

opinion

Access to information valuable commodity

Democracy is defined as government of, by and for the people. But for the people to know what is going on, they must have reasonable access to government proceedings.

Editorial

Act, which opens certain federal records to public inspection.

The FOIA opens many federal agency documents to the public, with such major exceptions as defense and diplomatic secrets, Social Security and income tax records, personal financial data and trade secrets.

But in 1981, two senators backed by the Reagan administration tried to further limit the type of information that could be released under the FOIA. Fortunately, most congressmen realized the importance of open government and the bill received little support.

Now Reagan has devised a way to

sidestep the legislative process. On March 11, Reagan issued an executive order giving federal department and agency heads the power to force polygraph tests on employees suspected of giving classified information to reporters.

This recent attack on the public's ability to monitor government occurred during the month set aside by national journalism organizations as Freedom of Information Month.

Tonight, two Texas A&M student journalism groups will sponsor a reverse press conference in observance of FOI Month. The conference is designed to foster community understanding and knowledge of the workings of the press.

That type of understanding is needed in light of the fact that a recent Gallup poll showed that three of four Americans don't know what the First Amendment is. That same poll says 37 percent of Americans feel current limits on the press aren't harsh enough. That's frightening.

Freedom of information is not a special privilege for reporters. It guarantees all of us the right to know, free of government interference.

Good news from Answer Man

by Arnold Sawislak
United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Washington Answer Man is with us today and he appears to have a bundle of newspapers and broadcasting scripts under his arm.

Question: What is on your mind today, sir?

Answer Man: Good news. As you must be aware, the president has asked you media folks to devote a week to writing and broadcasting the good news instead of all the dreary, frightening, awful tidings that you've been trumpeting.

Question: Yes, we all read about the president's proposal. But some of us aren't sure just how it would work.

Answer Man: Precisely why I am here today, my boy. I have been sent to explain to you inkstained wretches and syrupy voices just how to find and report the good news the president was talking about.

Question: Well, that's fine. Go right ahead.

Answer Man: OK. Now here is a newspaper from early in March. Notice the headlines: "Killer storms ravage California coast." Now, that is just the kind of

bad news the president sees no reason to emphasize.

If you just look here on the second page, you will see that at the very same time the East Coast was having gorgeous, almost summer-like weather. Why wasn't that the headline? After all, the people in California knew they were having lousy weather and the people in the East didn't need to know it. So why not play up the nice weather in the East and maybe make the folks out West realize that at least someone was getting sunshine?

Question: Fascinating logic, sir. What other examples of good news can you give us?

Answer Man: The unemployment story is the classic example. Here is a paper and a TV script making a big thing of the fact that 10.4 percent of the work force is unemployed. For heavens sake, how can you jump on a statistic like that when it is obvious that it means 89.6 percent has work.

Question: But sir, that 10.4 percent represents 11 million people. That's a lot of folks with no pay checks.

Answer Man: They know it and your president knows it, young man. And you

people have been ignoring the fact they are getting help. You report claims for unemployment compensation as if they were bad news. If you report about it, it means all those folks would have been without money for food and shelter 50 years ago, will be helped from their government stocks. Why don't you report that?

Question: Well, maybe we are overstating the negative a bit. What do you suggest in the future?

Answer Man: Start looking for the bright side of things for a change. When the Intertel plane crashes, write something about the airliners that took off and landed without mishap that day. If a government official gets caught taking a report how our system for detecting corruption has worked again. There are news everywhere, boy.

Question: But sir, I don't know the place where the media goes to lengths to report only good things about the government or the economy or society around it.

Answer Man: That's where you're wrong, sonny. Take a look at Pra-

How not to cover up — advertising in France

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

For years, sex has been routine fare in French advertising. But now, Francois Mitterrand's government wants to change the menu.

Yvette Roudy thinks she knows the best way. Mitterrand's 53-year-old minister for women's rights is the central force behind a legislative proposal to forbid "degrading and debasing women" in advertisements and publications. If passed by the National Assembly, the bill could affect anyone from J. Walter Thompson to the publishers of Ernest Hemingway.

For Roudy, whose French translation of Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" in 1963 launched her own feminist career, the measure derives its logic from the egalitarian premises of socialism. It also reflects both the increased influence of women's groups and an intense national debate over the French knack for fleshy commercialism.

That debate began in earnest last summer, when Avenir, a billboard company, plastered hundreds of its properties in Paris and other cities with a photograph of a bikini-clad woman. "On September 2, I'll take off the top," Avenir's model promised. Indeed, she not only followed through on that pledge, but, two advertisements later, finished the striptease.

More recently, a conservative mayoral candidate in Nice employed the image of a naked woman on a campaign poster. "As expected, after 21 months of socialism, I have nothing left," the caption read.

Whether or not the latter incident precipitated Roudy's anti-sexism law (as it turned out, the Nice conservative won his race handily), it was only a more extreme example of what French women's groups have long denounced as commercial exploitation.

As they have in America and elsewhere, women in France rightly fear the documented parallels between violence

against women and the often not-so-subtle use of sexual imagery in television, magazine and newspaper advertising. When ads leave one wondering whether the models or the products are for sale, some men can be expected to treat women as objects to use or abuse.

Moreover, commercial exploitation undermines the image that women have of themselves. Even if Madison Avenue has often substituted the harried housewife for a more up-to-date career-type, is the balance nurtured by a provocatively posed model in Calvin Kleins? In France, where the line between art and life is fuzziest, the distortion is only more severe.

When the abuses of advertiser's and publishers become excessive, Yvette Roudy wants "organized citizens" to have the means to prosecute culprits. "The government does not wish to put itself in the role of judge," she insists. Nor, adds one of her aides, does it intend to ban nudity.

Yet, the dubbing of Roudy's proposal as the "G-string Law" by the progressively-inclined tabloid "Liberation," underscores an obvious problem with Roudy's law: It would effectively beg government censorship. In democratic countries, as the Moral Majority has discovered, any attempt at government control over social matters inevitably becomes the issue itself.

Even if her bill wins the approval of France's Socialist-dominated parliament, Roudy and her supporters would probably accomplish more in encouraging groups to identify companies and advertisers that insult public sensibilities. Such a private campaign must have a spillover effect on consumers who fall prey to exploitive ads. That, in part, has been the strategy of Women Against Pornography, which recently issued well-publicized awards for the "best" and "worst" in American advertising.

After all, when the palates are as numerous as the offerings it's better to stick with a la carte than to hit them with prix fixe.



Letters: Vote with confidence

Editor:

Well Aggies, it's that time of the year again!

It begins with the big race to get key locations for campaign signs, colorful flyers, and of course door-to-door campaigning with that oft too familiar, "Howdy, I'm Joe Ag, running for your student representative."

I am unfortunately troubled with mixed emotions each campaign season. On the positive side, I see this as an opportunity to gain new input and ideas to better our University, not only in a fresh turnover of representation but also to gain feedback from each individual voter.

On the other hand, however, I see a form of negative politics taking place in the form of petty games. It is this portion of the campaign which creates disturbing factions among the Aggie Family. First, Corps members and non-regs alike declare a small scale war concerning the right to be a yell leader of the Twelfth Man. Then candidate supporters campaign against the opposing candidate in a form of mudslinging rather than sticking to their campaign platform. And of course there is always that two-percent student apathy when it comes to voting.

Much consideration is needed to decide who to vote for in each position. Each vote cast represents the voter's confidence in that candidate to get the job done in accordance with the voter's values and desires.

Granted, the one who works the hardest on the campaign deserves to win, or does he? This is merely one factor to consider in casting that vote of confidence. Perhaps the candidate has his own self-interest in mind. Power and prestige are great motivators to win an election. What will this do for you after the election, though? Your own goals and desires for that office should be evaluated and matched to the nearest candidate. If you have not had personal contact with each candidate running, ask a friend or current student leader you respect and whose opinion you value.

Whether you believe it or not, you and the administration give major responsibility and authority to these student lead-

ers. Make sure that your vote is an educated vote of confidence.

R. Scott Staton '83

Cartoon criticized

Editor:

This is in reference to Scott McCullar's cartoon on page 2 of The Battalion March 23.

The Corps should not be satirized in a situation like this. These two former cadets' actions did not represent the actions of the entire Corps of Cadets. The Corps does not condone the use of drugs and will not tolerate them as is evident by the rapid dismissal of these two individuals.

Tim Stephens
Dorm 2

Editor's note: This letter was accompanied by 250 signatures.

Traditions vs Greeks

Editor:

Lately, there has been much debate on whether or not to recognize Greeks at Texas A&M. A few weeks ago, I attended a debate sponsored by the Aggie Forum so as to hear what students felt about Greeks here at Texas A&M. The "Loyal Ags" — those opposed to Greeks at A&M — were represented by a female speaker, Teresa Barr. She had several good points why they should not be allowed, all with the same connotation — they are against tradition. Yes, tradition says that Greeks should not be allowed at Texas A&M.

I'm totally convinced tradition should never be broken. Why, we should have never have allowed females at Texas A&M. Yes, an all male campus was once a steadfast tradition. Now look what we

have, a lower-classed university where students can't concentrate on devoted their time to tradition and learning. "Good Ag". We males have to put up with silly females and demeaning things as dating.

Miss Barr is right. We students at A&M should dedicate 100 percent of our time to being loyal to our University. We should not have to participate in something as untraditional as a fraternity or sorority on a college campus. Who could think of breaking tradition at a college like Texas A&M. Ever since those meddling fools in the 60's allowed non-aggie attend A&M, and then those clownish '70s permitted females, look at how degrading this University has become. Why we're "only" number one in the nation.

Brian Fro
Kappa

Berry's World



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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 and show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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