

Battalion Interpretive

Legal Rights Panel: A Year-End Look

By Dave Mays Battalion Editor

Last Sept. 17, Senate President Gerry Geistweidt made a suggestion that surprised some senators and touched off a minor flap among law enforcement officials.

Geistweidt proposed that the senate establish a Legal Rights Commission, a panel that would advise A&M students who found themselves in trouble with the law and would check into reports of student "harrassment" by local police.

The commission Geistweidt envisioned would be composed of professors, students and others who had a knowledge of law and would give students information and legal advice, and perhaps even grant them loans for lawyer fees.

And, though local police officers were quick to deny that students were harrassed in any way, senators agreed to establish a committee to determine the extent of the need students had for such a commission.

More than eight months have passed since the committee was established with David Zoellner, civil engineering graduate student, serving as chairman.

Zoellner told The Battalion Thursday that, though progress

has been slow this year, he is very optimistic that the rights commission can perform a valuable service to A&M students. The need for such a commission has been clearly established, Zoellner said.

"It is a fact that college students are the easiest prey for peace officers," he said, adding that this is true here and in practically every other college town. "There is definitely an injustice here," Zoellner continued. "There is not equal enforcement of the law."

For example, he said, the police, if they want to wait long enough, can catch a college student illegally purchasing beer at a carry-out.

What happens in almost every case, however, is that they arrest the student for minor in possession but do not arrest the owner of the store who illegally sold the beer to him, Zoellner said.

This, he said, is unequal enforcement of the laws.

Students who are arrested and charged with some offense very often do not know what rights they have, and this, Zoellner says, is the greatest need the commission could satisfy.

"The courtroom is a very hostile environment," he explained,

"and a student who doesn't know his rights before his trial is very seldom informed of them there." Zoellner's committee has investigated 40 student cases already and is in the process of writing up reports on each one.

"We've probably helped students in about 25 of these cases, mostly just by telling them what alternatives they have," he recalled. "Most of the students faced charges of minor in possession, driving while intoxicated, drunk in a public place, or speeding."

A&M professors who are also lawyers have told me that they are continually swamped by students asking legal advice concerning some problem," Zoellner added.

"This is where we can help," he continued. "We're not trying to practice law or promote any causes," he said, "only provide information."

Selling the idea of a Legal Rights Commission to the university or the community has not been easy, Zoellner said. But he is quick to add that no one he has talked to has refused to consider the concept entirely.

Zoellner's committee met with the late President Earl Rudder last fall and, though he said he

believes the administration was simply "humoring him," he was encouraged by Rudder's proposal that they meet jointly with police and government officials from both cities.

The meeting never took place, Zoellner said, largely due to the president's illness and later death.

Zoellner said he has received less encouragement from people he has talked to in the community, but admits he has not been able to contact a number of district, county and city officials. He said he plans to see most of them this summer.

Zoellner said he did not talk to Bill Payne, president of the Brazos County State Bar Association, who, while appearing sympathetic, said he did not believe any special concessions should be given to students.

Zoellner said he had asked Payne if he could make a presentation at a bar association meeting to ask members to accept cases on a referral basis,

but received little encouragement.

After lawyers are two or more years out of law school, they tend to become too money-oriented, Zoellner complained.

"They would rather not answer questions or take nit-picking cases," he said.

He added that he could see the lawyer's side of the issue also, but suggested that the Legal Rights Commission could relieve local lawyers of many of their minor, but more bothersome cases.

For the commission to be effective next year, he said, it would need to secure the cooperation of a lawyer somehow.

Perhaps, he suggested, the university's lawyer could be paid something extra for giving legal advice.

In any case, he said, anything the commission advises students must come from a reliable source, and this means a lawyer must be consulted.

Bulletin Board

SUNDAY

Alpha Phi Omega will meet at 8 p.m. in Room 3D Memorial Student Center to hear a report on the arthritis drive and to prepare for next year's projects.

MONDAY

Ag Eco Club will meet at 6 p.m. in Hensel Park for the spring

picnic and awards presentation. Tickets are \$1.25 and can be purchased in the Reference Lab, Agriculture.

Iota Lambda Sigma will meet at 7 p.m. in Room 107, Mechanical Engineering shop, to elect officers. Richard Pulaski will speak on vocational education.

tonight on the tube

Table with columns for time, channel, and program name. Includes programs like General Hospital, CBS Evening News, News, Gunsmoke, Here's Lucy, Mayberry RFD, Doris Day, Carol Burnett, The FBI, and The Law and Mr. Jones.

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Listen Up the batt forum

Editor:

I would like to offer my congratulations to the Board of Directors and Mr. Gene Stallings on their farsighted investment in the future. It is obvious to all concerned that the transfer of some \$114,000 from the New Men's Dormitory Reserve to the project to put artificial turf on Kyle Field and the practice field is just the type of expenditure that is needed during this time of rapid growth at Texas A&M.

Since all of our present dormitory facilities are more than adequate in both number and luxury, it is good that our farseeing leadership has seen fit to expend over \$700,000 on a stadium that is filled at least once every two years.

The fact that all of the dorms have been built since 1910 and that they are constantly being maintained in a manner that is conducive to good study and living conditions speaks for itself.

Most administrators are probably aware that there are too many books in the library, anyway; that none of the streets need paving; that campus employees who are supporting families on less than minimum wages are grossly overpaid; that no new classroom space is needed; that no better professors could be lured to A&M by better salary offers; etc. These things are "known" to everyone who is interested, as the Board of Directors surely must be.

Given the generally excellent financial conditions of our university, it is obvious that the decision to transfer these funds

is in the best interest of a large majority of the students, both present and future. With our tradition of forming a senior line at half-time, it is certain that each and every student will benefit from this investment, if he goes to the game, if he wants to run up and down several hundred feet of ramps and stands, and if the benevolent athletic department will allow the students to walk on "their" new turf. Congratulations again. I. Brent Carrell '69

Editor's Note: System Comptroller W. C. Freeman told The Battalion that the money was "borrowed" from the account and would be paid back before the contract on the new dormitory complex was awarded.

Editor:

In reply to John McAuley's most recent joke in the Batt, let me say that I support President Nixon's 18 mile "invasion" of Cambodia. Now let me correct one of the many misconceptions the CCOC seems to have. Nowhere in the constitution is it stated that the Commander-in-Chief of our nation's armed forces must have congressional permission before he take the military action he feels necessary. The President must and does have the power to send troops anywhere and at any time without the delay of waiting for a session of Congress. I'm sure, however, that Hanoi is saluting the CCOC and the many other student groups who are helping to assure a Communist victory in Vietnam and the defeat of the

United States around the world. But, I'm tired of seeing American flags burn at home. It's about time to see traitors burn instead. Steve Timmons

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Editor:

I find it most difficult to believe that college and university administrators all over the nation are allowing themselves to be coerced into closing down their schools by a small group of radicals. It is also hard for me to believe that student senates are condoning this action by supporting student boycotts and strikes.

I am just as shocked as anyone else about what happened in Ohio last Monday, and I regret that four students lost their lives in this incident, but it must be remembered that those who were killed were in the front of a mob that was throwing rocks, bricks, and Heaven knows what else at the National Guardsmen, a mob that had them outnumbered and was trying to surround them. The National Guardsmen were called out to keep the peace, not to be targets for radicals who wanted to practice their brick throwing techniques.

Any administration that lowers the flag in honor of these students is doing a greater disservice to the flag than most radicals in any way, much less that of lowering the American flag to half mast.

Peaceful demonstrations are one thing, but brick throwing riots are something entirely different. Stanley Collins '73

The Battalion

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the student writers only. The Battalion is a non-tax-supported, non-profit, self-supporting educational enterprise edited and operated by students as a university and community newspaper.

LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor should be typed, double-spaced, and no more than 300 words in length. They must be signed, although the writer's name will be withheld by arrangement with the editor. Address correspondence to Listen Up, The Battalion, Room 217, Services Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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The Battalion, a student newspaper at Texas A&M, is published in College Station, Texas, daily except Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and holiday periods, September through May, and once a week during summer school.

Represented nationally by National Educational Advertising Services, Inc., New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

MEMBER The Associated Press, Texas Press Association The Associated Collegiate Press

Mail subscriptions are \$3.50 per semester; \$6 per school year; \$6.50 per full year. All subscriptions subject to 4% sales tax. Advertising rate furnished on request. Address: The Battalion, Room 217, Services Building, College Station, Texas 77843.

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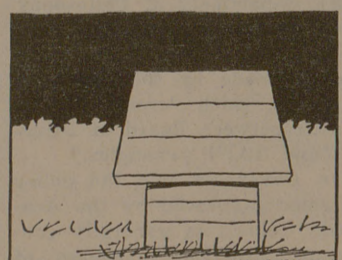
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