do not live in fear for I know that they will protect us with their own lives if necessary. May God's blessings be with them all.

Michael Carson
Class of 2002

Time for antiwar protests is over, troops now need support

To all the "American" protesters: shame on you. You all complain about war supporters talking trash about you, but this freedom of speech thing you talk about works both ways.

You may say you do not believe in the purpose of this war, and I may say I do not like you, because I certainly do not. As far as I am concerned, those who are still protesting are traitors to our country, and should be shipped to Iraq, where they can see firsthand the brutality of Saddam's regime.

Furthermore, there comes a point when good judgment and respect should overcome your personal convictions. Think of how our troops feel, the very ones willing to die for any one of us, when they hear that Americans may not

believe in their cause.

The time for protest is over. Shut up and support, or leave the United States. I quote Merle Haggard in saying "If you're runnin' down my country, man, you're walkin' on the fightin' side of me."

Ryan K. Rosborough
Class of 2002

Brown looks to ACLU for help though endorsed by Texaminer

Okay, so Ed Brown egregiously violates campus campaign laws by accepting an endorsement from the far right-wing "Texaminer," and who does he run to for legal help? Pat Robertson's legal shock troops at the American Center for Law and Justice? The "independently" operated Young Americans for Freedom? No. He goes to that bane of conservative existence, the American Civil Liberties Union.

Perhaps the next time those "independent" conservative voices (for those who don't know, that alleged "journalistic" endeavor is one of many projects funded by the far right) in the "Texaminer" complain about the evils of the ultra-liberal ACLU, they will keep this in mind.

How an SBP can forward the "Texaminers" conservative goals is lost on me anyway. Perhaps they would pull out the campus welcome mat, because of the way evils like diversity have increased student awareness of the world around them. Perhaps they will force Aggies to carry a 3.0 average or higher so as not to waste tax-payer dollars. In any event, while the upholding of civil liberties is always important, those who opt to do so should be wary of the potential for hypocrisy.

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