

Freedom is everyone's right

Freedom is not something to be taken lightly — especially when there is a danger of losing that freedom.

Americans have both a right and a responsibility to know what is going on in their government. The Freedom of Information Act is the way citizens can exercise that right.

But proposed amendments to the FOI Act could limit that essential freedom.

The Freedom of Information Act guarantees the public access to all records of federal agencies except those with special exemptions.

But the \$64,000 question is: How much longer will the records be open?

The Senate Judiciary Committee is now reviewing a bill that will drastically restrict the FOI Act. It will go before the Senate soon.

Every day Americans react to some governmental agency. Look where students spend their days. The University itself is a governmental agency.

The Texas A&M chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi today is observing Freedom of Information Day.

But the FOI Act is a freedom for all Americans — not just that of the media.

Without free information, the public loses twice. Not only is the media restricted from sifting through governmental records for the public edification, but also is every American denied



mary jo rummel

access to such records.

Some people claim that our generation was gypped — we missed out on the causes of the '60s we missed out on the indignation and embarrassment of the Watergate situation, the Cold War seems too far away and revolution is something that happens to other countries.

Supposedly college students aren't responsible for what happens to the country until they graduate and become responsible adults in the community and the country. Then if they don't like the way the government is run, they can change it.

Not true. Without freedom of information, no one will know how the government is working.

Supported by President Reagan and introduced by Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, the FOI-restricting bill would paralyze the flow of information about the government.

The bill's proponents contend that re-

strictions are needed to protect national security.

Security is important. Many of the activities of the CIA, FBI and Defense Department depend on security. But is it sacred?

The Act already allows exemptions for national security, personnel records, personal privacy, law enforcement investigations, federally regulated banks and oil and gas wells.

But the current administration feels that the restrictions aren't strong enough. The proposed bill would withhold law enforcement records, end access to government legal settlements and limit the authority of courts to determine whether national records are properly classified.

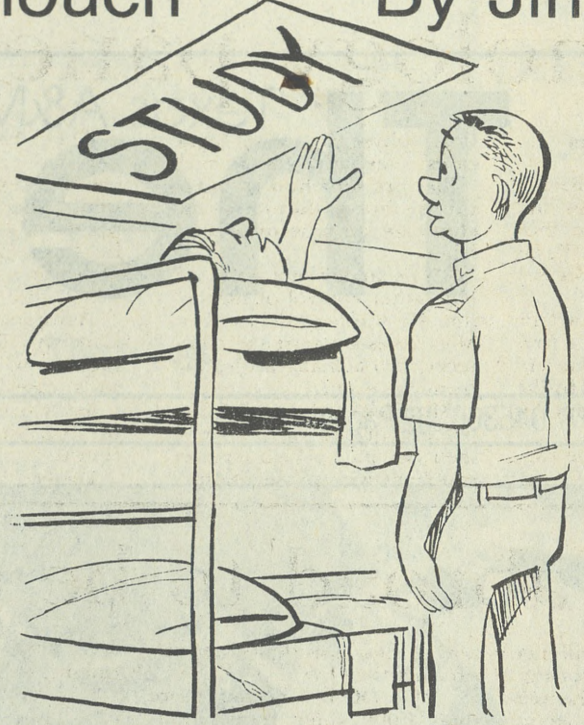
The bill also would broaden restrictions on memos and notes of government officials and company trade secrets. Another part of proposed bill would increase the cost of using the FOI Act and in some cases, the agency's response time from six days to one year.

All these restrictions would allow the government to tell citizens only what the government wants them to hear.

People should not have to depend on what the government tells them to make decisions about the country's future — their future.

Information is vital to maintain our freedom. Americans should protect the information they have by supporting the present Freedom of Information Act.

Slouch By Jim Earle



"Doggone it! I always forget what I was supposed to do until I get in bed."

Amplified speaker issue deserves more debate

A lot of people have complained about the use of public address systems around Rudder Complex — except the one time it really mattered.

Some said the amplified groups and individuals around Rudder were "imposing their views on others."

Others said: "I don't like the noise while I'm trying to eat lunch," or "Why don't they keep their opinions to themselves."

But when a Student Government committee addressed the situation, none of these people who complained so ardently during their lunch hour showed up.

Last night, the student services committee of Student Government held an open meeting to discuss a bill that would ban the use of public address systems from parts of the Texas A&M campus, including around Rudder fountain.

Even though the turn-out was the largest the committee had ever had, everyone presented basically the same opinion.

Seventy-seven students attended, 19 were committee members. The other 58 were mostly representatives from the religious organizations on campus.

Jolie Mailhos, author of the bill, explained that the sole purpose of the bill was to get public opinion. She said that someone had formally complained to her committee and requested a bill banning the use of PAs.

Visitors called the bill "contradictory" because it stressed freedom of speech yet wanted to ban usage of the tools "necessary" to implement that freedom.

One student said the bill specifically opposed religious speakers, yet silently condoned usage of loudspeakers by MSC



cindy davis

Town Hall and other "less controversial" groups.

From the discussion, it seemed every student in the whole University in love with getting lectured to on Bologna and Calculus.

That everyone on campus ardently approves the use of public address systems is a misconception, but there was one at the meeting to say so.

Helpless to do otherwise, the committee killed the bill.

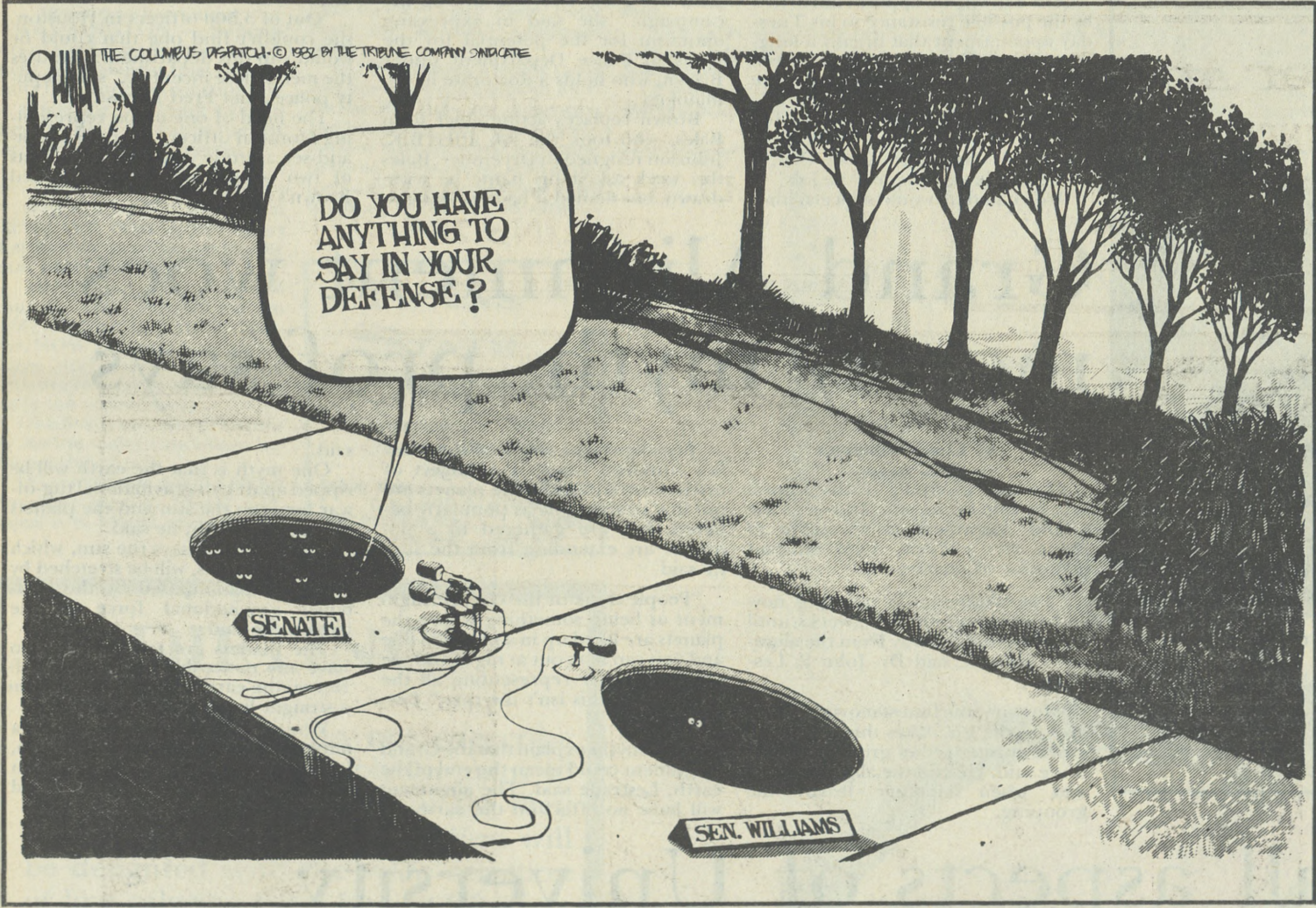
What else could they do? They had student support.

Yet people will still complain daily about speakers telling them they are going to "go to hell" if they don't stop and listen.

Several "Letters to the Editor" pointed out that some people oppose amplified speakers at the fountain. Whether a lot of publicity about the meeting or a kept that viewpoint from being expressed at the meeting is hard to say.

It's hard to have a debate on an issue when only one viewpoint is expressed. There must be a solution that can satisfy both opinions.

The senate should re-address the topic of public address system usage, misuse and work with groups who use the system to try to find a solution to a problem that will be agreeable to all.



Reader's Forum: Nights at the Student Senate Follies

Editor:
Tonight I have the honor, once again as a student senator, to attend a student senate meeting. Composed of, officially, 83 students that gather together representing the viewpoints of all 33,000 students attending this great University. Yet it would really be nice to see 50, let alone all 83, senators present. Why don't we get the total representation that we have seen Student Government striving for?

It's very simple, the student senators are tired of wasting their time. Going to senate meetings every two weeks, then staying past midnight repeatedly and walking out at the end with nothing really accomplished discourages the most active of senators. What do they do for over five hours? Here is a small excerpt I recorded from the last senate meeting:

(Ten minute break over, about to call the roll.)

Speaker: "Will all senators remove any food from the tops of the tables?"

A Senator: "Mr. Speaker, by what right do you have the authority to do this?"

(Small debate over this matter, finally the Speaker decides to vote on the matter to settle it.)

The vote: 28 for the policy to ban food during the senate meetings, 23 against. (One senator was holding her hand up for the policy while she was drinking a coke at the same time!)

(New debate whether there is even a quorum present.)

Roll call is taken.

Speaker declares there is a quorum present and the policy has passed.

Senator: "Is this policy a rule?"

Speaker: "Yes it is."

Senator: "What is the punishment for breaking a policy rule?"

Speaker: "Undefined, but I would say the maximum would be dismissal from the senate at the speaker's discretion." (New business continues.)

Not only was this a waste of time, but pointless and useless! The majority of those senators are concerned with representing those students that elected them to their position. But they are students too, with their valuable time divided up with studies, sleep, and the variety of other activities Texas A&M students engage. Along with these activities, they have chosen to give some time to Student Government, hence to all other students.

The problem is not with the senators, but with the hierarchy of Student Government. The "Candy Caper" would never have occurred if there had been some effective leadership in the senate. Yet it did occur! I raise one question, what type of entertainment will we enjoy tonight? Already they want to change the name of Student Government to Student Association. Will the upper echelon of Student Government (Association) refuse us the privilege to satisfy the call of nature?

Ron Palomares
Student Senator

Be true to your school

Editor:

Last Tuesday, I heard another student talking about Texas A&M. What he said bothered me very much. When

asked "What is wrong with being a proud Aggie?" he replied, "Everything!" I admit A&M has its share of faults and of embarrassments. But look around Aggieland; there are admirable traditions like yell practice, Silver Taps, and bonfire along with the reputations achieved by the College of Engineering and by the Aggie Band. These and other things give A&M its unique brand of respectability. Texas A&M is definitely not for everyone, especially the apathetic would-be tea-sippers. And we all know about "Highway 6..." Isn't it great that we have freedom in choosing colleges, not high school stuff is it? Constructive criticism is good but insulting your chosen school is just plain bad bull.

Johnny Jeng
Moses Hall

Apology needed from group

Editor:

It is with great chagrin that I write this letter in order to bring to the attention of one seemingly responsible campus organization a grave wrong for which they are guilty.

It is an absolute disgrace that the Political Forum would advertise a lecture by the American Communist Party in a building that memorializes thousands who lost their lives fighting the oppression caused by similar political beliefs. I cannot judge the activity as wrong, however, its promotion has no place in the Memorial Student Center. I further

doubt seriously, if Mr. Rudder would have approved the use of a facility in his own name for this purpose.

The question of right or wrong in this instance cannot be attributed to the rights of speech, press, or assembly; or whether any war fought, was just or not. It is very simply a matter of tact and respect for those who did die, and more

over those living who's loved ones name adorn the walls and bronze plaque of a very sacred memorial. It is for these people and for all who really care, which I due a most humble apology for my atrocity.

C.G. Darnell Jr.
College Student

The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.
Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

Letters Policy
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed, dated, and the address and phone number of the writer.
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