

Opinion

Rain for the parade

The results of educational reform the Texas Examination of Current Administrators (TECAT) are in. Only 6,579, or 3.3 percent, of Texas teachers who took the competency test failed. Gov. Mark White claims that's an A in anyone's book. Perhaps, but getting an A on TECAT results is like getting an A in Office Aide I — it doesn't really mean anything.

Dubbed a competency test, TECAT was proclaimed as the savior of quality education in the state. But TECAT is at best an assessment of basic knowledge. It measures such skills as fundamental writing skills, ability to use an index or table of contents and recognition of sentence fragments and basic grammatical and spelling errors.

Anyone who lacked these basic necessities for teaching shouldn't have been allowed in the classroom in the first place. But those who did fail will be given a second chance at passing.

TECAT, far from being a beacon of excellence, is more like a \$4.7 million broom used to sweep dead weight out of public schools.

Aside from a good spring cleaning, TECAT has accomplished little. Has the quality of education increased? Does it mean the teachers and administrators who passed the test are outstanding? Hardly.

The test doesn't examine how effectively a teacher can relay information to students. It doesn't account for an educator's ability to inspire students with enthusiasm and a desire to learn. Classroom performance is nearly impossible to measure with a standardized test.

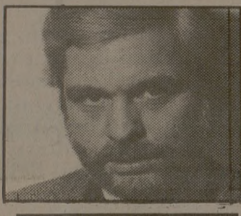
TECAT is a step in the right direction, but it is far from a solution. The sentiments that spawned the test show a genuine concern for quality instruction — but it's not enough.

Education in Texas still is ailing. The cure isn't an answer sheet and a No. 2 pencil.

The Battalion Editorial Board

Pluses into minuses

I knew a woman once whose problem was her beauty. She said women envied her, men lusted after her and employers never took her seriously. I believed her until I mentioned her plight at a dinner party.



Richard Cohen

The men nodded in sympathy, but the women indicated they disagreed. They threw their napkins at me.

It must have been in the same spirit that the *Washington Dossier*, a slick monthly of no consequence, asked members of Congress for some personal information, including their bad habits. What the magazine got in response was similar to the complaint of the lady who said that God had cursed her with beauty. Congressman after congressman confessed to working too hard.

Alphabetically speaking, Rep. Michael Barnes (D-Md.) was the first to fess up. He admitted to "compulsive neatness and punctuality." Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Calif.) said he spent "too much time on the road, working." Rep. James Jones (D-Okla.) confessed that he spent "too much time at work" and Rep. Norman Mineta (D-Calif.) was forthright enough to say that he just couldn't stay away from the desk. "Workaholicism," he called it.

These confessions are of a type. They are like those in which people admit to being too good or too generous or too sensitive. Confessions of this sort usually are preceded by the words, "I just can't help myself but..." Then comes the admission of some supposed shortcoming that is not a shortcoming at all — and probably isn't true, either. With the possible exception of someone complaining about how wealth has complicated his life, nothing quite so grates on the ear.

Where is the congressman whose bad

habit is goofing off? Where is the brave soul who is bored? Where is the man who chases women, the woman who chases men, the ones who daydream or whose worst habit is a craven fear of any interest group with a postage meter? Where is the guy who just can't turn down a contribution, the one who doesn't know how to say no to a speech invitation, the one who admits to throwing principle out the window should the president call on the phone?

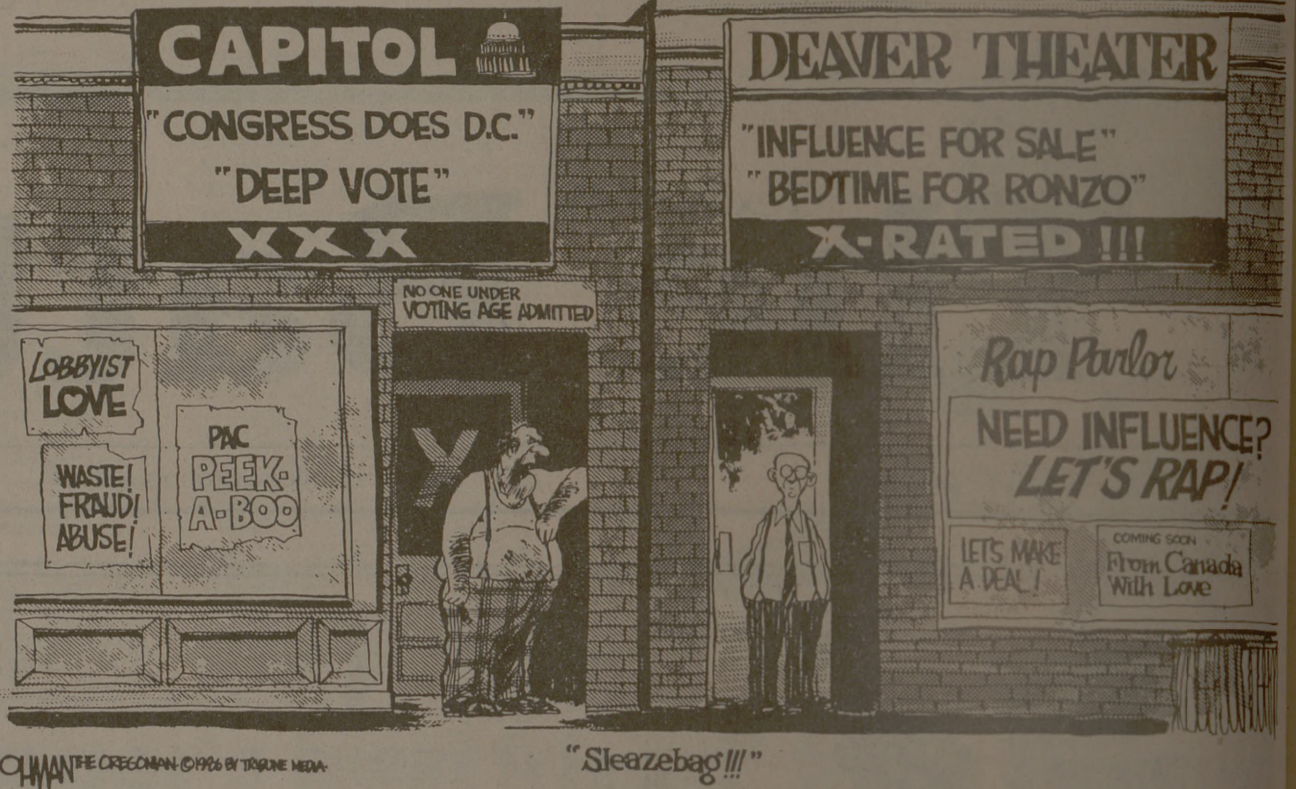
No one like that in our Congress. No, indeed. We have the most conscientious and noncontroversial politicians the world has ever seen. Take Rep. James Slattery (D-Kan.). According to *Dossier*, his political rating is 50 percent liberal, 50 percent conservative. His best friend is his wife. His heroes are Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln, Harry S. Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Robert F. Kennedy. A favorite movie is "Chariots of Fire" and his favorite book is the Bible.

Slattery's favorite clothing store is in Kansas. One of his favorite television shows is the "McNeil/Lehrer News Hour." He prefers to vacation in his home state (he's just corny about Kansas in August), and his wife-cum-best friend is a full-time mother "active in civic organizations and Bible studies." His ultimate ambition is "To be a good husband and father and the best congressman I can be..." But like his colleagues, he too has bad habits. They are "being late and trying to do too many things." I suggest therapy.

The survey goes on. Rep. Eligio (Kika) de la Garza (D-Tex.) says his favorite films are Eddie Albert movies. Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) says his is "Robin Hood" and Rep. James Howard (D-N.J.), chest surely swollen in pride, said his greatest achievement was "passage of the 55-miles-per-hour national speed limit." Many of the congressmen say their best friend is their wife, which in some cases is probably true, in some cases is nothing of the sort, and in any case has nothing to do with intimacy and everything to do with efficiency. It means you only have to lie to one person.

The most common ultimate ambition is to be just a darn good member of Congress. There are some exceptions. Rep. Thomas Downey (D-N.Y.) says he wants to be president; Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) says he wants to be chairman of the Federal Reserve System and Rep. Mel Levine (D-Calif.), at age 42, says he still wants to play first base for the L.A. Dodgers. Only Levine has a chance.

All in all, *Dossier's* profiles of Congress makes for depressing reading. Gone, for the most part, are the personalities, the characters — the men or women who could admit to a few really bad habits. Now many congressmen take an attribute and try to make you think it's a liability. They deserve what I got when I believed that beauty could be an affliction: Ladies, get your napkins.



Terrorists use atrocities, not media, for attention

The State Department on Tuesday accused NBC of encouraging terrorism because the network televised an interview with terrorist Mohammed Abul Abbas but refused to reveal where the terrorist was being interviewed.



Cathie Anderson

Abbas is under indictment by a federal grand jury in connection with the murder of Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair-bound New Yorker traveling on the Achille Lauro when it was hijacked in the Mediterranean Sea in October.

Robert Oakley, head of the department's counter-terrorism section, said that when a media organization makes a deal with a terrorist not to divulge his whereabouts, it is saying, in effect, "we've become his accomplices in order to give him publicity."

I can just hear the NBC executives now. Executive Number 1 says, "Ya' know we should get that guy who's accused of hijacking the Achille Lauro to appear on the 'NBC Nightly News.' We could put terror in the hearts and minds of every red-blooded American. We could give terrorism a new name. Why didn't I think of this before?"

Executive Number 2 picks up on his friend's enthusiasm.

"I'll make sure we get just the right lighting and make-up to really show him at his best. We'll make this guy a star. We'll boost our ratings. If we play our cards right, we might convince him to let one of our correspondents go along on his next raid. We'll get in on the ground floor, if you know what I mean."

"Watch out ABC," says Executive Number 1. "Whatever it takes we'll get this Abbas guy, even if it means promising not to reveal where he's hiding."

No debate. No extensive thought. NBC executives easily decided that they needed Abbas' interview to boost their ratings and scheduled him for the show.

By allowing Abbas to appear on the "NBC Nightly News," the network, like State Department spokesman Charles E. Redman says, gave this terrorist the platform he wanted to disseminate his political propaganda. Why would an American network allow a terrorist to say President Reagan has become "enemy number 1" and that operations on American soil are envisioned?

If NBC and other news media would give less time and space to terrorists and more to government officials, Americans could get more of the right information to make the right decisions. After all, the government knows whether

Abbas is a good guy, bad guy, rebel or just plain zero. Well, I suppose would be useless to try to dissuade Americans from joining a terrorism organization after hearing Abbas on television.

Of Abbas' appearance on "NBC Nightly News," Redman says, "Only terrorism thrives on this kind of publicity. Such publicity in fact encourages the terrorist activities we're all seeking to deter."

Yet terrorism, if it thrives on publicity, does not thrive on this particular publicity. Instead it is aided by the publicity of its atrocities.

Terrorists commit mass murders to get the attention of the world because being ostracized. People are drawn to the ugliness of the act rather than the news.

Yet terrorists won't stop because news media don't report their atrocities. They would continue to perpetrate — but Americans remain ignorant of their occurrence.

Terrorist acts, like plane crashes, nuclear accidents, are a symptom of times. The news media have the obligation to keep the public informed.

NBC executives are neither terrorists nor Abbas' public relations staff. They simply respect the public's right to know.

Cathie Anderson is a senior journalism major and the editor for *The Battalion*.

Mail Call

Advice from the opposition

EDITOR:

The words which punctuate the editor's note to Mike Foorde's letter of April 18, "... such expression requires effort on the part of the individual," are still etched on my conscience. For too long I've heard the groan of Texas A&M students, myself included, concerning the "liberal-bias" of *The Battalion*.

More than once I've vowed to post a response to a slanted editorial or fallacious letter from a reader, only to have my fervor foregone by more pacifying pursuits such as "The Cosby Show," or a large bag of nacho-flavored Doritos.

It is ironic that the target of my criticism has offered the advice which has awakened me from my apathy and mediocrity.

Bravo Foorde and Mark Schulz for standing up for what is right as revealed by God through his word. However unpopular this stance may be in these United States of the 1980s in which self-proclaimed gods state that "... morality is the individual's idea of right and wrong."

I choose to stand also for the standard of right and wrong outlined in the Bible, and challenge other on this campus who maintain this position to stand too and vocalize their beliefs on the pages of this publication as well as vocally in classes and on campus — before these rights are taken away in the name of separation of church and state.

Markel Lee Simmons '87

Thanks from a concerned dad

EDITOR:

A word of thanks to an unidentified Aggie gentleman who assisted my daughter in distress.

On April 20 my daughter, a Baylor freshman, was returning to Waco from a visit with friends in Fort Worth when she had a tire blow out north of Hillsboro.

The gentleman, driving a maroon (what other color for an Aggie?) Biarritz, and his young lady friend stopped, changed my daughter's tire, accompanied her into Hillsboro, where she bought a new tire and then followed her on to Waco to assure a safe trip.

Unfortunately, my daughter didn't get the young gentleman's name. But as a concerned father, I want to publicly thank this young man for his most considerate service to my young lady in need.

Herb Bailey

Devoted readers

EDITOR:

What misanthropic muse inspires Cynthia Gay as she composes her masterworks of editorial satire. Surely the Texas A&M journalism department must be filled with pride as they peruse her latest column, a commentary on recent *Texas Monthly* comparison of the University of Texas and Texas A&M. Certainly genius alone guided her pen as she wove the subtle threads of illogic and banality that only proved the point she so brilliantly feigned to contest.

The grand irony of that column did, however, illustrate the one point on which the *Texas Monthly* article was mistaken. A&M does have an intellectual underground. Our invisibility testifies to the authenticity of our critical disposition. We would never allow ourselves to be paraded as decorative symbol of status on the bosom of the object of our discontent.

Obviously Gay is well acquainted with this side of Texas A&M. In my five years as an undergraduate at this institutional learning facility, never has a *Battalion* column served as such a shining symbol to its ideologically disenfranchised. It is Gay's (not Karl Palmeyer's) column that feeds the fires of our discontent. It is her column that passes around with laughter, shocked disbelief and the vague impression that something greater than ourselves, and necessarily benevolent, is going on.

So in case she ever feels her inspiration fading, we want to assure her of a devoted readership that appreciates her talents, those of us truly "in touch with the '80s."

Jerry Rosrek

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. Editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but 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.

The Battalion (USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

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

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.