

Opinion

Democratic ideals slaughtered in the name of good taste

The classroom and the rock music industry are the latest suspects in a never-ending crime. The charge — corrupting the youth. It is a complaint that has been levied against everyone from Socrates to Frank Zappa. The scene is familiar: The backbone of the nation is being warped by some seemingly innocent medium which children come into contact with regularly. Unfortunately, what is warped in the long run is the backbone of democracy.



Loren Steffy

forehead to the underside of a mahogany desk.

It's important to realize that these groups aren't made up of fanatics. They're merely people who think the moral fiber of this country has been torn to shreds by professors who have the gall *not* to think like Ronald Reagan, and by musicians who *do* have the gall to sing about sex, violence, peace, love and other unmentionable subjects.

The PMRC has made some important advances. Several record companies have agreed to print song lyrics on the outside of album covers, which means parents can stop listening to senators' wives and start deciding for themselves what songs are turning their children's brains to guacamole.

The tell-all lyrics will give parents — and children — a better idea of what a song is about. Of course, rock songs still will be open to misinterpretation, out-of-context quotations and general dissection. But even great works such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* are picked apart by people who would rather see how many times the word "nigger" appears than pay attention to the book's anti-racism message.

What is disturbing about these groups is not their what's-right-for-me-is-right-for-everyone attitude, but that they employ this thinking in the name of democracy. Obviously they are doing

what they think is best for impressionable children. Someone has to keep Satan from invading their brains and turning them into Charles Manson groupies.

But at the same time these groups are protecting our children's minds, they also are warping them. We are showing them a contradiction in the concept of free speech.

It's fine with AIA if professors lecture on free expression, but if they exercise it, their names are recorded by the ever-vigilant AIA reporters. They'll be added to the national list of known, card-carrying liberals operating on America's college campuses.

Freedom of speech doesn't mean just a freedom of the norm, it means a freedom of extremes — some of which are not pleasing. If we are to hear Martin Luther King Jr., we must tolerate the Ku Klux Klan. If we are to read the Bible, we must tolerate *Penthouse*. If we are to listen to John Lennon, we must tolerate Ozzy Osbourne.

Groups like the AIA and the PMRC are attempting to control specific "undesirable" situations, but the result is an attack on a basic principle of democracy.

Socrates was forced to drink hemlock for his "crimes." Let's hope our First Amendment isn't similarly poisoned.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor for *The Battalion*.

Luckily, there's always someone to save our children from subliminal destruction. The classroom is patrolled by Accuracy in Academia, an outgrowth of Reed Irvine's Accuracy in Media. The word "accuracy" is, of course, relative.

AIA is out to protect students from professors who teach their personal beliefs in the classroom — especially if those beliefs are liberally biased.

The rock music business is monitored primarily by the Parent's Music Resource Center. The PMRC is a group of senators' wives who listen to heavy metal music and determine if certain songs will cause a kid to nail the babysitter's

Mail Call

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.

Reagan's plan doesn't hold water

EDITOR:

I am writing in response to President Reagan's plan to begin selling off federal assets to help balance the budget.

I can not believe that anyone would suggest liquidating assets as a solution to the deficit problem. It is proposed that such assets as the Bonneville Power Administration, the Elk Hills Naval Petroleum Reserve and satellites owned by the National Weather Service be sold to private investors at the earliest possible date and that the funds be earmarked for deficit reduction. It seems to me that the idea of selling off capital assets that have been accumulated over generations to relieve a deficit brought about by poor fiscal management is somewhat akin to pawning the family heirlooms to finance a spending spree.

While I can understand why the present administration would be concerned by a federal debt that has more than doubled under its stewardship, I think that liquidating federal possessions to make the deficit better on paper offers a short-sighted approach to the problem. It represents its desire to make the deficit numbers look better without being willing to make the hard decisions that are demanded.

In the first place selling these assets would not alleviate the harmful economic effects that running a deficit causes. The money that is now being taken out of the capital market to finance the deficit would simply be borrowed by private interests to finance the purchase of these assets from the government. There would be no more money available to finance investment in capital improvements that would create jobs and economic growth. We would have made little headway towards insuring long-term economic growth and some of our national assets would be gone for good.

While there are no easy solutions to the deficit problem I am confident that the solution lies somewhere in a mix of cutting federal spending and increasing revenues through a tax increase. While this may not be the easiest course to follow, I am convinced that it is the proper one and the one that reflects true leadership.

I hope we will have the national character to resist this attempt at political expediency and make the hard decisions to insure America's future.

William L. Hancock Jr.

Illogical rationale

EDITOR:

I could not help noting your article on Thursday concerning SCONA keynote speaker on the Middle East, William Stewart. The Battalion reported that Stewart said " . . . Israelis insisted that the Palestinian refugees had no right to a national state of their own."

It is important to remember that the area of Palestine, which today comprises Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, was divided in the 1940s. The Palestinians were offered a homeland in this area, and they refused it!

In addition The Batt reported "Stewart said, in the Middle East, terrorism is seen not as cruel, but as a useful political device." How tragic that there are people who utilize cold-blooded murder as a justification for political acts. Such illogical rationale shows how much Jews and Christians alike must live by the ideal expressed in the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill."

Barry Laves

Not the Christians fault

EDITOR:

Why does Karl Palmeyer do this to himself? Is he some sort of a sadist or something? Does he enjoy making unprovoked attacks on Christians and Christianity?

I'm referring, of course, to his nice little column about Valentine's Day. From what Karl says about the "good old days" it seems to me people acted just about as silly and stupid then as they do now (perhaps more so since the men were running around in skirts and the women were wearing bedsheets).

But that was the old tradition, and we all know that in order to be a truly world-class holiday (is that anything like world-class wrestling?) tradition must be changed. And so it was. Those tyrannical Christians who were obviously in control of the government since they had cleverly had their leader and a bunch of his most influential men killed to rally support for their cause) changed the name to Valentine's Day despite the cries of the majority of the people to keep the holiday as it was.

Oh sure, the masses tried to maintain the old tradition of dancing, drinking and degenerating — but severe punishment levied by the Christians eventually forced both the name and the activities of the degenerate but noble holiday Lupercalia to change.

Sure Valentine's day is silly, stupid and sickening. I feel like bawling every time I read one of those borderline (sometimes not-so-borderline) obscene or mushy mumbo-jumbo cards. But does Karl have to go attacking Christians for it? Christians didn't commercialize Valentine's Day though commercialization seems to be Karl's main objection.

It's almost like he thinks there's only one kind of religion — I can't call ever reading him attack any others. Perhaps it's a personal thing deep within Karl's own soul. I know I always was angered when someone I had wronged repeatedly granted me forgiveness if I only asked sincerely instead of wronging me in return as I expected. But then, that was the old me.

Duane Davis



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Where there is smoke . . .

The tobacco companies are fighting back against the steady drumbeat of anti-cigarette propaganda.

According to the Wall Street Journal, Philip Morris has launched a vigorous campaign to prevent discrimination against smokers. The tobacco company says anti-smoking zealots are harassing smokers and violating their civil rights.

A Philip Morris spokesman also maintains that when it comes to reporting the smoking story, the media are grossly unfair to the tobacco interests and support the "fringe element in the country today bent on modifying Americans' behavior to conform to their own interpretation of Utopia."

I wish the spokesman had said "some of the media" because I believe that anybody in this country who wants to smoke should be allowed to do so. I refuse to be lumped with zealots or members of the fringe element. While I am a born-again ex-cigar smoker, I would never take sides between those courageous people who have given up smoking and the weak, miserable wretches who still are addicted to this filthy habit.

The newspaperman's job is to be fair and impartial on any political issue,



Art Buchwald

whether it is tobacco or Colonel Khadafi.

So I will first deal with the arguments in favor of smoking. Most people who smoke are walking time bombs waiting to go off, and the cigarette is the only thing to keep them from self-destructing. The country does not have enough mental institutions to take care of all the neurotic people who would have to be committed if they weren't permitted to smoke.

Smokers are among our biggest taxpayers. Through cigarette taxes they support schools, sewers and the hospitals they check into when they get sick from smoking.

Smoking contributes to the nation's economy. Cigarette addicts will spend their last dollar for a pack of smokes rather than throw it away on bread or milk.

One of the most telling health arguments in favor of smoking is that more women are doing it now than ever before. They wouldn't if it weren't safe, because women smokers are not dumb.

The more anxious people are about lighting up, the more they are bullied by nonsmokers who will not tolerate smokers in the same room. These nonsmoking zealots justify their rudeness by claiming they become dizzy from the fumes. This is a joke. It is a known medical fact that tobacco smoke cannot do more physical harm to a nonsmoker than a glass of warm water from the East River.

The biggest fear of the tobacco companies is that if the nonsmoker is permitted to persecute the smoker today, he will persecute diesel trucks tomorrow and Consolidated Edison smokestacks next week. So the pro-smoker is fighting not just for his own rights, but the rights of everything that smokes in America.

Now let's be fair to the other side. The nonsmokers are made up of wimps who sit around all day waiting for a smoker to pull out a cigarette. They are intolerant, selfish people. When asked why they object to someone enjoying a few puffs from a filter tip, all the nonsmoker can come up with is a weak, "I have asthma," which is no reason at all.

Besides the wimps, a large number of nonsmokers are reformed puffers, who gave up the weed and now want everyone else to do the same. These people are unbearable because they not only ask smokers to put out their cigarettes but spend a half-hour telling them why they are not good.

So there you have it, two opposing sides, each with their own truth: one composed of smoke worshippers, the other always praying for fresh air.

We, as Americans, should have tolerance for both — the side that believes in long life, and the side that couldn't care less. No one has a monopoly on truth. The only thing we can all agree on is the tobacco companies are not in business for our health.

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate.

The Battalion

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