

Davenport Stands Up For Free Press

Dear Sirs:

I am most sympathetic with many of the attitudes expressed by Professor Nagyvary in his letter which you published on June 13. I agree that there is a tremendous difference between the political process followed in the United States and that imposed in Communist countries. I also agree that upon visiting many different countries in this world there is no better place in which to live than the United States. At the same time I am distressed because Prof. Nagyvary seems not to understand why our political system continues to survive

as the best in the world.

It does, for one reason, because while we respect the Office of the President, we do not identify it with the particular individual who happens to hold that office. Thus, our government does not disintegrate when individual presidents lose elections or even die at the hands of assassins, and it certainly will not suffer "irreparable damage" because the present office-holder is being subjected to criticism.

Our system of government also remains strong because while we are concerned about our national security, we do not identify it

with the political reputation of whoever happens to be president or his campaign workers. Thus, it is possible in the United States when the party in power is itself a threat to our national security, to replace it without recourse to violent revolution.

Prof. Nagyvary seems to omit consideration of the fact that these abilities to change and transfer power without bloodshed which constitute the superiority of our form of government, presuppose and require news media which are free to present us with information concerning the mistakes and imperfections of our elected officials. If, when the news media do this, the "rest of the world" is disturbed, it must be because they do not understand how and why democracy works and share the mistaken belief that the survival of our institutions depends upon the survival of particular politicians.

Those who are weary of continued news coverage of the Watergate affair should consider the fact that almost no information concerning it has been provided the citizens of China and Russia. Is this because the leaders of those nations respect our institu-

tions and national security, or is it possibly because they fear the example of citizens who have the right to subject their political leaders to public criticism?

I agree with Prof. Nagyvary that President Nixon did not need a burglary to win the election. But it does not follow that no burglary took place. I also agree that the American principle of fair play should prevent us from attributing guilt without substantiation. I believe, however, that the news media has presented us with clear evidence that a burglary occurred. Of course, if one believes in advance that the news media are "brainwashing" us with "sophisticated propaganda," then we have no basis for drawing any conclusions. In such a case, how

could Professor Nagyvary conclude that we cannot trust the news media? I suspect he bases this conclusion on reports of political speeches and comment appearing in newspapers and on television. The fact that such reports appear; indeed, the fact that his letter was published in a newspaper, should assure him that we have not fallen victims yet to "brainwashing" by any form of propaganda, and we will not as long as he and those who agree with him have the right to criticize the news media and I and those who agree with me have the right to criticize those in political office.

Manuel M. Davenport
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Batt Editorial

Thanks, Governor For Equal Rights

Many professional politicians felt if Dolph Briscoe were elected the state's governor a year ago, Texas would be in trouble due to his inexperience in the political arena. They said he was a very rich rancher, not a politician.

Maybe that is the reason some of the best human rights bills have been passed during his first term in office. Instead of being looked upon with disbelief concerning our marijuana-possession laws, Texas now has one of the most realistic. Previous to Briscoe's signing, an individual could get anywhere from two years to life imprisonment for possession plus the loss of right's due to a felony conviction.

The new marijuana law, passed two weeks ago, dropped most penalties to a misdemeanor. Possession of two ounces or less now has a maximum penalty of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Possession of from two to four ounces is still a misdemeanor but with a maximum fine of \$2,000 and one year in jail.

Possession of over four ounces is a felony conviction with the same penalty as was in effect of from two years to life. A stipulation was written in that this sentence could be probated if the judge felt that the quantity of over four ounces was not for sale.

In most instances, the first offense for possession only would be probated. The pusher, who needs to be locked up in the first place, will pay dearly for his deeds. The possession, use and sale of hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, LSD, etc., is still punishable under the old Texas law.

Briscoe also gave young people from 18 to 21 years of age full legal rights in a bill passed late last week. There was speculation of a veto and pressure from conservative members of his legislative members, but it was passed and goes into effect Aug. 27.

"Young people of 18 have earned full citizenship rights and have proved they are capable of meeting the responsibilities of adulthood," he said. "They gave their young lives to protect for you and me the American Way of Life. In my opinion, it is unreasonable for us to expect, and in times of crisis demand, this kind of service, patriotism and sacrifice from young people at the age of 18 while withholding from them the full privileges of citizenship."

Many people will feel Briscoe did this without the full sanction of the state or of the legislators. Many feel he took too big a responsibility upon himself, but during the legislative session he favored an unsuccessful proposed constitutional amendment that would have let voters decide the legal rights of young people.

The 18-year-olds deserve full rights. By that time most are freshmen in college and have left home to begin a new life. Most need to establish credit to purchase automobiles, televisions and insurance. Previous to this bill, young people would have to get parental consent or have a co-signer to any contractual agreement.

As for the now-legal ability to purchase alcoholic beverages, how many 18-to-21 year-old young people have never consumed? Beer, etc., is served at all fraternity parties beginning with the first day of rush week for incoming freshmen. What about high school activities such as the prom?

Thank you, Gov. Briscoe for making it legal, not for making it available. That distinction fell upon liquor store owners way before you made it into office. The legislation you have signed has been a credit to the office, especially to someone who supposedly doesn't know about politics — just ranching.

Two Profs, Two Alumni Get Posts

Two A&M professors and two former students have been elected to state and national leadership positions in the Society of Professional Engineers.

Dr. Charles H. Samson, head of TAMU's Civil Engineering Department, will take office this month as president of the Texas Society of Professional Engineers.

Dr. Charles A. Rodenberger, professor of aerospace engineering, will be installed as a national director for SPE.

A. C. Burkhalter, 1952 TAMU graduate, will serve as Region 4 vice president and James R. Montgomery, a 1933 graduate, will serve as Region 2 vice president. Burkhalter is a planning coordinator with the Friendswood Development Company in Houston. Montgomery is supervising engineer for the Humble Oil and Refining Company in Tyler.

Dr. Samson served TSPE as president of the Brazos Chapter in 1967-68 and on the finance committee, the professional society relations committee, and the public affairs committee of the state society.

Dr. Rodenberger is Halliburton Professor of Engineering at TAMU and was named as this year's Engineer of the Year by the Brazos Chapter.

The officers will be installed June 29 at the annual installation banquet, held in conjunction with the state convention at Brownsville.

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The Battalion

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EDITOR BILL HENRY

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12:00 - 1:00: Bible Study Time

Tuesday: "The Second Coming"

Wednesday: "Show and Tell"

Thursday: "Notes From My Bible"

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