

# Viewpoint

## The Battalion

## April 26, 1977

### Readers' Forum

# Morals need re-evaluation

By HOLT WILLIAMSON

On first hearing of the controversy between the gay activists and their opponents, I was immediately struck by the significance of the situation. As the vitriolic and hysterical harangues against this minority increased in number and volume, I began to perceive more clearly the problem and its ominous consequences. Finally, when the administration of a major state university (the bastion of tolerance, enlightenment, and truth) joins forces with the herd of the small-minded to deprive homosexuals of their fundamental rights as loyal, tax-paying, American citizens it becomes necessary to take appropriate action.

I think everyone will agree there is something wrong here. I always thought American citizens were born with certain inalienable rights and to deprive the citizen of these rights constituted the greatest of social and moral sins. Now, when a person, a university administration, or even society itself denies an individual the inalienable and legal rights guaranteed him by that same society, then, yes indeed, there is something drastically wrong. It might be a case of social schizophrenia or simple repression. Both diseases are intolerable in a healthy, free society.

America has always stood for individual freedom and liberty. The terms are synonymous. America is liberty and freedom, at least that is the great concept to which my allegiance was pledged throughout my childhood days in a small school in a dry, dusty West Texas town. Did someone tell that child a lie? If so, does an individual owe his allegiance to a nation whose morality is based on lies? I am sort of confused and I would like some answers. I was taught to respect the rights of my fellow man, regardless of whether or not I agreed with him; regardless of whether or not his actions slightly upset my stomach. In fact, as the international standard bearer of freedom, I was expected and obligated to defend his rights. After all, that was why we were in Viet Nam, wasn't it? Strange, that with such a cause we could have lost; or were we fighting for the wrong cause in the wrong country? Stop! Go to your bedrooms. Look in the mirror.

You need go no further to find the enemy. We, ourselves are the most dangerous threats to the things we hold most dear — to the greatest and best values of this country. Why are we the threat? Because we are ignorant, we are apathetic and lethargic. Because we have taken liberty and freedom for granted for so long we have forgotten what they mean. We have allowed "cheap, little hustlers" like Richard Nixon to redefine our symbols, the language. "Annihilation" grew to mean "pacification"; the infamous deeds of a powerful, authoritarian organization, i.e. the university administration, are described as "valiant"; "freedom" now means "repression." Oh yes, I heartily concur, something is dreadfully wrong.

In our numbness we have become vulnerable to the greatest weakness of a democracy — the tyranny of the majority over the minority. This danger is manifested by the predominance of the misconceived idea that might makes right; the distorted idea that prompts the question, "Why can't everybody be normal like me?" In a truly free society, "majority rule" can never be the justification for oppression. If it is, then the people are using the same deplorable tactics as those of totalitarian or despotic regimes. Are we ready for that yet?

To deprive someone of his right to peacefully join in association with those of his own choosing and to express the group's views; to prevent him from exercising the fundamental rights due all American citizens is wrong. Such societal restraint is like trying to cure the common cold with a flame thrower. The disease is successfully extinguished but at the expense of the life of the patient. Societal and political repression of ideas, behavior, and attitudes simply because they do not correspond to those of the majority is tantamount to committing social suicide. We will have overthrown ourselves.

As a product of the Viet Nam War, I heard a lot about patriotism. Everybody claimed to be one so I know there are a lot of you out there. Step out of the shadows where I can see you. Stand up for America, Liberty and Freedom for All. The battle is in your own backyard.

Holt Williamson is a University employe.

### Letters to the Editor

# Displaced sailors denied lake

**Editor:**  
On March 4 an article was published on the front page of The Battalion, entitled "Bryan to Drain Lake." The article stated that the Bryan Municipal Lake was to be drained for removal of arsenic residue which initially came from waste seepage from Pennwalt Corporation's Agchem-Decco Division on Dodge Street in Bryan.

The main concern of the article seemed to center around the effect the drained lake would have on the Texas A&M University Sailing Club. Since the lake will contain no water for some time, after drainage, the effect will obviously be a recreational disaster and a great detriment to the club.

In an effort to compensate for this expected drainage the club is looking elsewhere to carry on its activity. According to Jerry Mainord, advisor to the TAMU Sailing Club, the most probable site would be the cooling lakes of the Roland Dansby Power Plant north of Bryan. This would seem to be an excellent choice regarding location and accessibility. Regardless of the unavoidable situation the City of Bryan seems to be reluctant in making arrangements for the club to use the lake. Since Bryan charges a \$2 fee per automobile to enter the park area surrounding the lake, there seems to be some problems for the club in the use of the lake.

The article stated that the club has made no financial arrangements with Bryan for the use of the lakes because the city is unwilling to give special consideration to groups. They had also submitted a proposal, in 1976, requesting space for a club facility and permission to enter the park after paying a yearly fee. This proposal was turned down.

I do not understand Bryan's rationale for their decisions concerning this situation. When the proposals and philosophy behind the Dansby Power Project became known to me, recreation was a major underlying benefactor associated with the cooling lakes. The lakes and surrounding park areas would provide good outdoor recreational opportunity which is essential to a community such as Bryan-College Station. With this philosophy in mind, I should think Bryan would jump at the chance to incorporate and expand the recreational program of the Dansby Park Area. I feel that sailing is a quality activity and would be an attribute to any recreation program with a facility to accommodate such an activity. I sympathize with the sailing club because of the inevitable situation and would like to hear more.

—Mike Hunter, '77  
Recreation and Parks

## Wheelchair day no light matter

**Editor:**  
While glancing at the front page picture in The Battalion on April 20, I was appalled at what I saw. The photo was of the administrators and instructors participating in Wheelchair Awareness Day activities by actually portraying a wheelchair victim for the day. What upsets me is that these people appear to enjoy their ride by their facial expressions. This is defeating the purpose of the event. The day was supposed to show the many difficulties wheelchair-bound individuals experience daily, not how much fun it is to get a free ride. How are we as students supposed to respond if our own administrators treat such an event so lightly?

—Chuck Burr, '79

## Ag worth his weight in wallets

**Editor:**  
Last week I lost my wallet while bicycling in Bryan. I had no hope of seeing my driver's license, credit

cards, ID, etc. again. A couple of days later it was delivered to me by a fellow Aggie. He had taken the time and trouble of getting my address, then finding it, to make sure I got my wallet. Such a thing could happen at no place but Texas A&M. Thanks again.

—S. Taylor

## Fraternity receives thanks

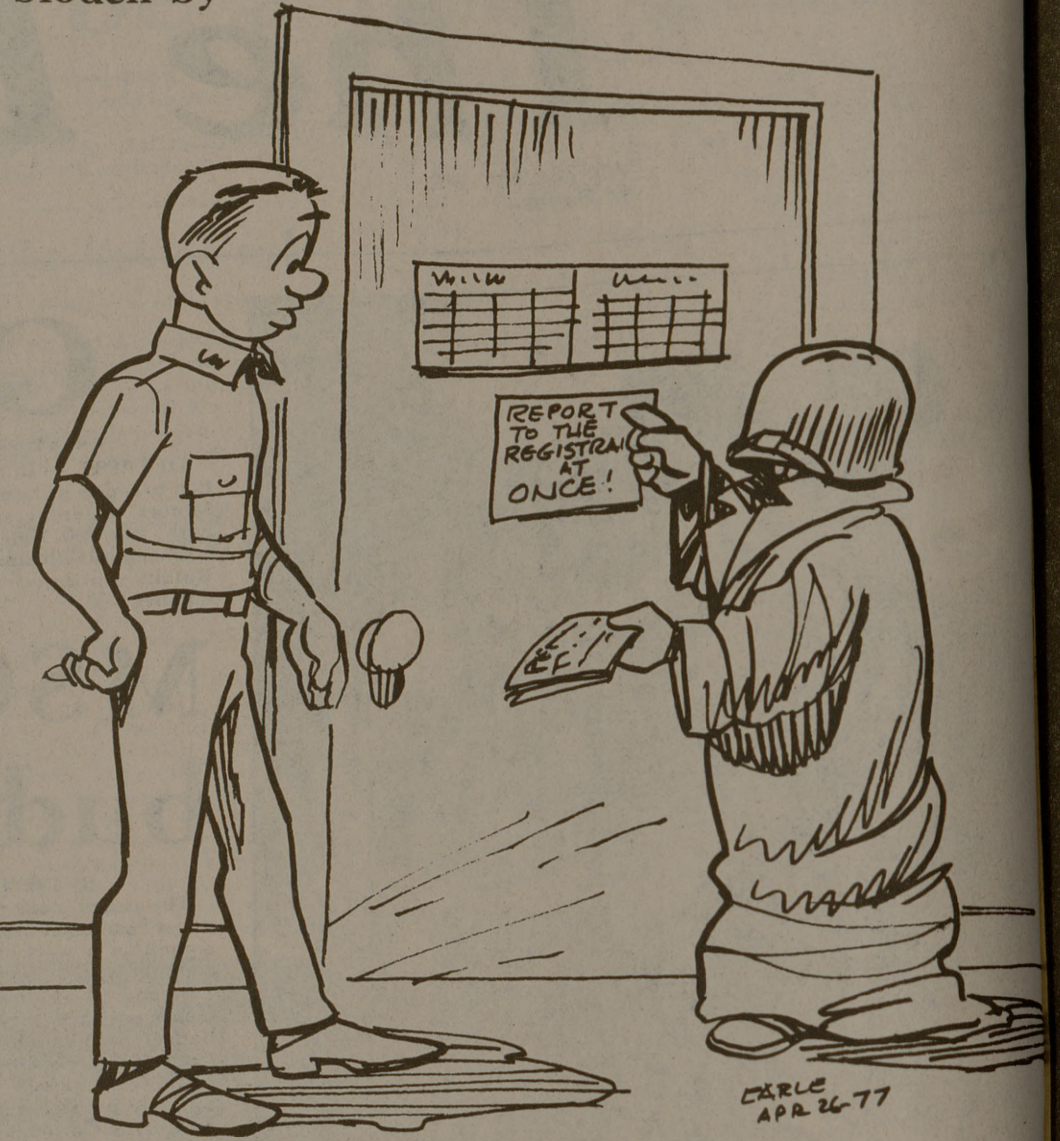
**Editor:**  
The clients and staff of Dilly Shaw Farm and Vocational Training Center and Robertson County Activity Center want to thank the Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity for the Easter Party given to us on April 7, 1977.

The party was a big success and included food, beverage and music donated by Lambda Chi. The party also allowed the clients to dance and to socialize with others which usually happens too infrequently. I and my staff were quite impressed with the enthusiasm and organization of this fraternity and their efforts have helped to develop basic social skills and self confidence within our clients. Again, thanks.

—William C. Morgan, Director

Slouch by

Jim B



"IT'S JUST MY WAY OF TRYING TO MAKE THE LAST WEEK INTERESTING FOR GRADUATING SENIORS!"

### Commentary

# Growth for a cause

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — There's a rich irony about the organization called Common Cause. It identifies itself as a public-interest group, as opposed to the putatively wicked special interest groups. Its great crusade has been to open up the political-governmental system to participation by "the people."

And yet Common Cause itself is a model of elitism. Its membership of 250,000 comprises one-tenth of one percent of the American public. By the estimate of its president, David Cohen, less than one-tenth of those members do more than write their annual dues check and maybe an occasional letter to their congressman.

From its birth in 1970, Common Cause has largely been an expression of the personal values, philosophy and program of its founder and chairman, John Gardner, a classic American aristocrat.

And yet, it's fair to say, I think, that this highly unrepresentative organization of mostly comfortably fixed and well-educated folks has had more impact on changing — and opening up — our political system than any other group in America these recent years.

Common Cause was on my mind because Gardner recently turned over the chairmanship to Nan Waterman of Muscatine, Iowa, and took up a kind of emeritus role at the age of 64.

What he and Common Cause have done these last seven years has been rather extraordinary. They have played a leading role in the weakening of the congressional seniority system, the passage of public financing for presidential campaigns and other major campaign reform legislation, and in the enactment of ethics, conflict-of-interest and "open government" statutes at both state and federal levels.

Another way of measuring their impact is to note that among their chief antagonists were former President Richard Nixon and former Rep. Wayne Hays.

This kind of clout seemed rather implausible seven years ago when Gardner, a former foundation president and outcast Republican alumnus of the Lyndon Johnson Cabinet, announced formation of a new citizens' group which would go beyond the conventional "causes" and focus on the fundamental forces that denied accountability in the political system. "Rampant goo-goo-ism," was the judgment of the Washington wiseacres.

It turned out that the cynics were wrong and Gardner was right. There was a constituency of angry citizens, who could be educated to the fact that you couldn't stop the Vietnam War until you changed the internal procedures of the House of Representatives that had denied its members a chance to cast a re-

orded vote on the war. Gardner mobilized thousands on behalf of significant but obscure reforms.

Gardner's definition of "reform" isn't everyone's cup of tea — including mine. Some provisions of the campaign finance and ethics codes Common Cause pushed through strike me as excessive, imprudent and the result of an unacknowledged bias for middle-class activism over any other form of political participation.

But I have to admire his skill in creating a constituency for that handful of congressmen and legislators who were battling for accountability and openness in their own sectors of government.

And I have to like the orneriness Gardner showed in making life miserable for the defense of the old devices for dodging responsibility. Gardner badgered them with law suits, publicity and the political reprisal. As Gardner said the other day, "I never knew what real slugging was until I got the ways people in power preserved their power seven years, he has given as good as he has got."

Along the way, Gardner hit on an organizational vice that seems to give at least a quarter-million citizens of this sometimes cynical land a genuine hope that they can have a real, personal impact on their government operates. And that is no small feat either.

Now, in keeping with his ideas about self-renewal, Gardner is turning over the chairmanship to Waterman and the day-to-day direction to her.

But what Waterman mentions as his unique quality — "his sense of commitment, his real indignation, clarity of his thinking and his skill in communication" — will still be used on behalf of Common Cause.

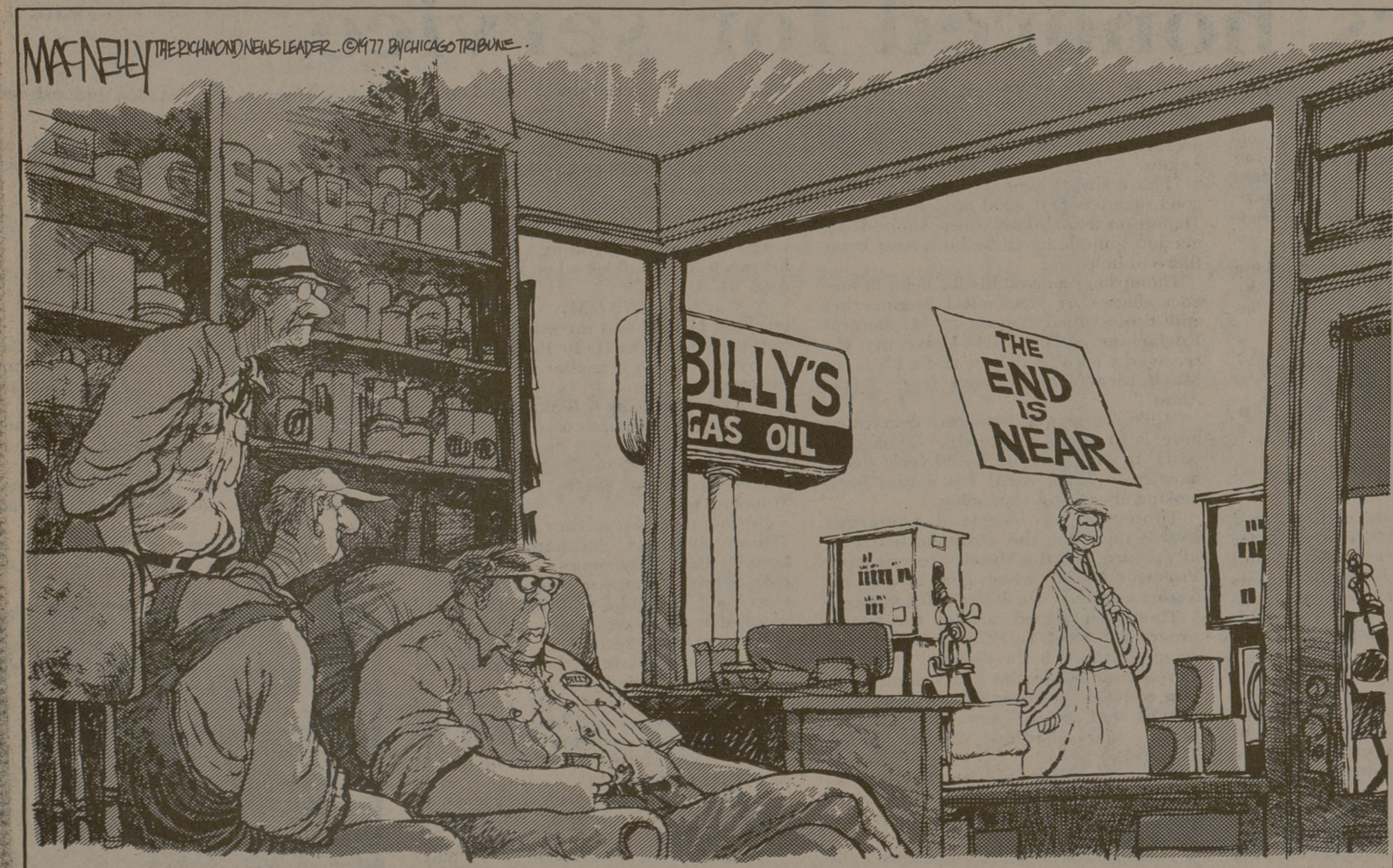
And Gardner has no doubt that Common Cause is its equivalent — will be needed for a long time, though the battle for openness and accountability in Congress has been remarkably successful, he said, "the jungle grows back over the clearing."

And the struggle for similar safeguards in the executive branch has barely begun. Gardner looks at the Carter — a Common Cause backer — with some crossed.

"It's an open administration," he said, "but it hasn't met its greatest test. The paranoia sets in later."

When that time comes, this deceptively well-mannered man and the organization he has created will be around. And that's probably a good thing for us.

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