

EDITORIAL

POOR REPRESENTATION

Athletes need to take responsibility

Texas A&M's reputation has taken some painful blows, as several regional newspapers have capitalized on recent conduct issues within the Athletic Department. In particular, the football team has suffered the loss of several players due to legal indictments and is having to discipline others who have had run-ins with the law. This situation has left the Athletic Department and, in turn, the University, vulnerable to criticism, as is exemplified by The Dallas Morning News headline "Arrested development: Losses, trouble with law handcuff A&M." This is not good publicity, and the athletes themselves must discontinue the unruly behavior.

The problem goes beyond the loss or suspension of a few players or the athletic program being somewhat stigmatized. The entire school is affected, and no one Aggie can put his head in the sand and ignore it. Whether they like it or not, athletes are front-line representatives of the universities they play for. Just as at any other school, University representatives are in the public eye and are subject to this double standard. A&M is a prestigious institution and, by whatever means necessary, it should prevent illegal conduct. Curbing this behavior starts with individual athletes. While measures should be taken to deter indecent or illegal acts, athletes and other student leaders must meet the expectations that come with being ambassadors for such a great institution. The responsibility of representing the student body falls on their shoulders.

Most students enroll in this University to experience firsthand an unparalleled sense of tradition and belonging. They identify with it in such a personal way that when it comes to a bad reputation, their well-being suffers as well. At a University where football is so revered, A&M players' conduct must be marked by nothing short of pride and honor. While the vast majority of athletes fill this role with utmost perfection, it's up to the Aggie family to establish what it expects from its student leaders. Anyone with the potential to tarnish the reputation of this University should realize there is no place for him at A&M.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Column misrepresented tuition issue

In response to Sara Foley's Feb 16 column:

Ms. Foley's opinion piece attempts to delineate key problems surrounding the recent tuition increases. However, two serious inconsistencies need to be corrected.

The title of the column reads, "Many problems with proposed fee increase," yet nothing is mentioned at all about fees. Ms. Foley and all Texas A&M students need to be aware that "tuition" and "fees" are entirely separate entities. Tuition is collected and used for direct educational purposes only, such as faculty salaries, library enhancements and student financial aid. Fees on the other hand, may not necessarily relate directly to education but serve the student community in other ways. Typical fees include the transportation, student services and recreational sports fees.

The second inaccuracy is within the following statement, "Had it not been for the students on the Tuition Advisory Council requests, the increase would have been more drastic." The Tuition Policy Advisory Committee was created as a result of the necessary decision to increase only the University Authorized Tuition (UAT). Various student leaders independently voiced their concerns prior to the increase, which resulted in the increase not being implemented sooner than it was. The UAT increase is in partial response to reductions in funding that the University has experienced from the Texas Legislature.

We strongly encourage all A&M students to become educated about these topics and to provide feedback and solutions to the Tuition Policy Advisory Committee student members by going to the Web site (<http://sga.tamu.edu/tpac>).

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Rebuilding Iraq

For true growth to occur, task must be left to Iraqis

Setting aside the whole Weapons of Mass Destruction debate regarding the U.S. invasion of Iraq, a big reason for the liberation was to make Iraq a beacon of democracy in the Middle East, enjoying both the freedom and the economic prosperity that follow. But economic prosperity is not truly being encouraged by the reconstruction authority.

It's ironic that the U.S. government is known to make large and often paranoid efforts to discourage monopolies, as in the case against Microsoft, but it seems that when it comes to Iraq, such rules fly out the window. On Feb. 7, Iraq began offering cell phone service in Baghdad, according to The Associated Press, but Iraqis were rather disgruntled by the high prices caused by the cell phone monopoly. Because the American reconstruction authority awards contracts to businesses that wish to open up shop in Iraq, it has the power to form and protect a monopoly. The result, of course, is the high price the Iraqis are seeing now. Faris al-Helli, a grain store operator in Baghdad, told USA Today that he had to pay a startup fee of \$69 while his brother in Jordan only paid \$22.

A major problem facing America today has spilled over into Iraq: America is oblivious to the conditions for economic prosperity. These days the answer seems to be "more government," but the stranglehold that U.S. government power has on the Iraqi economy by controlling who may and who may not start a business has led to monopoly-inflated prices.

The precondition for a country's economic prosperity has been and must be free enterprise, where the government takes a "hands off" approach to the economy. Had anybody been allowed to start his own cell phone service — as many were clamoring to do as soon as Saddam Hussein's regime toppled — Iraqis would have had their service sooner. Companies would have been racing to be up and running first, and the choices would be numerous. Since the same companies would be in competition, prices would have been much lower.

Government tyranny in the Iraqi economy hurts not only the Iraqi consumer, but the Iraqi producer as well. The American reconstruction authority has been granting the vast majority of contracts to corporations based in other countries. This leaves many Iraqis who want to seek their own fortune by starting a business on a long waiting list or left out altogether.

Currently, unemployment in Iraq is conservatively estimated

to be greater than 50 percent. This problem would be largely solved if the economy were left free to capitalism, as Iraqis would be free to start their own businesses or seek employment in newly-created businesses.

Besides creating jobs, the visible proof that the freedom America has brought Iraq also brings prosperity would certainly quell some resentment over the occupation, and some even think it would decrease the amount of terrorism there.

"Jobs for Iraqis will create stability and peace in Iraq instead of terrorism. This correlation is absolutely certain," Rend Rahim Francke, the Iraqi governing council's top diplomat, told Reuters.

The length of the Iraqi occupation is largely dependent on when Iraq can "get back on its feet." Surely if the economy was allowed to boom under laissez-faire capitalism, the Iraqis would not only get on their feet faster, but they might come to realize that freedom has its luxuries.

America didn't become a prosperous country because of the grace of some deity and a large religious population — theocracies such as those in the Middle East are far more religious but dirt-poor. Nor did America prosper because of fantastic leadership — we've had our share of bad presidents and scandals.

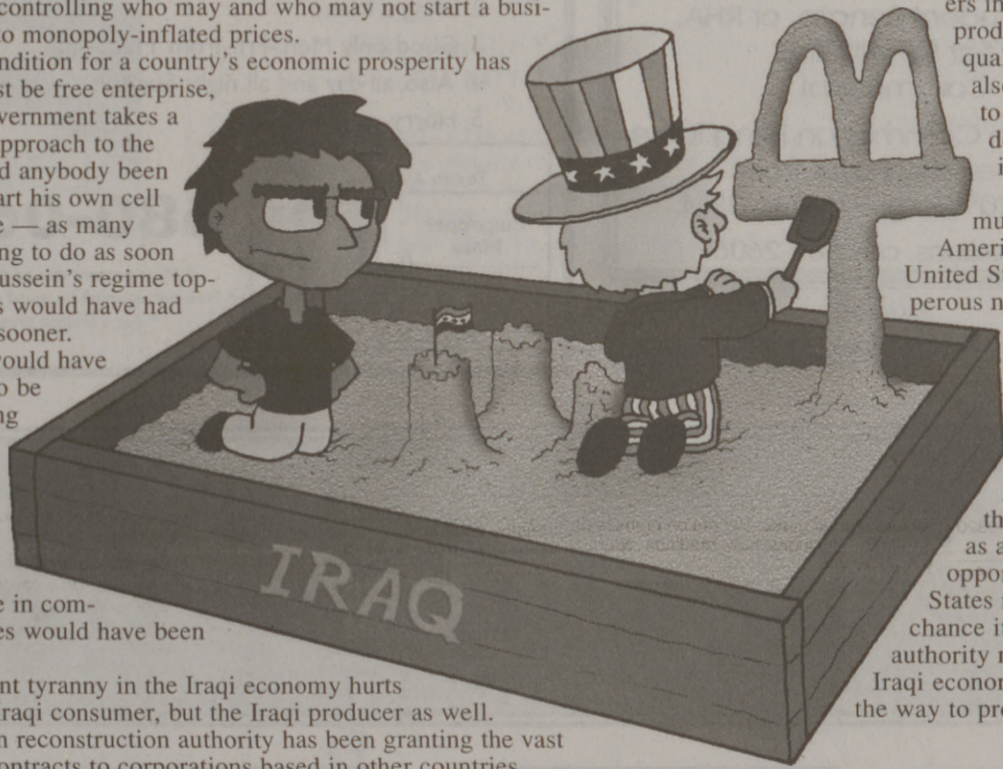
America became the wealthy nation that it is often hated for as a result of keeping government out of its economy. When ambitious young men and women are free to seek their fortunes, it brings prosperity to the entire country. Once new businesses and products have been established, companies strive to be leaders in the newest and the best

products, resulting in constant quality improvement. Workers also enjoy the choice of who to work for. Simply put, freedom and capitalism go hand in hand. If freedom is our desire for Iraq, capitalism must be as well.

Americans must realize that the United States is not a wealthy, prosperous nation because of chance or pragmatic doctrines, but because it values capitalism as a moral system based on justice, in seeing that a person is paid what he is owed. Though America has strayed from this ideal, for Iraq to succeed as a free nation with the opportunity to thrive, the United States must give them the same chance it had. The reconstruction authority must take its hands off the Iraqi economy and let capitalism lead the way to prosperity.



MIKE WALTERS



Mike Walters is a senior psychology major. Graphic by Josh Darwin

Significant contributions

As candidates fade from limelight, each one leaves his mark

Although the Democratic primaries are far from over, many political analysts are ready to name Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., the party's nominee. After winning big in Nevada and all but two of the decided states, it appears the pundits may be right.

With Kerry alone in the limelight, receiving endorsements from labor unions, members of Congress and former rivals who have since dropped out of the primary, it is likely the remaining Democratic candidates will continue to fade from the headlines, some faster than others. But in a sense, a little piece of each candidate will carry through the race and into the presidential contest. Each of the men and women has contributed in some way, whether large or small, to the direction in which the once wayward Democratic party is now moving.

Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut's lack of success in the primaries showed the party does not desire a Republican pretending to be a Democrat, while the measly numbers received by his philosophical antithesis, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, has shown that Democrats do not want their party to go too far left. The Rev. Al Sharpton has proven to be a calming voice throughout the debates, reminding the candidates that their principal target should be President Bush and not each other. Gen. Wesley Clark's decision to leave the race last week revealed that perhaps the War in Iraq is not the only issue on the minds of Democratic voters. As the field's outspoken populist, Sen. John Edwards, D-S.C., has coined the apt motto about the export of American jobs: "Twenty years ago, we talked about 'Buy American,' how about 'Hire American?'"

However, it has been Vermont's Gov.

Howard Dean, now sadly sinking in single digits in most states, who has most influenced the party's newfound direction.

After the New Hampshire primary, it became apparent that Dean would no longer wear the crown of frontrunner, a label which has been much more favorable to Kerry than Dean. Shortly after this primary, The New York Times quoted Dean as declaring the rest of the field "have now embraced my message. They talk about change. They all talk about bringing people into the party. The truth is, I stood up for that message when nobody else would."

He was indeed giving credit where credit has proven to be due. Dean was the first candidate to voice the concerns of countless Americans — concerns about jobs lost across the nation, seniors without prescription drugs, children without health care and a steady flow of lies from a government meant to be by and for the people, not adversarial to them.

Our president misled us about a decision of the most dire and fundamental importance — the decision to send our men and women in uniform to certain danger in a foreign land. Bush continues to mislead, as recently as last week on "Meet the Press," when asked by Tim Russert about the intelligence which persuaded the Bush administration to invade Iraq. He responded, "I made a decision based upon that intelligence in the context of the war against terror. In other words, we were attacked, and therefore every threat had to be re-analyzed."

However, in Ron Suskind's highly controversial book "The Price of Loyalty," former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill reveals that Bush had assigned Donald Rumsfeld to examine military options against Iraq 10 days after his inauguration, more than a year before the attacks on the World Trade Center. With the press virtually silent on many of Bush's questionable decisions, partly due to the

administration's surreptitious manner and unprecedented ability to avoid a straight answer, the Democrats have been left with the responsibility of pointing out Bush's blunders. Dean was the first to step up to the plate.

No other candidate has energized the progressive base as Dean succeeded in doing at the beginning of the primary season. He brought grassroots politics to the Internet with an exuberance which will affect politics far into the future. Dean's notable fund-raising efforts, consisting mostly of contributions less than \$200 according to The Progressive, have shown that the people can compete financially with the corporations. Kerry's new message to special interest groups — "We're coming, you're going" — is resonant of Dean's early "them against us" attitude, which was at the heart of his small-contribution fundraising style.

Kerry has also given the correct response to criticism about his vote on the resolution to give the president the power to go to war. After winning the Tennessee and Virginia primaries, Kerry appeared on the "Larry King Show," stating that he had trusted Bush to keep his word on going to war only after all other means to end dispute had been exhausted. He has recognized his misplacement of trust.

There is no doubt Kerry will make a better presidential candidate than Dean would have. He is polished, experienced and focused on his goal. But let us hope he does not forget the lesson of his fellow Democratic candidates. The people want a calm, but assertive, voice of hope to counter the Bush administration's policy of fear. In 2004, it will be only a Democratic candidate, not Bush, who will bring hope to children without health care, seniors without prescription drugs and a middle class without work.

John David Blakley is a sophomore political science major.