

Working out civilian, Corps polarization

Since it is far too long to be run as the letter it was intended to be, we have decided to run this as a guest commentary.

We cannot say that we agree with everything in this. We do know, however, that there are far more valid points that should be heard than there are those we disagree with. —Ed.

During the past four years as a student and as a member of the Corps of Cadets, I have seen this University undergo many changes. Yet, I can see the necessity of further changes.

I hope that I am not considered a paranoid reactionary when I say that the Corps has been the object of much criticism, some warranted, some not. I am sure that everyone realizes that the Corps is in a period of transition and is being radically restructured.

female students, though not complete, has become almost commonplace. These changes are due in a large part to a conscientious attempt to change the image of the Corps from a straight-laced, military organization to a group of young men who are interested in scholastics, athletics, world events, and campus activities. We happen to wear uniforms and many plan to serve as officers in our Armed Forces.

But even a passing, uninterested observer can easily note the polarization of our student body. The factions are the Corps and the civilians; the sounding-board for discontent has been the "Listen up" column of The Battalion. One side will object to the actions of the other. The other side will counter-object, etc., etc. The rest is history. The retorts of some members of the Corps have been violent (and oft times, irrational). But why does the Corps react so much more strongly than the civilians at times?

The Corps is basically a self-perpetuating organization. I do

not feel that this Corps reaction is based on support of tradition for tradition's sake alone. On the surface this may seem the only explanation. But there are others.

Since the Corps is self-perpetuating, we must enlist members. Students join the Corps whereas civilians simply become members of the civilian population of this campus. Faced with this problem, criticism hits us where it hurts the most: manpower. Knowledge of such criticism deters many from joining and causes others to leave. This is not to say that we are above criticism. We welcome criticism from within and without. But criticism beyond a certain point becomes provoking and belittling. Many Cadets feel that this "belittling" criticism is an attempt (organized or not) to undermine membership and thereby possibly destroy the Corps. The repeated attacks only go to strengthen this opinion and calls for defense of Corps traditions and policies. We realize that there are sincere anti-military feelings on campus with which we must contend. But if the Corps cannot maintain the necessary levels of manpower, the Corps will be altered in structure and could possibly be abolished. In the eyes of many, the Corps is fighting for its very existence. This might explain why the Corps often reacts so strongly.

But it is time that this fight come to an end. Each of us, Corps and civilian, must accept certain realities.

The civilian must accept some things about the Corps. Regardless of their feelings about the military, the R.O.T.C. Program and therefore, the Corps of Cadets at A&M must continue to exist. It is necessary for our national defense, especially in the light of the emphasis placed on an elite, "all-volunteer" Army. Civilians should accept the fact that the Corps will continue to fight for such good traditions as Silver Taps, Muster, support of athletic teams, etc. These are Aggie traditions. Although we are in no position to demand it, the Corps would very much like to

preserve some traditions for the Corps alone such as Elephant Walk, Boot Line, and Corps trips. Likewise, the Corps of Cadets must also face up to the facts. The Corps will never again maintain a majority on this campus. Therefore, we must work with the civilians in order that they understand our needs and desires and vice versa. We can only hope that the civilian student body will continue to be mature enough to respect our rights and desires as a minority on this campus. The Corps must also keep working for and be willing to accept constructive change within our organization if we expect to survive and grow.

The Corps and civilian students

will always be two very distinct groups. Therefore, "unity," in the truest sense of the word, is impossible—now or in the future. But we can work for a common, desirable goal: cooperation.

If these two distinct groups can cooperate and quit this constant childish bickering between themselves, we, the students of Texas A&M, can maintain our position, as the greatest student body anywhere. In 20 years, I would like to be able to say that our classes did more to promote harmony and coordination within our student body than any other class in this school's history. I would like this to be my personal legacy to Texas A&M University.

Stephen L. Baker '72

CADET SLOUCH

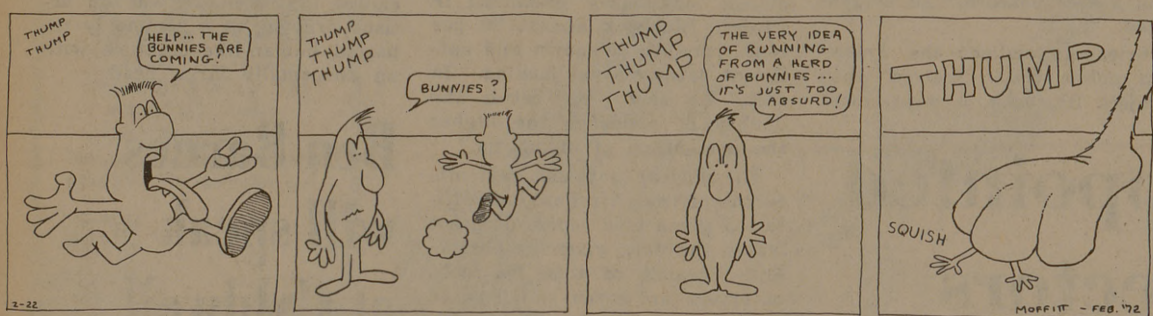
by Jim Earle



"I've won a free trip to Miami that pays for every thing except travel and room and board!"

AARGH!

... John R. Moffitt



The Battalion

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Page 2 College Station, Texas Wednesday, February 23, 1972

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