

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 9 • Monday, October 13, 2003

Bush breaking the bank

Congress should deny President Bush's request for \$87 billion to rebuild Iraq

President George W. Bush wore no flight suit Sept. 7 as he made a request to Congress for a supplementary \$87 billion for reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is in direct contrast to his May 1 speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln in which he arrogantly declared "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."

Still, there was very little contrition on the part of the president as he made his funding request. There was no indication the invasion of Iraq was unjustified and unnecessary from a national security perspective. There was no recognition that a lack of adequate postwar planning by his administration led to the need for the extra \$87 billion.

That is one of the reasons why Congress should deny his request and only allow the spending that would immediately support the nation's troops as they perform their heroic duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The majority of the nation agrees with this viewpoint.

Sixty-one percent of Americans do not think the money should be spent, according to a CBS-New York Times Poll released Oct. 2. Bush should not receive any money until he delivers an adequate "postwar" Iraq plan. Even a GOP congressman anonymously told Time magazine, "It would be helpful if they would say, 'We were caught flat-footed, but now we're handling it.' But they won't."

The most controversial portion of the requested money is the \$20.3 billion specifically tagged for Iraq's reconstruction. One billion dollars of that \$20.3 billion would go toward training Iraqi police and firefighters. This is especially ironic considering the Bush administration opposed an extra \$200 million targeted for America's policemen and firefighters, according to Time.

Another \$2.1 billion would be used to import petroleum into Iraq and upgrade its oil infrastructure. This makes no sense. Iraq is the world's second largest oil-producing country and this administration wants to import petroleum into Iraq at the American taxpayer's expense.



COLLINS EZEANYIM

Even ardent Bush supporter California Rep. Dana Rohrabacher asked, "Why should we give all this money to a country so rich in materials?" Some Capitol Hill conservatives wish to restructure the \$20 billion marked for Iraq's reconstruction as loans, according to Time. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle agrees. Under his plan, Iraq's oil revenue would be used to help repay the loan.

There are other provisions that do not cost as much but are just as ridiculous. Bush wants an additional \$600 million to continue the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. This is in addition to the \$300 million already spent on the WMD search.

The president should admit that the intelligence obtained about Iraq's weapons programs was shoddy.

His administration should concede there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and stop wasting taxpayer money on nonsensical WMD searches. An additional \$1 million would be used to build a museum to document atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein. It is important to remember the carnage and suffering this dictator caused, but this museum is not necessary and should not be built at this point in time.

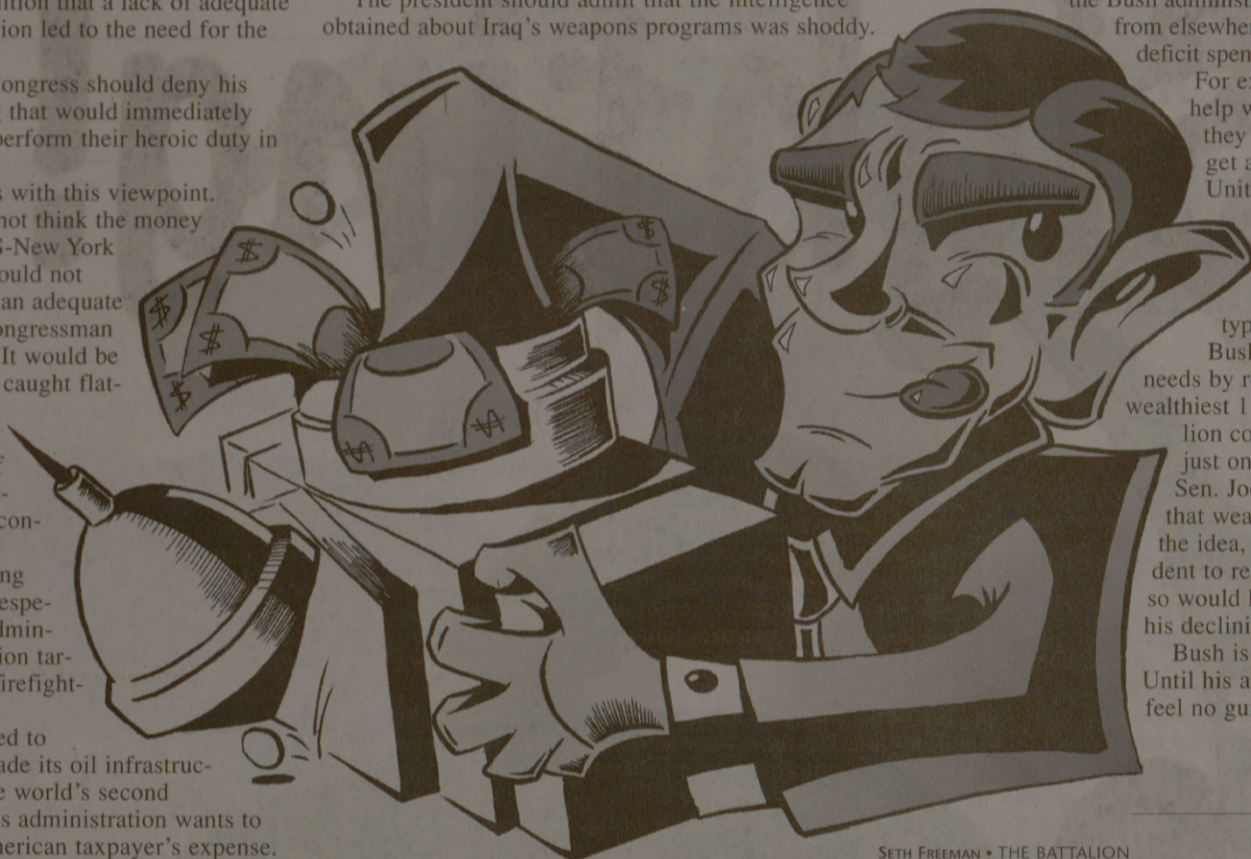
Besides, the administration should be focusing more on capturing or killing Saddam so that he will commit no more atrocities.

Some may ask whether it is good policy to deny the money needed for Iraq's reconstruction, but it's not a matter of not getting the money at all. It's a matter of responsibility on the part of the Bush administration. They can get the funds they need from elsewhere without forcing the nation into more deficit spending.

For example, other nations would be willing to help with troops and money needed in Iraq, but they would only do so by a U.N. mandate. To get a mandate, Bush must apologize to the United Nations for so recklessly going to war without their approval and humbly asking for assistance. Unfortunately, this was not the case as Bush recently addressed the U.N. assembly with his typical arrogant swagger.

Bush could also easily raise the money he needs by rescinding his ill-advised tax cuts for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. In fact, \$89 billion could be raised by forgoing the tax cuts for just one year, 2010, according to Democratic Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware. He told Fox News that wealthy Americans he's spoken to support the idea, but no one realistically expects the president to rescind any of his tax cuts, although doing so would help pay for the Iraqi war and improve his declining poll numbers.

Bush is accountable to the American people. Until his administration learns this, America should feel no guilt in denying his \$87 billion request.



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

U.S. must rethink how health insurance system works

According to figures recently released by the Census Bureau, the number of Americans without health insurance increased last year by 2.4 million, the largest margin of increase in a decade. This increase raised the total number of people without health insurance to 43.6 million.

The proportion of people without health insurance was especially high in Texas, where nearly 25 percent of residents are uninsured. Compare that disturbing ratio with Minnesota's numbers: there, only 8 percent of the population is without health coverage.

One good explanation for the large increase is the mindset of most Americans, politicians and workers who believe that an employer must provide health insurance. With this in mind it should come as no surprise that 2.4 million more people are without health insurance, considering that 2.7 million jobs have been lost in past few years. This fact underscores the root of problem: Americans are forced to rely upon old-fashioned employer-centered health insurance plans when what is needed is a more flexible system to meet the

needs of the modern worker.

The fact is that fewer and fewer Americans are sticking to the career paths of their parents and grandparents. No longer does a person graduate from college, go to work for one big company, which provides health insurance for employees and their families, and then retires at 65 with a company pension. In the 21st century, more people are working for smaller companies that offer fewer benefits, workers switch jobs more often and one in every 12 Americans starts his own business. Today, the best way to increase the number of insured Americans is by breaking the link between a job and health insurance.

Those who stubbornly support the outdated employer-provides-health-insurance concept may argue that at least with their system, one could expect the number of uninsured Americans to decrease in a strong job market. If employers are no longer to provide health insurance, then no such guarantee will exist.

This may have been true in the past, but the data from the past decade contradicts that logic. The number of uninsured Americans increased each year from 1987 to 1998, even when the job market was booming. Small businesses accounted for many of the new jobs then, as they will

in the future, and such businesses are far less likely to provide health coverage.

The United States can begin breaking the job-insurance link by no longer favoring employers who provide health coverage. Currently, companies are given more than \$140 billion per year in federal tax breaks to supply their workers with health insurance. The employees under such a plan are coddled by the government as well, since they do not pay taxes on health insurance benefits provided by their bosses.

The money given to companies as subsidies should instead be given directly to individuals as a health insurance tax credit. For example, if health insurance for a family costs \$8,000 per year, then the tax credit awarded to them could be 50 percent of this bill. Now, the family pays \$4,000 less in taxes, and uses this bonus to pay for its health coverage.

Mark Pauly, an economist at the University of Pennsylvania, and Bradley Herring, a health policy scholar at Yale University, have calculated that this "modest tax credit, paying 50 percent of the premium, would reduce the number of uninsured workers and family members with low incomes by as much as 52 percent." In other words, 21 million more Americans will

become insured. They will also have the luxury of choosing the type of coverage they desire and the freedom to change jobs without fear of losing their health insurance.

Currently, the Bush administration is proposing a \$3,000 credit for families with two or more children and incomes less than \$25,000. The bonuses are expected to cover as much as 90 percent of the health insurance costs. Individuals with incomes less than \$15,000 also get a tax credit, but only for \$1,000. However, families making more than \$60,000 and individuals earning more than \$30,000 are not eligible for the tax breaks. Though these tax credits are certainly progress, they need to be extended to include all Americans.

The time for this expansion is now. Health policy experts, such as Hanns Kuttner of the University of Michigan, predict that the number of uninsured will rise again this year because the job market remains weak and many states, Texas included, have cut back their Medicaid programs. Perhaps by then, if not now, Americans will realize that a system which has worked poorly in the past will only work worse in the future.

Midhat Farooqi is a senior genetics major.



MIDHAT FAROOQI

MAIL CALL

YCT demonstrations not attacking anyone

In response to Sarah Szuminski's Oct. 9 article:

I would like to clarify a few points recently made in The Battalion regarding the Traditional Family Values Week activities of the Young Conservatives of Texas A&M. First, YCT never directly attacked Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Aggies (GLBTA) or any other student group. What we did was attack a message and a lifestyle that we find morally objectionable that is being subsidized with our student fee money. The purpose of our protest was also to show the student body that they don't have to feel pressured into accepting a lifestyle they object to.

Additionally, The Battalion did not print a single example of a mafeasant expenditure of student fees of the many we provided to them, which included a speech made by author Christian de la Huerta on the subject of "Coming Out Spiritually" that not

only promoted the homosexual lifestyle but was also a religious justification of this lifestyle, which is a slap in the face of Christians. Student fees also went to pay for the printing and distribution of flyers promoting GLBT issues, including one that stated that there are more than two sexes and that gender is a "mix and match mode of self expression."

The students should not be forced to fund this offensive material.

Sarah Davis
Executive Director of YCT

A&M GLBT students deserve respect

The YCT paraded around campus Wednesday with signs that discourage unity and solidarity on our campus. One of these signs said "Texas A&M: Where girls like guys, and guys like girls." I would like to take this opportunity to correct my fellow Aggies. Non-heterosexual students

are present at Texas A&M University. We pay tuition and fees, just like everyone else. Many of you are friends with us, or at least with the individuals that make up our queer community, and yet you still don't know who we are or understand us.

So who are we? We are humans. What do we want? To be able to love whoever we want without fear of being discriminated against, or made fun of or assaulted. But this is not acceptable to some people, as evidenced by the YCT's display. Contrary to some people's beliefs, we don't want to destroy anyone's individual morality, we don't want to hurt anyone and we don't want to change anyone. Nor do we want special rights or privileges, although it would be nice to have our unions and life partners officially recognized by society.

Apart from the large gay and lesbian community, there are also many bisexuals and transsexuals on campus. Besides that, there is also a very large community of people who support us, who were able to figure out that we

mean no harm to anyone, and that we are normal people. It is time for the rest of our campus to catch up.

David Pasnik
Class of 2003

Sweatshops boycotts not productive

In response to Oct. 10 mail call:

These so-called sweatshops are jobs. Jobs that allow people to provide for themselves and their families. In 1998, when France had the spotlight of the world during the World Cup, France decided to boycott certain soccer balls because of how they were made. Some were made in these "sweatshops" and the boycott only drove these hard working individuals out their jobs. How did they face unemployment? With whatever they could do to survive. readily available: crime and prostitution. Did this boycott save the people it was designed to? No, it made

their situations worse.

Let's be honest with ourselves, would we like the people of developing nations to be able to work in safe conditions like the ones we have here at home? Yes. Would we like them to earn some of the highest wages on the planet like we do here? Yes. Is it going to happen anytime soon? Probably not. Let's put things in perspective. These jobs pay more than most of their alternatives and are much safer than readily available alternatives.

Michael W. Hart
Class of 2004

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@thebattalion.net

NEWS
THE BATTALION

ld be the primary con...
Regan said. "Guidelines...
ie master plan help locate...
es where the new building...
ld be built."
nother part of the master...
states that buildings that...
ymbolic to the University...
ld be protected at all costs...
historic core around the...
lemic Building will espe...
y be preserved.
The desire to have a new...
er plan was started before...
Gates became president...
Bill Perry, vice provost and...
of the Built Environment...
il. "The plan was started...
a year ago. We wanted to...
t so that students can get...
ss easier."

loading or unloading a...
ish Camp route is ideal...
se its users are too far...
as and its stops are main...
not busy streets.
Drivers agree that bike...
ssary and undesirable for

continues, TS will try to...
arriers next year.
cept to the area and we...
evaluate before making...
isions," Weis said.
ill continue to monitor...
the bike carriers so we...
ed decision whether to

id before every practice...
en they were struck by a...
veling on the shoulder of...
-lane highway.
man was thrown into the...
r the hood of car hit him...
l time to say a few words...
ar before he heard some...
ll, "Watch out!" and the...
of brakes screeching.
n't know who was driving...
hey must not have been...
attention, because it...
ylight and they hit us,"...
l in Sunday editions of...
Austin American...
an.

ts.tamu.edu

OUTDOORS

Event Date
Oct. 14
Oct. 14
Oct. 18
Oct. 21
Oct. 26

Nov. 26-30
Jan. 11-17
March 14-21

adventure as we...
stery and advent...
re information.

orientation class?
hursdays at 3:30

YOUR MARK

ck for a reduced...
ore information...
e A&M campus.