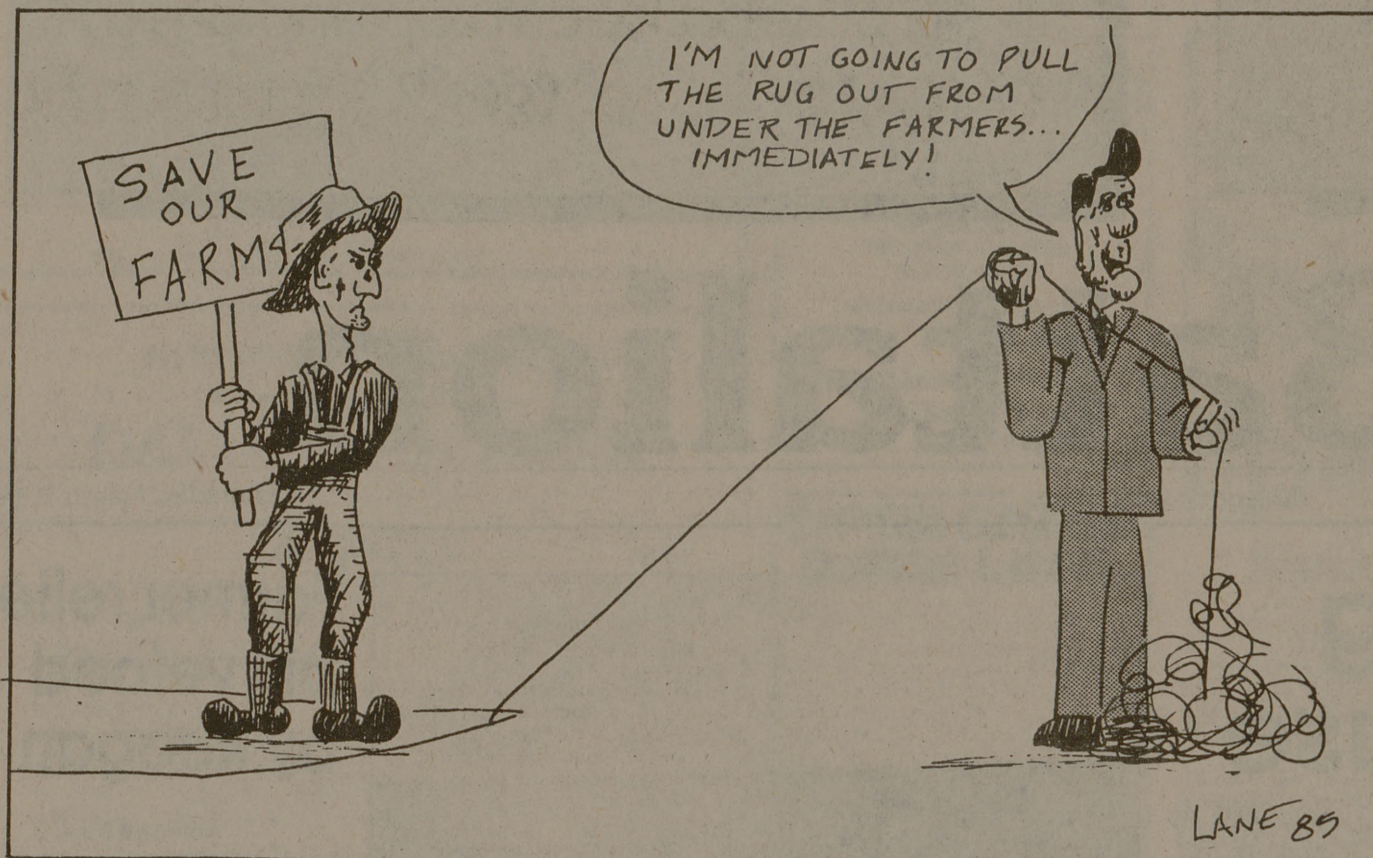


OPINION



Can't judge book by its cover

Just about everyone has heard the old cliché "you can't judge a book by its cover" but, in spite of itself, its wisdom is all too often ignored.

Catherine Campbell

A few weeks ago, an incredibly pro-sexist column appeared in The Battalion with an underlying message that stressed physical beauty as the only important attribute a woman needs to be perfect.

I really couldn't believe it.

The writer of the chauvinistic column, Kevin Inda, is a senior at Texas A&M, as am I, but it appears he is going to be leaving college with the same ignorant concepts as when he first arrived (Kevin, haven't you learned anything about life these past four years?).

Inda, like too many others, believes that physical beauty is the key to happiness and the sole criteria for choosing a companion. Men who don't bother to look past a woman's measurements are in for a rude awakening. Ever heard the expression "the lights are on but nobody's home?" (We're talking intellect here, Kevin.)

Maybe body measurements should be ignored, after all there is a popular standard that ideal women measure 36-24-36 ... but where are the ideal stats for the men? It's really something that some men have the gall to expect physical perfection in the opposite sex when they can't really meet those requirements themselves.

And how many guys bother to wonder

if their ornamental-on-the-arm girlfriends even have I.Q.s? It's sad how priorities can become so twisted.

Although women today on average don't wear girdles anymore (what were those things anyway?), anorexia nervosa is at an all-time high. The pressure is on to look like the ideal woman, and guys like Kevin Inda are only adding to the problem.

Soooooo, in response to the very misguided Kevin Inda, who so graciously allowed The Battalion to print his ridiculously skewed view of courting, I have one question: You were kidding weren't you, Kevin?

Inda's editorial concerning the difficult search for the elusive perfect mate was appalling to several Aggie women. Even if Inda was joking, his warped sense of "humor" revealed him to be the closet sexist he is, not to mention exposing his exponential amount of ignorance concerning women.

At the risk of making a generalization, Kevin Inda is like too many other men who think they know everything there is to know about women. And, because Inda is incapable of understanding the opposite sex's psyche, he resorts to categorizing women according to looks and morals. Boy, what a wonderful, generous "MAN!"

Inda's very insightful analogy of the "mating game" (did you think of that term all by yourself, Kevin?) to checkers — with the sole purpose "of jumping as many of the opponents as possible" — was shallow, low-brow and uncouth.

Personally, I've always thought the game of checkers was a bit boring and have always been partial to the superior game of chess. Chess requires strategy, planning and subtle manipulation (manipulation, now there's a word that probably scares the hell out of you, Kevin). Apparently, females equipped with intelligence pose a real threat to Inda (better watch out Kevie, baby, they're all around you...but I doubt they're out to get you).

Inda also mentions that he resents women's usage of cosmetics: NEWS ALERT, Kevin! When done tastefully, make-up on a woman can be like the icing on a cake.

It may surprise Inda, but not every woman wants to look like the perfect Ivory Girl. Some of us "resort" to wearing cosmetics because a) we want to b) it's a form of self-expression and c) society dictates we'd better — it's expected. (Face facts, Kevin, you wouldn't be caught dead with a girl who doesn't wear make-up...unless, of course, she had pristine beauty and great bones. Maybe you should join an Amish community to find the Plain Jane princess of your dreams.)

And for Inda's information, in the game of chess, the queen is the most powerful, prized piece on the board; we all know the king doesn't do much but hang around waiting to get cornered due to his lack of foresight. By the way, Kevin, checkmate.

Catherine Campbell is a senior journalism major.

Banning books can discourage thinking

Every morning I pick up the paper and read about death and destruction. Rarely does the word "murder" not appear on the front page. Monday, I picked up The Battalion and saw an advertisement advocating another type of homicide — the killing of ideas.



Loren Steffy

"The Agency for Public School Literature Reviews has determined that these four books are unsuitable to remain in school libraries and classrooms as they contain graphic violence." Above this statement were displayed the names of four great classics: "The Red Badge of Courage," "Moby Dick," "A Tale of Two Cities," and "The Plays of Shakespeare."

These works do include scenes of violence, as do many books in the average school library such as Dante's "Inferno", Homer's "Odyssey" and Malory's "La Morte d'Arthur." Merely because these literary landmarks are offensive to an individual, group or even a majority doesn't justify prohibiting their circulation from everyone. My columns may be offensive to some people, but that doesn't allow those people to stifle my right to free expression.

The endangered works not only demonstrate exemplary literature, but they allow our society a look at the culture and values of a past civilization. Whale hunts, and treachery may not be the most pleasant choices of subject material, but they are socially relevant. The Civil War and the assassination of Julius Caesar could be labelled offensive, but the past cannot be changed because a group of people don't want to read about the world's unpleasantness.

Sure, we can ban the books and protect the innocent children from the nastiness of the world, but sooner or later the kids are going to read the front page of a newspaper and discover reality for themselves.

This band of censors is attempting to place a ban on literature that will transcend time and cultural boundaries. They want to use their social values as beliefs as a standard by which literary works must be measured. Not only does such a restriction inhibit the education of youth, it suppresses the right to free speech for every author, dead, living, yet to be born.

Books can be burned at Farenheit 451, but they can be banned with a temper, a closed mind, and a little fanaticism.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and weekly columnist for The Battalion.

LETTERS:

LRD doesn't condone software copying

EDITOR:

The Battalion article on copyright and microcomputer software offered considerable information and opinion about the nature of the problem. Although your article reported an offer to copy a microcomputer program by an "LRD employee," it should be made clear that the policy of the Sterling C. Evans Library Learning Resources Department does not in any way condone copying of microcomputer software.

Employees of the LRD are informed of this policy during training, and instructed to inform LRD users that copying is illegal whenever the question arises. Use of any of the many "copy breaking" software packages is expressly forbidden in the area, and any user observed using a "copy breaking" program is asked to stop using the program immediately.

H.W. Hall  
Head, Learning Resources Department  
Sterling C. Evans Library

Just what (or who) is simple-minded?

EDITOR:

I agree with Mr. Inda's column minority recruitment. Why should we bother to have these non-white types in school, let alone try to recruit them?

After all, it's a proven fact that hard as they try they'll never be as good as white people. Don't get me wrong — I'm not a bigot or anything, I just know these things from experience.

So why waste their time in school when they could be out picking grapefruits or something. The only white thing to do is encourage them early on to learn a trade and forget about an expensive college education. The solution is that simple-minded!

B. Mecum

Don't call us and we won't call you

EDITOR:

I would like to extend my gratitude in behalf of Dunn Hall to Puryear and Davis-Gary Halls for making our dining experience, Friday, March 1 tremendously enjoyable. Your warmth, compassion, and hospitality was overwhelming. Let's face it gentlemen, one cannot say enough nice things about you, as

The more we know about the human brain, the less we know

WASHINGTON — It was a headline that arrested the eye: Einstein's Brain Was Different.



George Will

Not news, you say? Wrong. The news from neurobiology is large enough to subvert our sense of ourselves.

Having obtained bits of Einstein's brain from the pathologist who conducted the autopsy in 1955, a scientist at Berkeley has discovered that Einstein's brain had 73 percent more "support cells" for every neuron than are found in average brains. The Einstein samples reportedly came from the part of the brain responsible for "the deepest thinking" — presumably the part we use to ponder the infield-fly rule.

We are learning a lot — perhaps an alarming lot — about what we are. Increased knowledge of the brain already has brought a reduction of misery through pharmacological treatments of such diseases as depression and schizophrenia. But that knowledge seems to threaten us — that inner something that makes us individuals. It seems to portray us as merely physical, as more comprehensible and quantifiable than we want to be.

It was bad enough when Copernicus evicted us from where we think we belong: the center of the cosmos. Since then, many systems of thought have seemed to imbed us stickily in the world in ways that compromise our sense of autonomy.

Darwin embedded mankind in the

mud of the planet that Copernicus had made peripheral. Darwin asserted a continuum between mankind and lesser (are we sure?) matter. The historicisms of Marx and others asserted that political and social change are governed by iron laws of social evolution, not the choices of autonomous human beings. Freud said there are within us uncharted depths with their own turbulences.

Now comes neurobiology, suggesting... what? It really does not suggest that anyone with 73 percent more support cells per neuron than average could have said, as Einstein did, "Hey: Increase the speed of an object and you contract the passage of its time. Neurosciences do not make such extravagant claims.

In the current issue of the New York Review of Books, Israel Rosenfield of the City University of New York offers a balanced assessment. Suppose particular mental events — feelings, emotions — can be associated with particular chemical events. That does not mean that, say, the feeling of love or patriotism or whatever can be expressed as a chemical formula. Neither does it mean that when you read "Hamlet" you should say, "Ah, yes. This is the product of beautiful brain chemistry."

What has been learned about brain functioning has advanced therapy more than it has understanding. We can improve the functioning of the brain without really knowing how to explain what is being done, aside from the correction of a chemical imbalance. As Rosenfield writes, "Just as we cannot know the role an actor is playing by studying the basic electrical patterns in his brain, no analysis of the circuits of a computer can tell us whether the computer is playing

chess or predicting the weather." While it is better to treat certain mental illnesses by administering drugs rather than confining the patient to an immobilizing chair, "we should have no illusions that we really know what we are doing when we use many of the therapies administered today."

The chemistry of memory, the chemistry of sorrow... We would feel diminished in dignity by such ways of speaking. But certain foods contain amino acids which pass into the blood and alter moods. Indeed, simply seeing food evidently can trigger physiological mechanisms that produce weight increase. Gracious.

Human beings became comfortable with the thought of themselves as creatures composed of flesh and blood and also something grander. Now neurobiology makes problematic the idea that we are both bodies and quite distinct minds or spirits. The idea of "the ghost in the machine" may be yielding to the idea that we are machines. Are we just the sum of the chemical reactions bubbling within us?

Happily, the more we know, the less we know. The more we know about the brain, the more we are awed by how much there is to know, not only about the brain but about the totality of creation that has culminated (we are the culmination... aren't we?) in a gadget as intricate as man. The neuroscience behind the news that "Einstein's Brain Was Different" calls to mind a recent Chicago Tribune headline. It was a story about the aftermath of the Israeli airlift out of Ethiopia: "20th Century Stuns Ethiopian Jews." I know just how they feel.

George Will is a columnist for the Washington Post.

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Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

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