

OPINION

Schools too often ignore constitution

Can you imagine what would happen if high school students were allowed to distribute any kind of literature among themselves, during school hours, without school control?

Bryan High School Principal Jerry Kirby seems to think the consequences would be disastrous. For that reason, he suspended a student for two days for passing out in school a satirical newspaper called "The Twisted Times."

Bryan High officials say the paper, which they call an underground paper, violated district rules which require students to have any materials for distribution approved by the principal. But the student's parents are appealing the suspension, charging that the school's policy of prior restraint is unconstitutional and the punishment too severe. (They say students caught fighting at Bryan High get only a detention on Saturday mornings.)

The school's practice of prior restraint of publications which have no disruptive potential is, on its face, unconstitutional.

The rule about such pre-censorship set forth in a Des Moines, Iowa school district case (Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 1969) is that students' First Amendment rights may not be abridged unless school authorities can show that a publication would "substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school."

"The Twisted Times" is not disruptive. It was a harmless parody put together by a creative 17-year-old who wanted to share it with his peers. And that is his right.

Students, like teachers, do not leave their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse door.

Our schools are supposed to be teaching youths about their responsibilities as citizens, about their individual constitutional freedoms. If at the earliest stages, children are taught to discount the fundamental principles of our government, how can they be expected to respect and honor those principles?

The Battalion Editorial Board

Why don't commercial washing machines provide instructions?

I returned to the coin-operated laundry this morning and opened the washer which held one of my two loads of clothes. I found the water had not drained from the machine, leaving my clothes floating in mirky wetness. I called the attendant over and she explained that I had used the wrong setting. She started the machine again and walked off.



Loren Steffy

I was puzzled because the setting was the one I usually use for my "assorted colors, sizes and other non-white things" load, and I had never had any problems.

The cycle finished again and my clothes were still swimming in a pool of yuck. Water was pouring out from underneath the machine. My clothes were

removed and placed in two other washers because I had "too big a load."

My garments completed their cycle without incident, but as the repairman was fixing the machine, he discovered a sock which he assumed was mine.

"See all the trouble you caused 'cause you had too full a load?" he said, condescendingly. I told him I'd never seen the sock before, but he wouldn't believe me. As I was leaving the laundry, I noticed water once again spewing from my ill-fated machine.

My washer-cramming is conservative compared to some of the tub-busters I have seen. The washers bore no signs warning how much was too much. No "don't fill above dotted line," or "do not exceed fifty pounds." How is Joe Laundry-User, ignorant of the finer details of laundry-machining, supposed to know these vital facts?

Sure, the washer had a "machine unbalance" light, but it didn't light when

my washer did its dime-store imitation of Niagra Falls. What are the limits of laundry machinery?

Detergents have charts indicating how much soap per load; why didn't these commercial washers have any indication of how many clothes per load.

I looked at the snarling repairman cursing my distant relatives and casual acquaintances.

"How was I to know?" I asked. He growled under his breath and wandered off.

OK, maybe I was supposed to use common sense, but the clothes fit in the washer perfectly. Such assumptions of people's common sense are sure to end in frustration for everyone involved.

In laundries, just as in all aspects of life, a little communication can cure a heap of problems.

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and a weekly columnist for The Battalion.

Congress hands Reagan defeat of his aid to Nicaragua policy

WASHINGTON — This is the most important congressional moment since May, 1947, when Congress supported U.S. intervention-through-aid on the anti-communist side in the Greek civil war. Congress thereby transformed containment from a theory into a policy. Congress has now effectively killed aid for the anti-communist side in Nicaragua's civil war. Congress has forbidden even modest financial support for the military effort of a mass movement prepared to do the dying to prevent consolidation of the second Soviet satellite in this hemisphere and the first on the North American continent. The evi-



George Will

creation of containment is complete.

What Reagan's aides are calling a compromise (aid restricted to nonmilitary uses) is a shattering defeat. He sought military support for a military movement and lost, utterly. On an issue he characterized — correctly — in the starkest moral and national-security terms, his characterization was disproportionate to his effort. He did not go to the country on television. A great communicator does not deal exclusively in good news (it is time for a tax cut; America is back and standing tall). He also rallies majorities for hard decisions. Reagan has chosen to hoard his political capital — for what? The great battle over Amtrak subsidies?

In 1947 President Truman told Congress: "I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure." Reagan's policy was — the past tense is required — the Truman Doctrine after 38 years of communist advance. An armed Nicaraguan minority, sustained by outside (Soviet, Cuban, East German, etc.) forces, is sovietizing Nicaragua in the way that was being done in Eastern Europe in 1947.

The Soviet Union's Sandinista clients have no more right to rule Nicaragua than Vidkun Quisling had to rule Norway. Yet the world continues to speak of Sandinista steps toward Stalinism as "failings." The Sandinistas are not somehow failing to implement democracy; those "failings" are premeditated successes.

FDR spoke of "quarantining" dictators, but an isolationist Congress resisted, until the big war arrived. Now that today's Congress has essentially spurned the contras, communist dictators on four continents will know that Congress will not permit even small incursions, let alone quarantine.

The sum involved — \$14 million — is 12 percent of the sum (\$117 million) the U.S. government had given to the Sand-

inista regime by 1981. Familiar voices are saying the usual things: that the United States "drove" the Sandinistas into Soviet clutches. But in their first two years, the Sandinistas received more aid from the United States than from any other country — five times more than the Somoza regime received in its last two years. (Someone should calculate the value in 1985 dollars of the aid France gave the American Revolution. It was, I will wager, much more than \$14 million.)

During the Vietnam War, people eager to believe were encouraged by Hanoi to believe that South Vietnam was experiencing a "indigenous peasant revolt" and that the ferment in Indochina was only cosmetically communist. The Sandinistas deny their American protectors the comfort of the pretense. The Sandinistas do not deign to disguise their Stalinism at home, their "socialist solidarity" with the Soviet Union and its other clients, their "revolution without borders" against neighbors.

In 1947 Congress had fresh memories of the terrible price paid because of nonresistance to Hitler at the time of the re-militarization of the Rhineland. Today the historical memory of many members of Congress consists entirely of Vietnam and its putative lessons. But congressional management of U.S. policy toward Central America — too little aid, too late; pursuit of the chimera of negotiated settlement with a regime that does not believe in splitting difference — is a recipe for another Vietnam: another protracted failure.

Surely the Americans who should talk least about negotiated liberalization of the Sandinista regime are those Americans who, by trying to destroy the contras, are removing the only serious pressure on the Sandinistas.

Nicaragua's communist president, writing in the New York Times, says U.S. support for the contras is "contrary to American values." That is an odd complaint from someone who proclaims this detestation of American values, and it is an ignorant charge, given the long history of U.S. support for resistance to tyranny.

Today there are anti-communist insurgencies in Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia. Americans opposed to the contras favor, in effect, a declaration of indifference to the only force that might enable Nicaragua to join Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Argentina and Honduras on the list of nations that have risen from tyranny to democracy.

Mikhail Gorbachev hit the ground running — right at Pakistan, threatening reprisals if Pakistan continues to facilitate aid for the Afghan resistance. Now that Congress has spurned the contras, how long will Pakistan resist Soviet pressure? Now that Congress will not countenance support for the contras, the increasingly tinny voice of the United States will have decreased resonance in South Africa, the Philippines

and other places where freedom is at issue.

It is said that an optimist is someone who believes his future is uncertain. Optimism about democracy, and not just democracy in Central America, is irrational now that, six months after a landslide reaffirmation of a President, Congress, acting in the name of fastidiousness, has removed the keystone of his foreign policy: support for democratic revolutions.

George Will is a columnist for The Washington Post.

LETTERS:

Joe Bob's column makes fun of racism

EDITOR:

"Joe Bob Goes to the Drive In" was cancelled in Dallas because three city councilmen ranted that it was insensitive to famine victims and racist because it made references to "Negroes." They didn't think it was funny and that's O.K. — they're entitled to their own opinions, but the paper went too far in canceling Texas' best satirist over one column. Their front page apology was sufficient.

Joe Bob's close personal friends know where he's coming from. Those who heard John Bloom's speech at the library know that he's satirizing all sorts of intolerant bigots. But the councilman didn't understand this when he read the column for the first and only time. He probably got as far as the reference to "stupid Negroes" before he blew up, since he didn't complain about the references to Chinese, "Meskins," or "stupid white people."

Joe Bob says in public what many people think in private. Without this weekly reminder of how silly bigotry can be, it's easy to forget how to laugh at it. Censoring him won't put a dent into racism or tastelessness. As for being "insensitive," the band aid records have turned into the fluff story of the year — why not satirize it? Sending food to famine victims is a noble idea, but the media promote the records as if this stop gap measure was a one-dose curative. If the councilmen really want to help them they should consider this.

B. Mecum

Ed Board should follow own advice

EDITOR:

I must say that April 22 was truly a momentous occasion. For the first time I have to admit that I agree wholeheartedly with the opinion expressed by the Editorial Board. Your assessment of the deplorable actions of Joe Bob Briggs was quite accurate. Indeed, racially derogatory remarks such as those expressed by Briggs are not worthy of print. You are to be commended for your sound judgement.

However, I must ask why do you advocate the printing of explicit obscenities? You expressed this approval in a recent Editorial column addressing the magazine "Litmus." How can one draw a distinction between the two?

Just as racial slurs are offensive to one sect of society, vulgarity is equally offensive to another sect. Who does it benefit by publishing obscene remarks? No one. Does it expand the mind? I daresay not. Does it inform the populace of any pertinent news? I hardly think so.

Does it harm anyone by abstaining from printing such remarks? No, of course not.

If you are attempting to conform to a code of ethics modeled after reason and sound judgement, I suggest that you standardize it.

Richard Davis
Class of '85

O'Hair was friendly, warm — not empty

EDITOR:

In her letter earlier this week, Helen Miller said that she found Madaly Murray O'Hair to be an "empty" person. As one of the students who had an opportunity to speak with her at length away from the pressure of a hostile crowd, I must say that I received quite the opposite impression.

O'Hair was warm, friendly and almost grandmotherly, which is quite remarkable given the years of persecution she has suffered at the hands of other such "open-minded people."

Whatever one's religious beliefs, it is dangerous to form an opinion which has no basis. But it is just as plain evil to act on it, especially when it means harming another's livelihood or reputation.

Kevin Klein

Lost wallet found; owner can claim it

EDITOR:

Do you know Rosalina Omana? If you do, please tell her that her wallet has been found and that she can reclaim it by calling 260-6205.

Randy G. Herrera, '84

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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.

Letters Policy
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. 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 be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

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