

Listen up

# Regarding the Bonfire and ecology

**Editor:**  
In recent days it has been difficult to read an edition of The Battalion without encountering letters from people concerned about the Bonfire.

I feel there definitely are more productive channels available for the manpower and time now expended on the Bonfire. I heartily support those who offer alternatives.

However, some have indicated the cutting of trees for use in the bonfire is a form of environmental degradation. I must move to question this.

The land in and around College Station, now referred to as the "Post Oak Belt," was originally a savanna—a grassland matrix with trees scattered throughout. Early settlers wrote of the lush grass and scattered trees.

Unwise land use practices such as cultivation of land not suited

for agronomic production, and overgrazing by cattle resulted in the disappearance of this grass cover. Post Oak and other trees invaded the area previously occupied by grass. The removal of grass fires as an environmental factor by the white man gave the trees added protection and allowed them to survive.

The resulting vegetation is referred to as "thicketization" rather than a forest. It is easy to identify the veteran trees that were a part of the climax vegetation. The grass fires effectively pruned the lower branches and it may be several feet to the first limb.

My point is, the situation encountered in wooded areas around College Station today is not natural (climax). It is a disturbed situation resulting from man's misuse of his environment. To restore this land to maximum

production, the removal of most, if not all of the trees is necessary. Therefore, cutting the trees is often beneficial. If the veteran trees are left, the area is quite scenic after removal of "scrub" trees.

Nevertheless, it would seem that using old houses and/or trash for the Bonfire would both help the community and project a better image for Texas A&M University.

Brown Collins '69  
★ ★ ★

**Editor:**  
This letter is in reply to the editorial by Steve Hayes concerning the Amchitka nuclear test. Needless to say, the editorial was one sided and did not even try to present the side of the A.E.C. Noticeable by its absence was the fact that the blast went exactly according to A.E.C. predictions.

Also, Mr. Hayes' remark that it was "the world's largest underground nuclear H-bomb" is in error. According to Newsweek magazine, the Russians in the past 13 months have detonated two underground nuclear blasts "of proportions similar to or greater than" the Amchitka test. The Russians have also set off an above ground test which was ten times larger than the Amchitka test. It should be noted that above ground testing is much more hazardous than underground testing. Although an au-

thor may put personal opinions in an editorial, he should not be allowed to distort facts.

The author was correct in asserting that this particular H-bomb might not be used on the Spartan ABM; however, he once again failed to explain that the fundamental technology of the final version will be the same and knowledge gained from this test would certainly not be wasted.

The editorial also asked the question, "Is there really any way to say that this blast will have no effect on the next one, ten, or twenty earthquakes and tidal waves?" The strength of the surface wave shock is used to determine whether or not tidal waves will be generated. Although shock wave theory may not be perfect, it is probably more accurate than whatever hocus-pocus Mr. Hayes used to insinuate that tidal waves will still occur.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I considered the editorial to be full of half-truths and what-ifs.

Richard Klapper

Thank you for your information on the size of the bomb — we were mistaken in that sense.

About the tidal wave effect, however, there seems to be a misunderstanding. While the surface wave shock determines the initial wave, the bomb may

have some effect on later earth tremors. Amchitka Island is part of "the ring of fire," an area of volcanic activity that is relatively active — the San Andreas fault is part of it. This is what Steve Hayes meant by possible tidal waves and earth tremors. He fears, and so do many others, that the blast may cause future shocks by upsetting the balance of the faults.

It is also Hayes' right to doubt the value of another H-bomb explosion, especially when the aftermath could be severe.

Certainly the column is full of what-ifs. When anything is done, it is a good idea to think about what might happen as the result of it — that is what is known as what-ifs — and intelligent thinking.

## Cadet

(Continued from page 1)

tion, and it's what A&M is all about. We learn to respect the individual for what he is and the importance of getting to know him. This is A&M; not quibbling over who's burning who's campaign sign.

"Of course we don't think the Corps is the only solution on this campus; the civilian student body demands a lot of recognition. But I think they're missing a lot by not seeing what the Corps is all about.

"For years we've been trying to build leaders, not necessarily as members of the Army or the Air Force or the Marine Corps, but as citizens, he continued."

Last year the population of the Corps of Cadets dropped to approximately 2,500 students. Parsons has set his goal at 3,000 for next fall.

"I don't know if we're going to meet Col. Parson's 3,000 mark by next year," Stanley said, "but I think we're going to see a substantial increase. We are growing."

TRY BATTALION CLASSIFIED

## CADET SLOUCH

by Jim Earle



"I've already had a student who wants to leave early for the Texas Game! Aren't they playing here this year?"

Steve Hayes

# Feds and predator control

The Federal Government first became involved in predator control programs as a result of World War I. Congress appropriated \$125,000 tax dollars for the protection of cattle to be used by our allies, and our own troops. As is often true with Federal programs it outlived its cause and eventually developed as the main business of the US Fish and Wildlife Services. In its first 20 years, the program was aimed at determining the best methods to eliminate predators for the thinking that prevailed was if you decreased predators, the amount of game would increase.

The bounty system was formed, but this only reaped the surplus predators, and did little to change the ecological balance of the predator-prey relationship. Strychnine and thallium were next used for poisoning predators. However, not until WW II, with the development of sodium monofluoroacetate, (Compound 1080) did mass distribution of poisons gain great impetus. As might have been expected, programs, expenditures, and criticism spiraled. Thus, the Department of the Interior did what we have learned to expect of any bureaucracy, they formed a committee, the Leopold Committee, to be precise to study the situation.

In 1964, the board submitted its unanimous report to the Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, stating "that control as actually practiced today is considerably in excess of the amount that can be justified in terms of total public interest." Furthermore, the Committee included in its report, the opinion that, "... the program of animal control ... no longer is a balanced component of an overall scheme of wildlife management ... Far more animals are being killed than would be required for the effective protection of livestock, agricultural crops, wildland resources, and human health.

This unnecessary destruction is further augmented by state, county, and individual endeavor ... the Branch of Predator and Rodent Control, bears scant relationship to real need and less still to scientific management."

Among other things the Leopold Committee called for establishment of legal controls over the use of certain poisons. But two years later, nothing had changed, and in fact the director of the bureau which oversees the predator control program stated that he did not feel obligated to the report. And five years later it was noted that there

were no significant changes anywhere in the predator control program. The costs of the predator control program continues to spiral, the number of destroyed wildlife increases, in spite of the decreasing number of sheep raised.

It is a tragic irony that the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the agency which helps to maintain the predator control program, also maintains the official endangered species list as well. It is by the actions of this bureau that many of the animals (i.e. kit fox, black-footed ferret, bald eagle) are added to their lists. As a result of an over-employed bureaucracy, most district field assistants have rationalized their predator control programs as the saving grace of the livestock industry. Control has become a way of life for these agents. An agency with over 700 field agents and supervisors is simply not staffed to handle an occasional program, but a perpetual one.

During 1970, the bureau, acting under the U.S. Department of Interior, distributed enough bait carcasses to kill three times the present number of coyotes, and distributed 800,000 strychnine balls, and 20,000 cyanide guns to ranchers who requested

them. No form of discriminate control is used, yet the director of Wildlife Services, stated that these methods are "attempts to limit wildlife depredations in a manner that protects wildlife." Not only is the logic used so blatantly irrational, the facts do not bear him out. In 1969 alone nearly 35,000 animals not listed as predators were killed by predator control methods. These animals included beavers, badgers, porcupines, raccoons, otters, and foxes, as well as others. Also several of the few remaining grizzly bears south of the Rio Grande were accidentally poisoned by a joint effort of the U. S. Dept. of the Interior and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. Understandably, the total number of animals taken by these methods is declining, yet the budget has soared even past the rate of inflation.

We have reached the point where gains no longer exceed costs.

Tomorrow: The Costs

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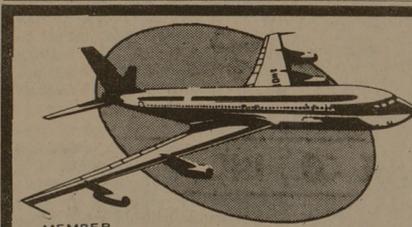
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