

# Opinion

## Buck passing

The Board of Regents refused to grant an audience with Students Against Apartheid to discuss divestment of Texas A&M's holdings in South Africa. This shows a sickening lack of regard for the effects of the University's money on human life.

Board Chairman David Eller, in a Jan. 14 letter to Chancellor Arthur G. Hansen, said it's not the board's responsibility to make moral decisions. Eller's statement is itself a moral decision — money before morality, apathy over action.

A&M has about \$3 million invested in companies that have dealings with South Africa — a miniscule amount when compared to other schools such as the University of Texas, which has \$772.6 million invested. Board Executive Secretary Bill Prensal says the board has a responsibility to maximize its investments and that, although divestment of funds is within the board's jurisdiction, divesting strictly on a moral basis would go against legislative policy.

But a moral statement is exactly what A&M needs.

We need to let South Africa know that we won't allow our investments, no matter how small, to help support government-sponsored racism. We need to show the world that we don't condone a government's disregard for human rights.

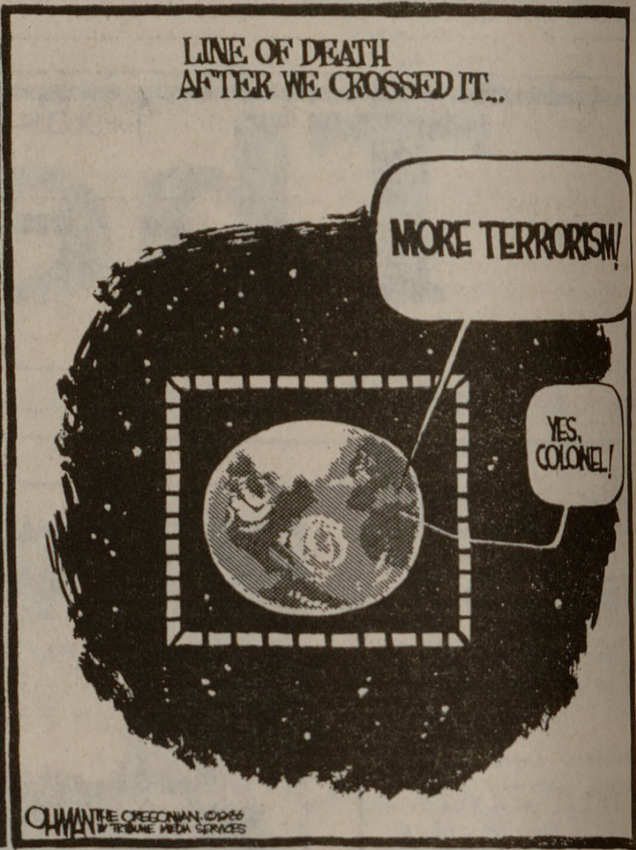
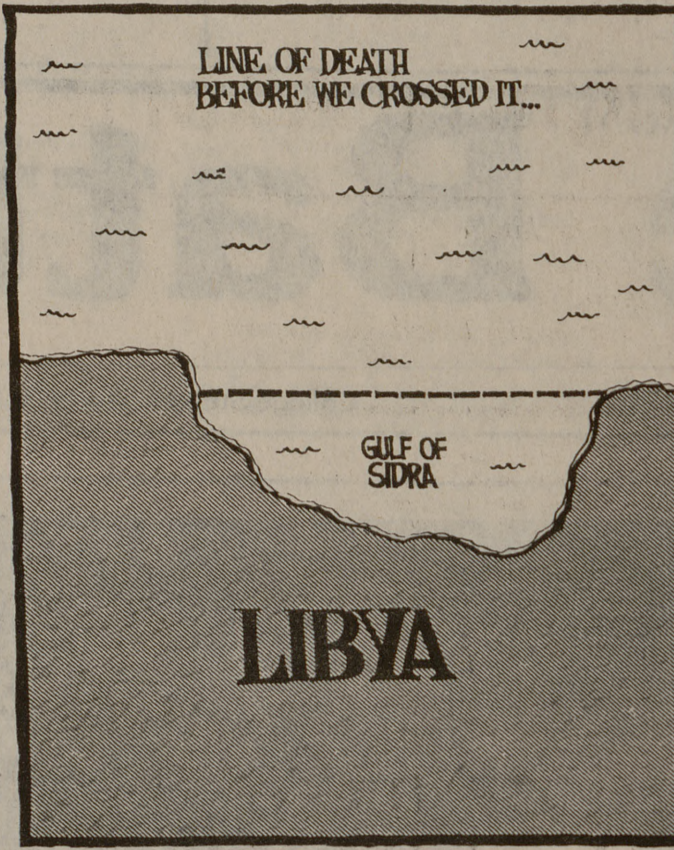
The board's stance on divestment as moral statement sounds legitimate. It's much easier to push the responsibility onto the back of the Texas Legislature than to deal with it here.

But the University has made moral statements in the past. When the Gay Student Services sued for recognition, the University defended itself by saying the group would not be "consistent with the philosophy and goals that have been developed for the creation and existence of Texas A&M University."

The same phrase could be tacked on to a statement about University investments in South Africa. Instead, the regents seem more concerned with how much money we can make on our investments. They'd rather leave moral decisions such as divestment to the Legislature.

It's time for those in charge to take some responsibility for the Legislature's money. It's time to stop passing the buck, be it to the Legislature or to South Africa.

The Battalion Editorial Board



## Legalizing Compound 1080 poses threat to man, animals

We are now beginning the celebration of our state's 150th birthday. If a large number of citizens don't act now, it may also be the beginning of the end of a clean, healthy environment in Texas.

Chris P. Carter  
Guest Columnist

In 1972, President Nixon, by executive order, banned the use of the highly dangerous poison Compound 1080 (sodium monofluoroacetate) on federal lands and in all predator-control programs. However, bowing to political pressure, the Reagan administration revoked the executive order and re-registered the deadly poison for use in individual states. The Texas Department of Agriculture now wants to reinstate this predator-control poison in the form of toxic collars placed on goats and sheep.

This is nothing short of insanity. If this is allowed to happen, it will soon be legal to defile our Texas soil, our animals and ourselves with one of the most deadly and harmful of all poisons imaginable — and all in the name of a few sheep and goat raisers who have other alternatives.

As a veterinarian, my husband knows what Compound 1080 can do to an animal. It is odorless and tasteless and looks like powdered sugar. So lethal is this poison that a single teaspoon can kill 100 adult men. Twenty-five percent of 1/500 ounce is enough to kill a 35-pound child. The time required to kill an animal or person can run two to 12 hours, while the victim experiences violent vomiting, convulsions and severe internal pain.

One of the most dreaded features of

this poison is its secondary poisoning effects. Tissue of the victims is also poisonous to scavenger animals feeding on the carcasses. People who have handled these carcasses or their vomit also have been poisoned. There is no known antidote.

Prior to the 1972 ban, black bears, bobcats, raccoons, golden eagles and domestic dogs and cats were found to be poisoned by the compound. Agents of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Animal Damage Control Program were discouraged from reporting the deaths because of the political controversy over the issue.

Human beings have lost their lives to Compound 1080 as well. If we allow this horrendous poison in Texas, the deaths will start all over again. Our beloved pets, even our children — especially those who live in the country — won't be safe from accidental exposure to this deadly compound.

My husband and I live in the country. We do not let our dogs run free, but we do wander the countryside with them running alongside us, enjoying their romp. Like all dogs, they sniff around and get into any and every type of garbage in the fields they can find.

Can you imagine the tragedy that would ensue if they were to get hold of any of this poison? Can you picture this cataclysmic conclusion to a pleasant walk in the country? Even though my husband is a veterinarian, there would be nothing he could do to save them. This type of scene would be happening all over Texas if we allow the reinstatement of Compound 1080.

And what about our children? Young

children love to touch and put everything into their mouths. Is it so fetched to see the potential for kidnapping hold of this lethal substance?

There are many alternatives to protect our goats and sheep from predators. The use of guard dogs, non-taste-deterrent baits such as lime chloride, livestock pens at night, grazing herds away from the range have proven to be methods are highly effective in controlling predators and do not cause a threat to target species — our pets and children included.

Why should we contaminate Texas land and threaten our own lives even putting our own lives in jeopardy for the sake of a few who don't bother looking into safer alternative methods?

It is imperative that state officials do not want this poison allowed in state. During the last 150 years, Texans have had to endure years of adversity, pain and suffering. An enormous price has been paid for a high quality of life that we enjoy today in Texas.

For this reason, we cannot allow a small minority to introduce a lethal poison into our precious environment.

One hundred fifty years of progress has yielded viable alternatives to control of predators of sheep and goats. Let's not turn back the hands of time resorting to barbarian techniques of uncivilized past.

Chris P. Carter is a secretary in Brazos County Courthouse.

## Seat belt laws, like cartoons, are a joke

It is Saturday morning all across America — cartoon time for a trillion or so kids. At the moment, they are watching the "Mr. T" show, which is sort of a cartoon of a cartoon, but never mind. There's the famous Mr. T in his equally famous van and — hold it a second, kids — what's that across his chest? It's a sash. It's a bandolier. No, it's a seat belt!



Richard Cohen

Yes, a seat belt. And right ahead of Mr. T's van (or maybe it's behind; I'm not really paying attention) is the bad guys' car. They are mean-looking with appropriately mean, unshaven faces. They snarl. They growl. But lo! What is that across their snarly and growly chests. Yes! Once again, it's a seat belt.

Oh, golly gee kids, do you get the lesson? Do you understand what, almost subliminally and very cleverly, you are being told? Buckle up. At least that's what it seems at first blush. And a good lesson it is, too. It could save your life and protect your face from going through the mean windshield. But wait, kids. Maybe you also are being told that, perish the thought, if you go through the windshield, it is, as we adults say, your own damned fault. You should have buckled up.

What do you mean by that you ask? What's so bad about teaching kids to buckle up? The answer, of course, is nothing. It is the smart thing to do. But we all know that no matter how clever the message, there are many kids and adults as well who will not buckle up. They will go flying through the mean windshield.

But if their cars had air bags, they would not. Air bags would cushion them from hitting the dashboard. It would work in those accidents over 35 miles per hour where seat belts sometimes do not — where, in fact, they seem to cause injuries of their own such as snapped spinal cords. But the auto companies by and large oppose installing air bags. They could add \$200 more to the price of the car, although Ford charges \$815 for them now. If, though, you are rich enough to afford a Mercedes, you get an air bag as standard equipment. One of the reasons that the rich get richer is that they survive.

The federal government has seen to that. Under a compromise announced by Department of Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, auto manufacturers will not be required to install air bags if, by 1990, two-thirds of the U.S. population is covered by mandatory seat-belt laws. One by one, the states have compliantly fallen in line. Just this month Maryland became the 23rd state to sign up for the Liddy Dole Good Shook award, passing a mandatory seat-belt law just as Dole and the auto industry want.

Dole's compromise has put the states in a real quandary. Seat belts sometimes save lives; in a head-on collision, air bags almost always do. By choosing the former, the states all but rule out the latter. But worse than that, the Dole rule revives the pernicious notion that we are always the captain of our own ship. This was the advertising dogma of the auto industry in its irresponsible pre-Nader era: Safe driving was YOUR responsibility and any accident was either your — or the other guy's — fault.

No mention was made of poorly made cars, bad tires, roads designed by the mayor's nephew or the fact, uncontested since time immemorial, that accidents will happen. People will be careless or drunk or silly or, when it comes to men, distracted by some young thing walking on the side of the road.

Now we are creeping back to that era. Of course people are responsible for their own welfare, but so too, are the auto manufacturers and a government that (barely) regulates the industry. Seat belts are now being touted as some sort of panacea against injury. They are no such thing. General Motors offers \$10,000 to the heirs of anyone killed while wearing a seat belt in one of their cars, suggesting that such a possibility is remote. But by the first of the year, GM had paid out \$2.4 million to the heirs of 240 former GM owners or passengers.

So now it's Saturday morning again. The kids are watching a cartoon show on television and there's tough Mr. T wearing his seat belt. Adults watching have to smile. They know that in real life neither Mr. T, nor the bad guys nor lots of other people, would ever wear a belt. The cartoon is like the Dole rule itself. It's a joke.

Richard Cohen is a columnist for the Washington Post Writers Group.

## Mail Call

### Thanks to all

EDITOR:

Sunday night a fire destroyed 13 Sausalito apartments. We were some of the luckier ones. Our apartment was destroyed, but we managed to save many of our belongings thanks to the help of some good Ags.

When we arrived, the apartment already was aflame. Several people helped us pull our belongings out of the smoke-filled house. But it didn't stop here. The day after, several Ags from other apartments offered trucks and helped haul our things to our new place.

We would like to thank the Red Cross, Jamespoint Properties and especially our many friends who stood by our side and helped us throughout the ordeal. Only in a community such as this could everyone pull together like we did. Thanks to everyone involved.

Jeff Walton  
Dave Cudlipp  
Wade Welker  
Peyton Lumpkin

### Original split

EDITOR:

I would like to address this letter to Craig Bain and all those who think they can do a better job than the journalists and photojournalists working for *The Battalion*. I don't recall any of his stories or photos being published recently. When the "Going Bananas" photo was taken it was for a class, but it showed some human interest and got published. Again I ask, "Where's his?" I would like to commend *The Battalion* for very excellent and creative work.

The banana split is a one-of-a-kind original — sorry.

Michael "Going Bananas" Adams

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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