

OPINION

Free speech part of students' rights

The First Amendment right to freedom of speech comes in myriad forms, and instances of suppression of this right are equally numerous. Last week, U.S. District Judge Norman Black ordered a Spring Branch Independent School District high school to allow the Christian Club to meet on campus. The Battalion Editorial Board agrees that students, too, have the right to exercise their freedom of speech.

The purpose of the club is "to allow a small group of students who have a common interest in Christianity and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ to meet once a week for one hour to discuss common experiences."

The school district denied the club a request for a room, and the group's planner sued the district in November. Under the Equal Access Act, which Congress passed last year, the outcome of the suit was obvious. The law prohibits schools from denying students the use of school property on the basis of religious, political or philosophical beliefs.

By holding a religious meeting on campus after school hours, the students are exercising their right of free speech, but they are not mixing church and state. The beliefs expressed by the club are purely their own, not those of the school district. The district would be guilty of mixing church and state only if the club were allowed to meet during school hours.

Students, too, are entitled to exercise their First Amendment rights, and what better place to learn about freedom of speech than in school?

The Battalion Editorial Board

LETTERS:

The true meaning of being an Aggie

EDITOR:

Allow me a moment; a moment to say I'm sorry. No, I have not walked on the grass at the MSC (or on the drill field, though the temptation has arisen.) I have never supported t.u. or recognized it as the "University of Texas." Aggies, I am guilty of calling myself an Aggie, yet not upholding all that the position entails.

I thought, prior to 3 p.m., April 21, that I was a "good Ag." I say "Hi" if not "Howdy" (I was born in Connecticut, bear with me), and I walk to class, though not always and not to everyone. Strike one.

I support Aggie sports. As with every Ag, football and cotton fill my dreams in the fall. I go to one or two basketball games. I wanted to go to more. Honest! I have even gone to an away baseball game. To the female athletes, I owe a tremendous apology. Somehow I have never attended one of your events. Strike two. Thank you for your sweat, pain, and endurance you suffer for A&M.

Besides all of this, I go to the Hall of Fame occasionally on Thursday nights, and the "Chicken" whenever. I do not like beer (strike three) but thank Heavens for long neck Coke bottles.

My fellow Ags, I even cry at Silver Taps.

I used to think that this made me a "good Ag," but as Lt. General Ormond R. Simpson ('36), explained to me. I fall short of being the Aggie I should be. The thought of the great men who have roamed this fantastic campus before awes me. How can I honor the Congressional Medal of Honor recipients who line the walls of the MSC? Or the likes of Rudder, Ross, Zachry, Harrington; the list continues, long and impressive.

My dear Aggies, former, present, and future, I am sorry for the spiteful words, a forgotten name, judgments, lack of consideration, and selfishness. I love each of you, those of you I know. The cowboys, the C.T.s, the B.Q.s, the non-regs, my classmates, my friends. You will always be in my heart. Those of you I do not know personally, I want to, and I love you for being Aggies.

And to General Simpson, I owe you a great deal, for my first muster; for the true meaning of what calling myself an Aggie means.

Thank you, Ags, for listening. May God bless you and keep all of you safe until April 21, 1986.

Kirstin E. Haas Industrial Engineering

Chemistry department needs some help

EDITOR:

Like the King in "The Emperor's New Clothes," it's hard for the Freshman Chemistry Department to accept that it has been found naked. Three weeks ago a professor handed out a paper defending the freshman program against "outside rumors." Last week he handed out a seven page survey that was loaded with sarcasm to help fortify his own personal position. The questions were written with extreme choices, and poor English grammatical construction.

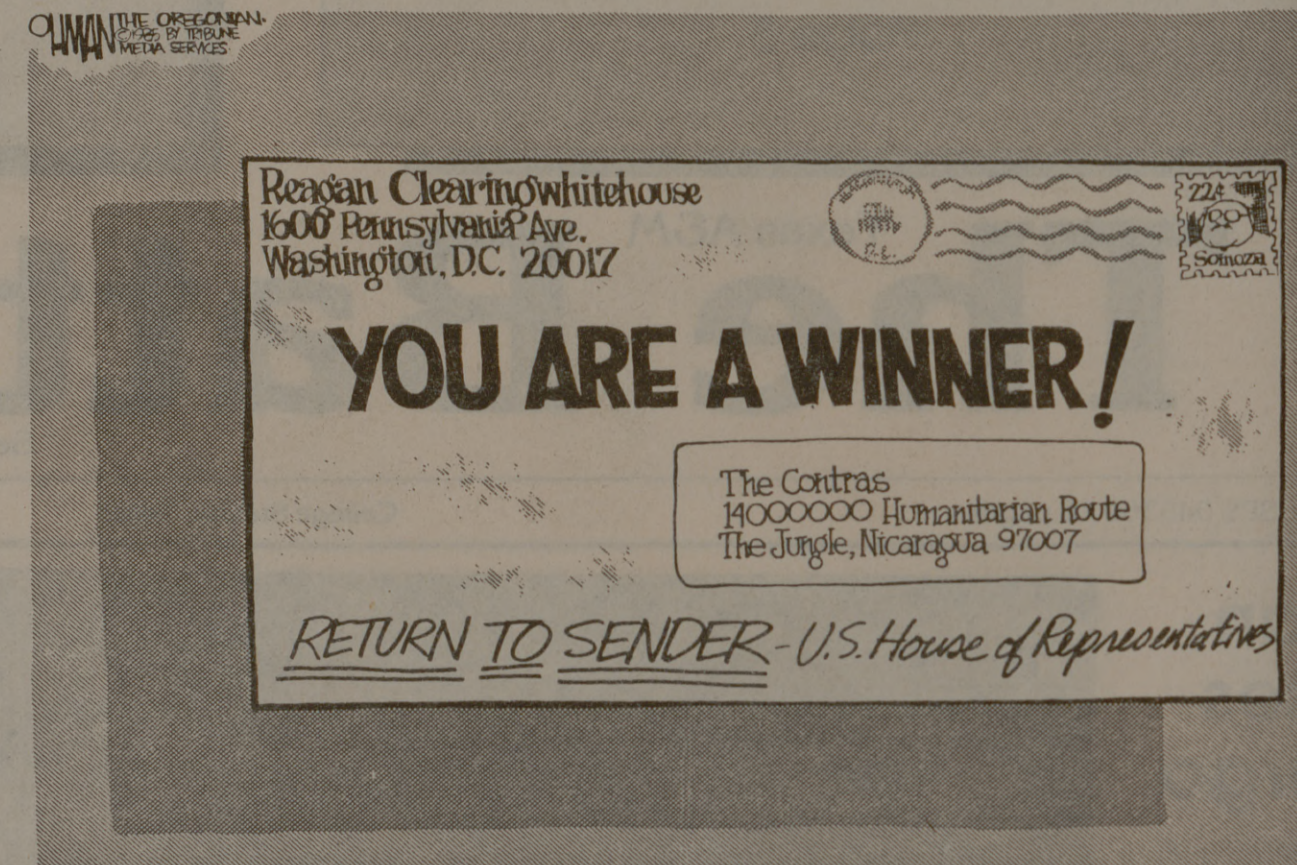
Let's face it — if over 520 of MY students went to ONE tutor for help, I'd feel embarrassed, too. . . . Especially in view of the 78% C's, D's, and F's on the first three tests.

Yes, with 58% D's and F's, it must be difficult to rationalize their teaching methods to "outsiders." Add to this the fact that Rod O'Connor, the former Head of Freshman Chemistry, had only 14% of his students under 60% (compared to 31.5% now) and over two and a half times the number of A's and B's, and even the most naive person might begin to question the current program. Even "t.u." gives 52% A's and B's compared to our 21.5%. It's a small wonder that the professors are so defensive.

Well, I guess if all else fails they can "curve" the grades . . . but doesn't it seem odd that last semester a student who earned a 78 in Chemistry 101 got the same "C" as a student who earned a 56? Oh well, I'm sure it is just "relative" . . . but isn't it interesting that Dr. Rod O'Connor never used a "curve" (even "t.u." doesn't curve in most cases). It is too bad that grades don't stand for achievement any more . . . they do, however, keep students "in their place."

Why not get honest? Why not require 16 professors to teach four sessions per week of 50 or less students. This would allow time for personal contact, extra help, individualized tests, and even the correcting of homework! Then, if the professors had spare time after work, they could do some research as a hobby. Perhaps we could do some research as a hobby. Perhaps we could then use the term "teacher" and mean it.

P.S. I also feel it was highly deceptive to publish only the student survey results from two popular teachers. Seems pretty biased, why not explain why last semester the freshman program was rated below all the other chemistry courses (question #11) for the first time in the history of Texas A&M? Let's be honest!! Mike Coad Accompanied by 44 signatures



Reagan's controversial visit could cause German snit

By ART BUCHWALD Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The phone has been ringing off the hook since President Reagan decided to go to the Bitburg cemetery. Some people are not happy about it.

Sylvia Grossman called the other day. "I read in the paper the reason the President is going to the cemetery is because he doesn't want to offend the West Germans."

"That's correct," I told her.

"Tell me something. What would happen if he did offend the Germans?"

"I'm not sure I understand what you're driving at."

"Let's say the President cancels his visit to the graveyard where the SS soldiers are buried, and the German's become offended. What can they do to us? Do you think they'll stop sending Mercedes-Benzes to the United States?"

"I don't believe they would go that far, though an embargo of German automobiles is always a possibility. Our main fear is they could get into quite a snit about it."

Sylvia said, "They should have thought about that when they started World War II. Okay, let's take the worst-case scenario. They get into a snit. What happens then?"

"No pass, no play" stresses studying

Today, not only are parents, teachers and administrators complaining, but Johnny can't read, but complaints of "Johnny can't play" are being heard as well.

To many vocal people, the "no pass, no play" rule prohibiting students from participating in extracurricular activities for six weeks if they fail just one course during a six-week grading period is a cruel and unjustified punishment. These people have lost sight of the reason students are in school — to learn and become educated.

That's not to say sports, music and literary events don't help round out a student's education, but first, students must be proficient in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Only by mastering these building blocks can one hope to excel in any extracurricular activity.

Looking back at my own high school education, I realize just how much time my classmates and I spent in extracurricular activities, whether it was band, drama or sports. I can remember getting out of class for an activity with little questioning or resistance from anyone. I guess I was fortunate. I wasn't involved in too many activities during my high school career. Those few activities I did participate in, though, took up much of my time, some of which could have used more effectively by studying.

But that's all changed for today's high school students with the enactment of House Bill 72 which limits the amount of time a student spends on outside activities and the "no pass, no play" rule which sets higher grade requirements for participation.

Students at Bryan and A&M Consolidated high schools said the reforms

who are in a snit because of something we've done. One more snit is not going to hurt us. Besides, if the President has to choose between a German tantrum and the feelings of Holocaust and victims of the Holocaust, then let him live with the snit.

"It's not just a German snit we have to worry about," I told her. "We also have to concern ourselves with Chancellor Kohl's political future. If the President doesn't go to the cemetery Kohl's Christian Democrats will have a problem winning a May 12th election in North Rhine-Westphalia."

"Are you trying to tell me a local German election is the reason Reagan insists on going to Bitburg against the advice of everyone from the American League to the survivors of the Nazis' death camps?"

"It's not just the Westphalia election. The President owes Kohl a lot."

"Why does he owe Kohl?"

"Because the Chancellor took our Pershing missiles."

"How can the President owe Kohl for accepting our missiles? They are in Germany to protect him as much as they are to protect us," Sylvia said.

"It's not just the missiles," I said patiently. "Kohl has also spoken out strongly for a 'Star Wars.' The President thinks he's a real war guy."

have definitely made them study more for two reasons:

First, the bill raises the passing grade from 60 to 70 on the 100 point grading scale. Second, and even more important to the students, is the tough restriction of the "no pass, no play" rule.

With comments such as "I have to make the grades to keep playing" and "You can't miss anything," it's clear that extracurricular activities still are a major factor in high school students' lives. However, with the "no pass, no play" rule, the emphasis on extracurricular activities has begun to align itself more realistically with the students' purpose in school.

Opponents of the rule overlook the main benefit of "no pass, no play." Since its ratification, students have a better incentive to do well in their required course work.

The students themselves may not realize the rule has any benefits because of the hostile manner in which people have reacted to the law. In the Brazos Valley, the "no pass, no play" rule has had some positive results.

Teachers and administrators of the two high schools said they noticed their students were studying more and meeting the higher requirements set by the Legislature. The only disapproval of "no pass, no play" has been the length of the suspension if a student fails a class. Many agree that three weeks suspension from extracurricular activities would be a more justified punishment.

The rule does have faults, but, with time and revision, this law will be the most influential measure taken to reform public education in Texas.

Wayne L. Grabein is a senior journalism major and photo editor for The Battalion.

Sylvia said, "I don't know Kohl. He's such a real neat guy why does he let Reagan off the hook by finding some place else to go besides a cemetery where Nazis are buried?"

"As I understand it the SS was buried at Bitburg were not real Nazis but just kids drafted into the service."

"Who said that?"

"Chancellor Kohl. You must remember, he has a lot more to lose than Reagan if the President doesn't visit Bitburg."

Sylvia said, "I wouldn't be too sure about that."

I tried to be as diplomatic as possible. "I don't think it's your duty or mine to tell the President of the United States what cemeteries he should visit, what ones he should skip. After all, he has very qualified staff in the White House who do nothing but tell what's good for him and what isn't."

"Oh yeah? So where were they when Reagan needed them?"

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