

Opinion

'Decency' group's efforts misguided but not wasted

I frequently go to 7-Eleven stores to satisfy an irrefragable urge — for Cornnuts. I can't help myself. Cornnuts always have been a bigger attraction for me than the not-for-sale-to-anyone-under-18-years-of-age magazines carefully hidden behind the counter.



Loren Steffy

Occasionally I might catch a glimpse of the *Playboy* nameplate and wonder how Christie Hefner, an avowed feminist, can be in charge of such a publication and not suffer a severe personality split.

Other than this reason for pondering ideological hypocrisy, it doesn't matter to me that 7-Eleven will no longer be selling *Playboy* and its staples-in-the-navel competitor, *Penthouse*. What does matter is the reason the convenience stores' parent company, Southland Corp., arrived at its no-smut decision.

Southland has been under increasing pressure from the National Federation for Decency, an anti-pornography group the magazines compare to Nazis. Southland denies its decision was influenced by the NFD, but Don Wildmon, the group's representative before the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, claims otherwise.

With more than 300,000 members, the NFD is not the small group of radical fundamentalists that critics have

been writing it off as. Its demonstrations are organized and the demonstrators are informed and prepared to deal with opposing arguments. Last year the NFD launched a massive protest in Dallas with more than 10,000 people marching to the steps of Southland's headquarters.

Although the opposition can argue the relevancy of the term "decency," few can say these people don't have strong convictions.

So why *Playboy*? Why *Penthouse*? This group proved itself to be a formidable foe of pornography, so why attack the most socially accepted of all the "girlie" magazines? Why not go after the real threats that other, less organized groups can't?

Playboy's pages frequently are graced with excerpts from best-selling novels by such respectable authors as Arthur C. Clarke and William F. Buckley. President Reagan's son is on its payroll, and it's one of the 10 largest-circulating magazines in the country. *Penthouse's* circulation can't quite compare with *Playboy's* (it's only in the top 20), but it, too, is frequented by famous names, including Jerry Falwell, who heads a sizeable anti-pornography campaign himself. The 7-Eleven ban barely will put a dent in smut distribution — 3 percent of *Playboy's* sales at most.

Is NFD's effort wasted? Misguided is a better word.

NFD targeted the "largest purveyor of pornography." But the magazine's obscenity is, legally, questionable at best. NFD merely lashed out at the largest

and most visible manifestation of a more latent illness. They attacked the symptoms but not the cause.

It has not been determined yet if such magazines as *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are linked to sexual crimes, violence and child abuse. It probably never will.

But there are areas of the pornography industry — however it is defined — that clearly are prohibited by law. Yet many vile publications — especially child pornography — continue to circulate despite laws against it. They pose a far greater threat to society — especially children — than a few bare breasts nestled between ads for whiskey and cigarettes.

Some forms are so explicit that they serve as instruction manuals for child molesters, explaining how to pick up children in a park and sexually assault them or how to perform incest — complete with illustrations — on a nine-year-old girl.

Here is where our society needs the NFD to concentrate its efforts. Here is the real threat the NFD sees the potential for behind the 7-Eleven counters.

I'm not belittling NFD's efforts with ludicrous cries of censorship. NFD is enjoying the spoils of effective activism.

But the battle it chose to fight was the least productive and easiest to win. If pornographic material is responsible for sexual crime, NFD has gone after the misdemeanors and left the capital offenses undisturbed.

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

Mail Call

Costs outweigh the benefits

EDITOR:

As students at Texas A&M hear about the recent disaster in the Soviet Union, we all wonder how it happened and what effects the meltdowns will have on everything from people to politics. As a zoology major, I am of course interested in environmental impact of such an event; and although time answers may be revealed, an underlying question in my mind drives me to ask why we employ nuclear power at all. The (quite literally) immeasurable damage of the stations simply fascinates me.

The practice is unsafe. No matter how "perfected" it is, the entire process will never be 100 percent fail-safe. Given, the level of an accident is variable, but how can any accident (at any level) be justified to those effected, to (possibly) deformed offspring or to the environment. To any supporter of nuclear energy — justify this "cheap, reliable energy source" to the untold number of people who are effected by the meltdowns at Chernobyl. And it will happen again, as long as nuclear energy is used, the threat is always there for an accident. It will never be safe.

Even if "perfect" procedures were possible, such an energy would and will produce incredible amounts of radioactive wastewater and highly radioactive products, and as the quantities of these highly hazardous wastes increase, so does the need for effective containment methods and disposal sites, which clearly do not exist.

Nuclear power is a very selfish practice. It produces a cancer in our world, and now it's killing people. It doesn't think of the future. Does anyone really think that the Nukes are considering the cost of paying someone to warn people for thousands of years to stay away from their dumpsites? I believe the solution to the problem is too complex to solve today, but new policies must be made to curb this practice, like "No dumpsites — you make it, you keep it." The environmental impacts of events such as Chernobyl are immense, and I honestly wonder why anyone could support anything so dangerous to everything and everyone.

Pete Walton '87

Absolutely no absolutes

EDITOR:

I would like to address this letter to *The Battalion's* "guest self-righteous moralist," Mike Foadre, whose last Bible-thumping letter appeared in Tuesday's issue. I have been tempted for some time to write in rebuttal to many of his "divinely inspired" letters but refrained, thinking "He has a right to express his opinion." Well, Foadre had finally pushed me over my threshold.

First of all, Foadre's assumption of the "absolute truth" of the Bible is absurd. The fact is that the Bible originated from the oral tradition before there was writing. Secondly, he seems to be entirely ignorant of the fact that the Bible has been translated into many languages before English. There is not always an exact translation for each word. Lastly, based on these two facts, interpretation of the scriptures is indeed left to the individual. Although the message of the Bible is clear, it could not logically be taken as "absolute truth."

Next, Foadre decided to address the issue of morality and attempted to argue how the rest of the world should believe in his values. If he would seek the definition of this word, he would discover that morality is the "quality of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior." Note that this says nothing of the Bible or Christianity. It seems apparent to me that principles are largely individualistic. Therefore, morality is the individual's idea of right and wrong. Although I do not choose this style of life, I also do not condemn it. Homosexuals are humans and have rights as humans. I just hope for Foadre's sake that God does not judge him as he has judged others.

Jon A. Thomas

Vet school a sure bet

EDITOR:

The Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine has once again gained the honor of being one of the top institutions in the field. This was evidenced recently by the acceptance of all fourth-year students who applied for veterinary internships at other veterinary schools around the United States.

This in part can be attributed to a faculty composed of staff members from all over the world as well as A&M graduates, dedicated to academic excellence. This has given the veterinary students an extremely broad background and a high degree of exposure to many different concepts of veterinary medicine.

Congratulations to all fourth-year students who have accomplished this goal. Also, congratulations to the college for maintaining a high standard of academic development which has gained them the recognition and respect of the nation's veterinary colleges.

Karol Binford

Unauthorized use of Reveille

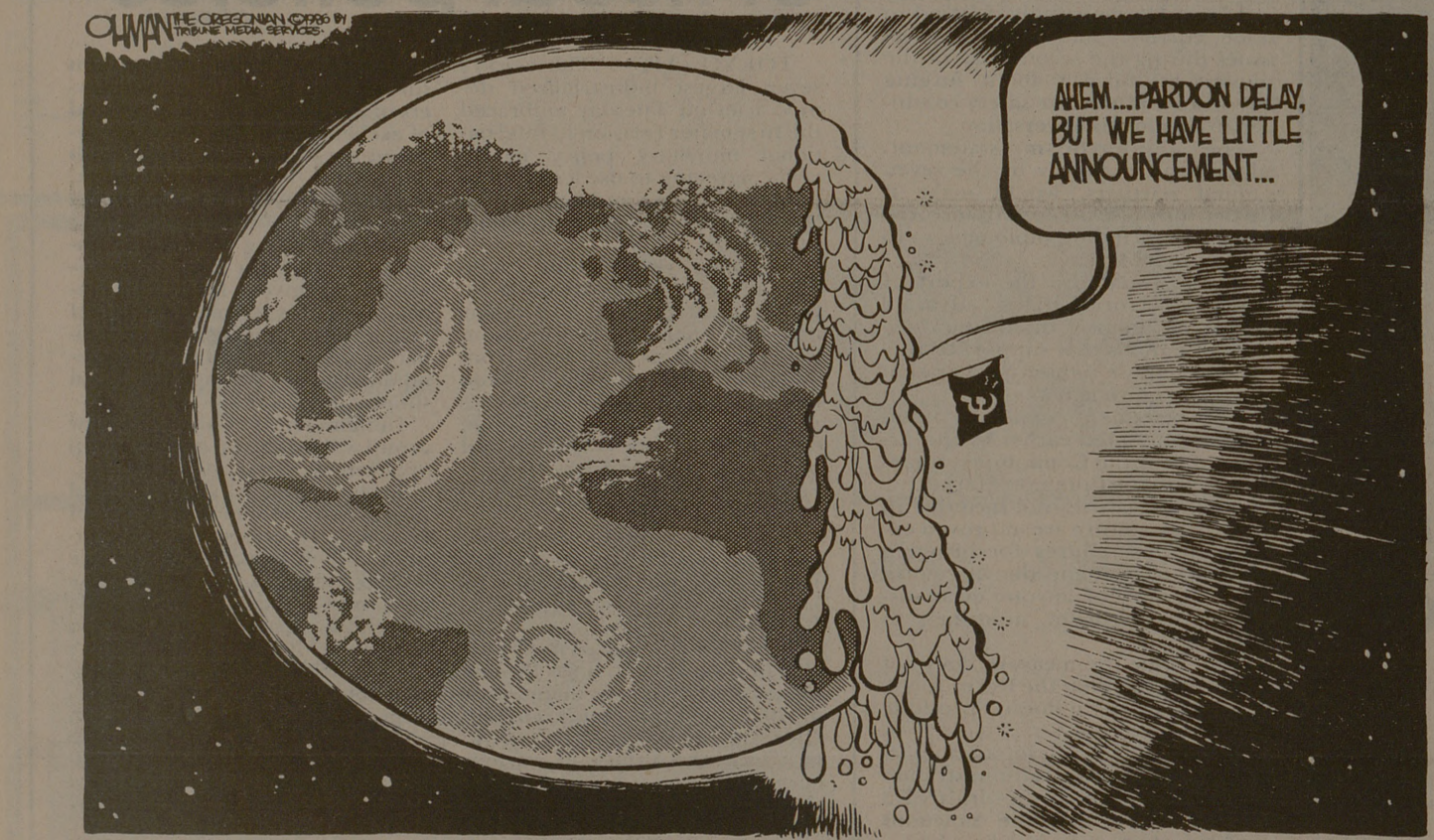
EDITOR:

On Thursday, a political advertisement was featured on page three of *The Battalion* showing Kent Hance posing with Reveille V. Not only was the picture unauthorized, but it was taken after we had specifically told the Hance organization that under no circumstances was Reveille to be used for political promotions. Her appearance Wednesday at the Kent Hance rally was done only to give equal time to all candidates. (She made a similar appearance at the Loeffler rally without incident).

Reveille represents Texas A&M University and all of its diversified student body. She does not support any political candidate. We always have and always will maintain an open door policy of trying to grant all requests for Reveille's appearance. It is unfortunate that some people would take advantage of this policy to satisfy their own ends. In light of the events of the last week we are not at all displeased with the results of the Republican primary on Saturday.

Darryl Jamail '86
Commanding Officer
Company E-2

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.



Waldheim an innocent victim

Unless I am presented with convincing evidence to the contrary, I have to go along with Kurt Waldheim's story, that although he was lieutenant on the staff of a Nazi general, he had no idea that any atrocities were committed in Greece and Yugoslavia during 1942 to 1945.



Art Buchwald

There is no reason at this point in time to question the fact that the former Secretary General of the U.N. was anything more than a translator for German Gen. Alexander Lohr, who unfortunately cannot be with us today because he was hanged as a war criminal.

Despite unfounded accusations, it is my humble opinion that Waldheim was a victim, as were most German officers of World War II.

I cannot verify it, but this is probably what happened.

Waldheim, then a bright young officer of Austrian birth, was assigned to General Lohr's staff. Lohr's job was to kill as many Yugoslavs and Greeks as he possibly could and solve the Jewish Balkan question once and for all.

But Lt. Waldheim never knew about any of this. He was under the impres-

sion Gen. Lohr's mission was to keep the Yugoslav and Greek partisans from looting stores.

When Waldheim first arrived and presented himself to Gen. Lohr, the general told him, "I need a translator."

"Jawohl," said Waldheim. "What would you like me to translate?"

"Shakespeare. I love to read Shakespeare in the original. It relaxes me after a long day on the battlefield." Lohr handed Waldheim a German copy of Shakespeare and said, "I want a new play on my desk every night."

"What about my fighting, sir?"

"Don't worry about fighting. Leave that for our boys in the field."

So Waldheim moved into an office three doors down from the general and started to translate Shakespeare.

Every so often someone would rush in and say, "We have 5,000 Greek men, women and children in trucks outside. What should we do with them?"

Waldheim would yell, "That's not my department. Can't you see I'm translating 'Hamlet'?"

Or an SS sergeant would crash in and say, "Where are the freight trains for the Jews of Salonika?"

Waldheim would put his hands over his ears so he couldn't hear what the

man was saying and run out of his office.

For three years Waldheim kept his hands over his ears and eyes, never once hearing or seeing anything that the Germans were doing in the Balkans. As long as he completed his Shakespeare translations no one ever asked him to do anything for Hitler's war effort.

Probably one of Waldheim's great triumphs was translating "All's Well That Ends Well" while Lohr and his troops wiped out 15,000 Yugoslav partisans in the infamous "Operation Black."

The fact that Waldheim appears in a photograph at a Montenegro airport in full uniform with other officers a few days before the operation in no way means that he was involved in it. He was just saying hello to old friends before he went off to his tent with his German-English dictionary.

Some people maintain that it is awfully difficult to serve on a Nazi general's staff in the Balkans from 1942 to 1945 and not know what went on. Kurt Waldheim was the kind of guy who could do it.

If he made a mistake it was not mentioning in his autobiography that he served in the Balkans as a translator of Shakespeare for Gen. Lohr. The only reason I can guess for the omission is he was ashamed to admit he had no idea what happened in World War II.

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The Battalion

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