

OPINION

A Texas Blue Law repeal is overdue

The House voted Wednesday to repeal the Blue Law, a 24-year-old restriction which prohibited the sale of 42 items on consecutive weekends. Rep. David Cain, D-Dallas, appropriately compared the out-of-date law to "Leave It to Beaver."

As Cain pointed out, stores are no longer as specialized as they were in 1961, when the law was first enacted. A Safeway or a Kroger can find it difficult to keep track of what items can and cannot be sold on Sundays.

Opponents of the repeal are claiming a need to have a day reserved for the family, but having stores open on Sunday would not prevent a "family day" for those who desired it.

The Blue Law is a relic from a different age which has lingered in our society long enough. Many families, and, for that matter, college students, have no choice but to shop on Sundays. And as more and more households have both husband and wife working, June simply doesn't have all day to shop before Ward and the Beaver get home.

The Senate has not yet voted on the repeal, but we hope they will follow the example of their neighbors in the House and bring an end to this archaic and seemingly random restriction on the sale of certain items of merchandise.

In 1985, the idea of not being able to purchase certain things on Sunday is ridiculous at best, and grocery and department stores having to rope off aisles containing "prohibited" items is even more absurd.

The Battalion Editorial Board

Editors defend The Battalion

There are about as many misconceptions about The Battalion around here as there are Aggies — a whole bunch.

Rhonda Snider

This week The Battalion ran a three-part series about, guess what, The Battalion. The writer of the articles interviewed many people about their feelings toward Texas A&M's student newspaper. The comments ranged from complimentary to downright derogatory.

Michelle Powe

It seems a favorite pastime in Aggie-land is ragging on 'that liberal rag,' The Battalion. Of the criticisms directed at The Battalion, some were valid and some were not.

The charge that too many mistakes consistently appear in the paper is valid. Even one mistake is too many. We try to be as accurate as possible, but even the best reporters make mistakes now and then.

That our reporters delve into unfamiliar areas to cover a story is also a valid criticism. At times, Batt reporters have to cover events or issues they know little about.

The root of both of these problems is the same: Batt reporters are students.

The entire staff of The Battalion is made up of students — students who do their Battalion work in between going to classes, studying for exams and working other jobs.

Because The Battalion relies on student workers, it has a high turnover rate. Reporters aren't around long enough to become experts on particular areas. By the time editors become proficient at editing and management, it's time to hire a new staff.

In other words, we don't have the ad-

vantage that non-collegiate newspapers have of honing reporter-analysts and the wise old souls who work at copy desks.

So we work with what we have. Sometimes we send inexperienced reporters out, admonishing them to do loads of background research, to question anything they don't understand and to double-check facts.

The choice is either to send less-experienced reporters out or to not cover the event at all. We choose to cover the news.

And we make some mistakes. But we're not afraid to correct those mistakes, remembering that a published correction is a sign that we're doing everything we can to be accurate and objective.

While these criticisms about The Battalion are valid, some of the complaints in the series were without merit. They reflected gross misconceptions of the purpose of The Battalion.

A common complaint about the paper is that the editorial board does not reflect the opinions of A&M students. The editorial board is not supposed to represent student body opinion, but to reflect our own opinions. Our goal is not to be a mirror of the student body, but a light to the student body. The editorials are to make people think.

Even so, we give other opinions equal time: columns, letters, reader's forums.

We're accused of covering controversial topics just to kick up dirt, and of covering only bad news. We're accused of being anti-Corps, anti-Student Government, anti-A&M, anti-American, anti-anything.

The Battalion does not try to be controversial; we just try to present the news. And we do cover good news; people usually just remember or notice the bad news.

We're not anti-anything. We've pub-

lished lots of articles that reflect on, for example, the Corps — the appointment of the first woman Corps staff, the Corps awards, just a few — that ran on page one. We reported about the Corps just that — reported. We don't do bad things happen.

We're not a bunch of liberals. At least not most of us.

When you have as large and as a group as we have working sweeping generalizations don't

This semester, we have had on The Battalion two cadets, foreign students, out-of-state students, fraternal members, students who play country music, rock music, music and gospel music. People staff are married, others are a few are engaged. We have go to various religious services who go to no religious services.

It's hard to be biased in any way with such a myriad of people.

But probably the most charge waved in our faces is that the Battalion does not accurately reflect A&M student body. The job of a paper is not to mirror its readers, but to report accurately and fairly.

To only print pretty little which say what Aggies want would be to deny the stimulation intelligence and curiosity of student

College students are adults to absorb differing opinions and their own decisions. They are not a body president seems to think. We have to spoon-feed them the things of the world. We don't have down to them.

Rhonda Snider is the fall editor of The Battalion and Michelle Powe is the aging editor.

Some post-graduation uses for that lovely cap and gown

Graduating seniors escape from a world of college-type problems and enter a world of real-life-type problems. But there's one problem that bridges the gap between the two worlds: what to do with your graduation cap and gown.



Dainah Bullard

This problem is difficult to categorize. Is it the last of the college-type problems, or the first of the real-world-type problems? Why are gowns for Texas A&M graduates black (as in funeral) instead of maroon (as in Aggie)? And what do you do with a \$13.67 robe composed of two yards of paperish material that smells like glue (is THAT what holds it together?), and a hat that looks like a retarded flying disk?

The problem of what to do with an ugly graduation gown after graduation is but one dilemma faced by graduating seniors. Few students cruise through their years at A&M without ever being hassled by their professors, the campus

corps or the darlings at Heaton Hall. But those troubles culminate during the final semester at the University.

Only a divine being can spare graduating seniors all the academic and financial fiascoes of their final semester. However, with a little ingenuity, one graduation memory — the ugly, smelly black one — can be salvaged to live a life of usefulness. The following are some practical uses for an impractical graduation requirement:

- Wear the gown as bath robe — provided the paperish material holds up to moisture and there is absolutely no one around to see you.
- Wear the gown as swim suit cover-up — provided the paperish material holds up to moisture and you want to discourage everyone who might see you.
- Wear the gown as a gown — if you're really desperate.
- Line a bird cage with the gown — if you want to depress the bird.
- Drape a bird cage with the gown — if you want to kill the bird.
- Make a black mask, and play Zoro with the gown.
- Stretch the gown over a frame to make a wigwam.

• Use the cap and gown for the perfect fashion accessory at the College Station.

• Use the cap and gown for a costume at Halloween. The cap forms a pointed peak with just a touch of courage.

• Get a little exercise — use the cap for a flying disk. (You may get more than just a little exercise. What direction that thing could fly.)

• Dress up your kitchen — use the cap for a serving tray, cake plate, cutting board.

• Bronze the cap and gown and use it to a marble slab — the campus's most statues.

These are just a few of many solutions to the problem of what to do with the graduate's garb. Every graduate is free to adopt one of these solutions, or to think up one of his or her own. The thing: don't dump the costume on the Will or the Salvation Army. What did they ever do to you?

Dainah Bullard is a graduating agricultural journalism major and former assistant city editor for The Battalion.

Handicapped are more than ballast

"... all men are created equal," is not just a dramatic phrase penned by an idealistic patriot who had no concept of life in the 20th Century. It is one of the foundations of our country. Apparently the Texas Commission on Human Rights has forgotten the significance of these words.



Loren Steffy

Bill Hale, the commission's executive director, said Wednesday the agency will not prosecute complaints of job discrimination filed by handicapped people. Hale said because of lack of funds, the agency had to concentrate its small staff on money-generating cases.

Not only is such a decree in direct violation of state law, it completely ignores the commission's primary purpose. Rep. Ron Wilson, D-Houston, one of the sponsors of the bill that created the agency, said the commission was specifically ordered by the Legislature to handle complaints of the handicapped because the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission does not deal with those.

Hale claims the agency lost \$40,000 handling handicapped complaints.

"I just can't afford to do that anymore," he said.

What a business-like approach to human rights. Defending social injustice is a heroic thing as long as the budget stays afloat, but the minute the ship begins to sink, it's time to throw that handicapped ballast overboard. Hale is saying handicapped people have to sacrifice their basic human rights for the sake of a buck.

I'm sure their employers won't mind Hale's decision, knowing that their chances of prosecution for job discrimination are almost nil.

Maybe enough handicapped people will get together and sue the commission for its blatant abuse of the law. But how ironic to have to sue an agency to get them to stop discriminating against you so that they can protect you from discrimination.

The phrase, after all, says "... all men are created equal." Not "... all men are created equal when it is economically feasible."

Loren Steffy is a sophomore journalism major and the editorial page editor for The Battalion.

LETTERS:

Exposing a magician

EDITOR: What a magician Mike Coad is with numbers and statistics. In the first place, his statement, "last semester a student who earned a 78 in Chemistry 101 got the same 'C' as a student who earned a 56," is really imaginative. If you ask any Chem 101 student who earned a 78 last semester, he'll tell you that he got a "B." On the other hand, a student with a 61 or below unfortunately only got a "D." However, in stretching a range of 15 points to a range of 22 points only involves a less than 50 percent error. Not that bad.

Secondly, he provided The Battalion staff writer with the following numbers about the Chem 102 grade averages from three exams: 6 percent "A," 15.5 percent "B," 20.5 percent "C," 26.5 percent "D" and 31.5 percent "F." He also repetitively talked about 58 percent "Ds" and "Fs" in his letter to the editor. However, on page 4 of the "first day hand-out" which we presented to all the Chem 102 students, we specifically stated, "The ranges of the letter grades will be determined at the end of the semester." None of us teaching in Chem 102 knows anything about the letter grade distribution invented by Mike. In fact, none of us know any letter grade distribution of Chem 102 at this stage.

Since Mike is so creative about numbers and statistics related to events which are both recent and local, I really

do not know what percentage of truth I should believe in our great Magician when he quotes some numbers and statistics related to events which are either two years ago (the O'Connor data) or one hundred miles away (the UT data). Since there is doubt about the solid numbers he quotes, how can we trust the subjective opinions he expresses?

Journalist and TV commentators: if you want to do any responsible reporting, be very quick with your eyes and ears. Be sure that you can distinguish whether the great Magician is idling or performing. If I were you, anything he says I would ask him to identify the source, or to back up statements with unmistakable facts.

Dr. Yi-Noo Tang
Lecturer Freshman Chemistry

Defending Freshman Chemistry Program

EDITOR: A note to the students of Chem 101 and 102:

I have several short remarks to make in response to Mike Coad's assessment of the present Freshman Chemistry Department Program at TAMU:

The questionnaires for the recent (4/26/85) student poll were handled personally by Dr. Tang and myself; the chemistry department was not involved. The information was collected in the Friday noon class when many students

had already started their weekend, thus accounting for the lower response. The data were worked up by me, Dr. Tang and a Battalion representative. We are popular instructors, it is true, but our classes are only slightly above average. Even so, this survey was probably more representative of general student opinion than the comments of the students Mike is tutoring.

You are in university to learn, to think — to seek out all sides of a situation and make an independent decision based on facts. The fact is that the grade distribution for Chem 101 (Fall 84) was: A, 100-88; B, 87-78; C, 77-62; D, 61-50. This does not include the 2 points extra credit for attempting the homework problems. The fact is that the grade distribution for Chem 101 will not be set until after finals week. Mike misrepresented the data for the first three exams. The final grades will be curved. Curving is the norm for university courses (and yes, Mike, Dr. O'Connor did curve the grades in his administration).

We understand chemistry is a difficult subject and therefore unpopular for many of you who have to take it. But, remember — we are teaching future doctors veterinarians, engineers,

biochemists, biologists, etc. We have an obligation to give these students a solid, extensive grounding in basic chemistry. The tutorial help we have available is to help you understand the material in a course that is not your main love.

Any program can be improved to some extent — there is no doubt — constructive criticism is a part of the process — but criticism is based on fact. As it stands, the Freshman Chemistry program is at least as good, as helpful, as willing to discuss and explain policy to its students as any program on campus. I am willing to discuss face-to-face the pros and cons of this program (including exams, homework, textbook etc.) with anyone.

Good luck on your finals.

Dr. Wendy Keeney-Kennicutt
Lecturer in the Freshman Chemistry Program

Editor's note: Dr. Keeney-Kennicutt says the grade distribution statistics for the Fall Chemistry 101 classes (quoted above) were obtained from the end-of-the-year computer grade sheets. However, the statistics quoted in Wednesday's Battalion were grades reported to Michael Coad by Chemistry 101 students.

The Battalion
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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor shall reserve the right to edit for style and length but will make every effort to reflect the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and include the address and telephone number of the author.

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