

Opinion

What better reason?

The Bill of Rights supports the idea that all Americans are innocent until proven guilty. Attorney General Edwin Meese apparently doesn't agree. Meese, in an interview with U.S. News and World Report, said, "... you don't have many suspects who are innocent of a crime. . . . If a person is innocent of a crime, then he is not a suspect." This kind of reasoning is not only ludicrous, it raises questions as to the competency of the man who said them.

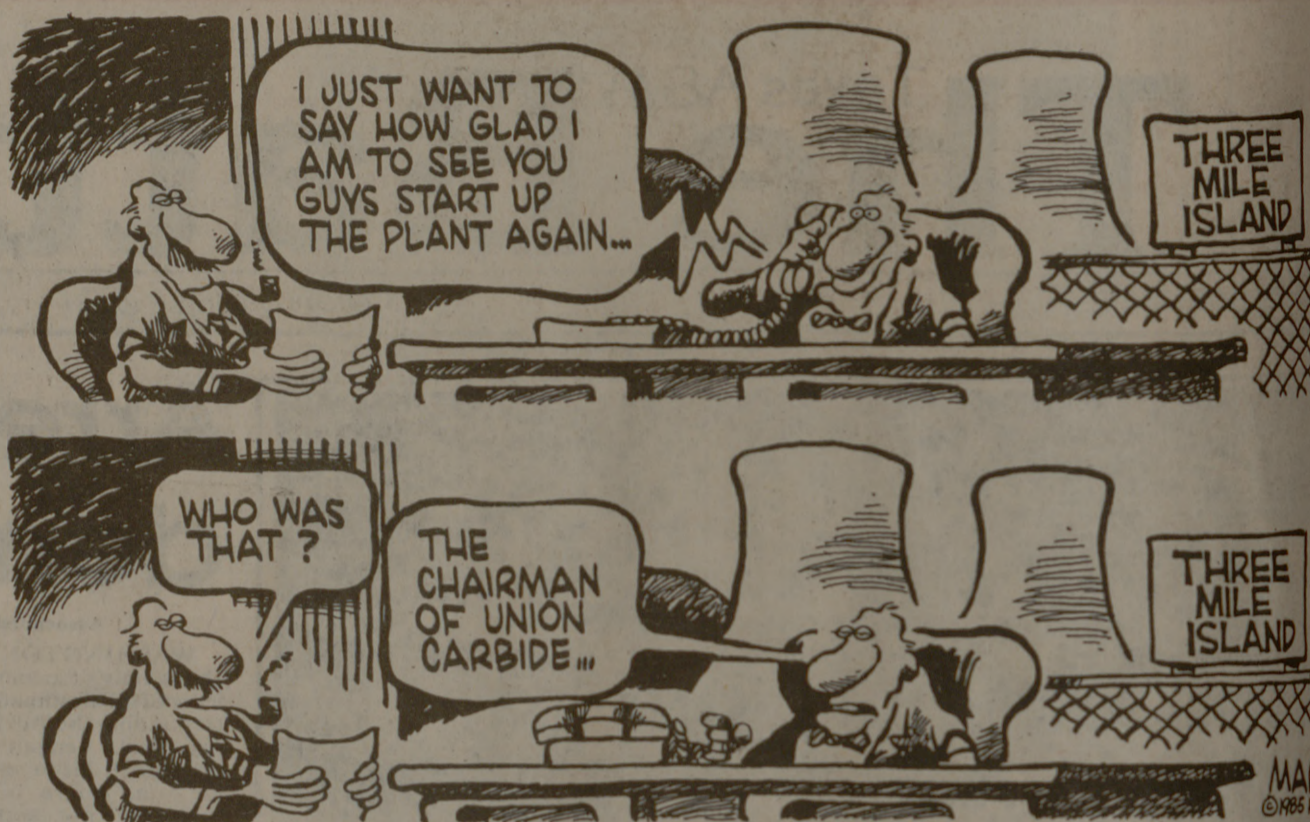
An attorney general should be well versed in law, especially the basic building block of the American legal system. To say that suspects are not innocent of crimes is absurd. If that were true, there would be no need for courts, judges, juries, lawyers and Ed Meeses.

Meese's statement came in an interview concerning the Miranda ruling, which gives suspects the right to have an attorney present before police questioning. The magazine allowed Meese to review his answers before publication. A spokesman for Meese said the attorney general meant that many suspects who are guilty get off on technicalities surrounding the Miranda ruling.

Perhaps Meese is upset over the loopholes Miranda creates, but that does not justify his blatant disregard for the Bill of Rights. In the United States, the state must prove the defendant's guilt, the defendant does not have to prove innocence to the state.

In voicing his opposition to the ruling, Meese certainly struck a solid blow in favor of the opposition. What better reason for a law protecting a suspect's innocence than an attorney general who doesn't believe that right of innocence exists.

The Battalion Editorial Board



Greeks

Is University recognition worth

As part of its quest to become "world class," Texas A&M has granted social organizations, a.k.a. Greeks, the opportunity to apply for "official" University recognition, with all the benefits and privileges that such recognition entails.

Rebecca DeLong
Guest Columnist

To be recognized or not to be recognized; that was, and still is, the question.

It's no secret that A&M is just a tad fond of its traditions. As students, we've been indoctrinated to believe that some things here are gospel; women are not in the band, gays do not have a club of their own and Greek is a four-letter word.

And so it goes. Or should I say "so it went" until some brave souls had the nerve to question the gospel according to Aggieland and bring about two changes for the sake of overcoming discrimination.

The first change was recognizing the Gay Student Services on campus. The second change was allowing women in the band. And now a third change has come in the recognition of Greeks on campus.

Recognizing the Greeks made sense for a couple of reasons. First, it is just good business sense to back financially

rich organizations which can bring in lots of revenue for the school.

Second is the hope that officially recognizing them will break down barriers that exist between Greeks and non-Greeks.

But now that the tables have turned, it's up to the Greeks to decide whether or not there is an advantage to "official" recognition.

From the University's standpoint the answer is an emphatic "YES!" And why not? Recognized Greeks will be required to do their banking through the A&M financial office and surrender any interest on money to the school.

Of course, the Greeks get something for their money. They'll be able to conduct meetings and rush on campus, advertise in The Battalion for half price.

But there's one aspect of recognition that is getting glossed over — the clause that states that no University organization shall discriminate.

Uh oh. This is where things get messy. And this is why it makes no sense that A&M should recognize fraternities and sororities.

Forget the fallacy that this will make the Greeks more acceptable to the non-Greeks. The Corps of Cadets is obviously University recognized, and we've yet to break down the existing

barriers between regs and

What it all boils down to is that organizations are basically discriminatory organizations, and that's going to change. But for as long as A&M to recognize them, that's a change indeed. It is an irony that a school which has made two mammoth victories in coming discrimination would down and recognize the Greeks and fraternities discriminate against everyone, not just the reggies. And though Greeks come with boosting their membership, see it now, there is every possibility that they could one day find themselves slapped with a lawsuit.

So Texas A&M, in its quest to discriminate against no one, has dictated itself. Greed reared its head, and the University broke and gave recognition to the organizations which have their very roots on discrimination.

Rebecca DeLong is a senior journalism major.

Letter to the Readers

Just a matter of ethics

If people are influenced by what they see on television, it's no wonder Americans distrust journalists: American television is great for stereotyping people: politicians, wealthy oil men, Texans, journalists.

Michelle Powe
Managing Editor

Journalists are always depicted on television and in the movies as unprincipled, unfeeling news hounds, who are always looking for some dirt to kick up and willing to do anything for a story. If they aren't sticking microphones in people's faces, they are breaking into offices to find the information they seek or going undercover to sucker some poor fool into exposing himself to the world.

This may be a romantic image for kids sitting at home in the living room dreaming of adventure and drama. But it just ain't so.

This distorted picture of journalists is partly a result of ignorance on the part of the people who invent these fantasies on film. Television and movie screenwriters' associations with the media are probably limited to "reporters" from Entertainment Tonight and the National Enquirer. I use the term "reporters" loosely, because these people aren't journalists — they are gossip columnists and fiction writers. But as obvious as this distinction would seem to be, people continually lump grocery store reading together with real newspapers and newsmagazines and the result is that the real journalists suffer from the comparison.

The portrayal of journalists breaking and entering, and donning disguises to get the story is just plain wrong. The misconceptions caused by this stereotype are damaging to the field of journalism, and hamper the ability of honest reporters to do their jobs.

Journalists have ethics which we enforce upon ourselves. These guidelines are designed to keep the journalist free from conflicts of interest, and objective and unbiased in his reporting. The journalist's purpose is to serve the truth, to report the news fairly, accurately, objectively, responsibly.

The majority of journalists follow these rules willingly, because to abandon these principles is to abandon the cause and the integrity of the free press. The Janet Cookes — young reporters with their eyes on Pulitzer Prizes rather than the truth — are the exception rather than the rule.

I have heard people state matter-of-factly that The Battalion runs sensationalistic or negative stories because Battalion staffers think sensational means news. Wrong.

We don't search out sensationalist stories to print and purposely try to provoke our readers. We report the news, and we try to report it as fairly and accurately as we can. If the news also hap-

pens to be sensationalistic or negative, that does not mean we have twisted the news, it is merely a sad statement about our society.

To quote from the American Society of Newspaper Editors' Statement of Principles: "The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgements on the issues of the time. Newspapermen and women who abuse the power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust."

This is the policy we have followed in the past at The Battalion, and the policy we will continue to follow. We try to maintain good faith with our readers, because good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism.

Michelle Powe is the Managing Editor for The Battalion.

More to public education than being a TEAMS player

The Texas Legislature has decided it's time to "get tough on education." But instead of really toughening educational standards, the Texas Education Agency is trying to hoodwink the public. They introduced teacher competency tests, and the public cheered. They talked about a "career ladder" and merit pay, and the public applauded. Now the TEA comes up with the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimum Skills, and the public is ecstatic.



Loren Steffy

The TEAMS test is an exit-level examination which all high school juniors must pass before they can graduate. The idea of a pre-graduation exam isn't bad for monitoring the success of education programs, but it doesn't help improve the quality education in any way.

If a system of education is inadequate, and it establishes standards for graduation, those requirements also will be inadequate. Students who pass a test which monitors those standards merely live up to the inadequacy of the system, but their education is not improved because of the test.

To ensure that students have an adequate knowledge base, tests which measure specific objectives would have to be administered at the end of each year.

Then, if students didn't meet those objectives, instruction designed specifically to remediate areas of weakness should be developed.

Currently, students who fail the TEAMS test are placed in a generic course aimed at helping them pass the test. This doesn't address the individual's specific areas of academic weakness.

The TEAMS test is supposed to assess basic skills — what the state feels high school graduates should have learned during their 12 or 13 years in school. However, a standardized test such as TEAMS doesn't measure children's actual knowledge, it measures how their knowledge compares with that of their peers. The tests don't measure strengths or weaknesses of individual achievement. They measure how well one student's accomplishments compare with the group the test has been standardized on.

Because of the emphasis on comparative education, the TEAMS test stresses uniformity instead of individualism. The state is saying, "This is what you must know to be an educated person." A child who strives to do well on TEAMS is striving to be as much like his peers as he can, at least as far as academic achievements are concerned.

Education should be more than shoving children into a mold and producing millions of homogenized young adults. Education should be more than just seeing if students live up to certain math and English requirements.

The TEAMS test doesn't measure writing skills — at least as far as actual composition is concerned. TEAMS measures none of the social skills a student needs to get along in the world. These are valuable and necessary, but the tests chooses to ignore them.

But the comparative knowledge arrangement of the tests is easier to grade. A computer can process an answer sheet in a matter of minutes. But a grader could toil over compositions for hours. Developing a test that measures social skills accurately is virtually impossible.

The idea of testing a student's ability before he is unleashed on the world is an excellent idea, but finding a test that can fairly measure all that a student has to offer society is going to be difficult. The TEAMS test isn't the answer. It fails to accurately represent the student's overall knowledge.

It's admirable that the public is demanding tougher educational standards in Texas, but they shouldn't allow this thirst for better education to be quenched by the TEAMS test.

Texas shouldn't be fooled into thinking the TEA is some sort of fairy godmother and the TEAMS test is a magic wand which the TEA can use to educate children with a wave of its hand. There's no room for magic in public education. Improvement is going to take a lot of hard, tedious work.

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