

# Opinion

## Grading the tests

The 99.1 percent passing rate for the Texas Examination of Current Administrators and Teachers (TECAT) has been lauded as a reassuring indication that teacher competency is on the rise. But the 80 percent passing rate for the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET) is being be-moaned as a sign that teacher education programs are not up to par. A closer examination shows that results can be deceiving.

TECAT is a placebo of educational reform. The test does not upgrade the quality of education or improve the level of teacher competency. It is an assessment of basic skills, designed to weed out illiterates who have managed to worm their way into the classroom.

Those who cannot pass this test never should have been allowed to teach in the first place. Most of those who completed the TECAT in June were taking it for the second time, after failing their first chance in March. Nevertheless, the 1,199 teachers who failed the TECAT twice still can be given a one-year extension.

The overall impact of the TECAT reassures the public that most teachers at least can read and write, but it does not measure teaching ability in a teacher's specialization.

The ExCET exam, however, goes beyond the basic assessments of TECAT. This exam is more thorough and takes twice as long to complete. Half of the exam concentrates on the teacher's area of specialization.

The lower passing rate is not a sign of poor teacher education programs so much as a sign that the public's demands for higher teaching standards are being implemented.

The ExCET exam eventually will make the TECAT obsolete. It assures that incompetent teachers never get certification, let alone a classroom.

Where the TECAT attempts to make up for poor education standards of the past, the ExCET is nipping teacher incompetence in the bud.

The 20 percent failing rate for the ExCET should be more reassuring to quality-education-conscious Texans than the 0.9 percent failing for the TECAT. Texas A&M should be proud its graduates scored higher than the state average, with 93 percent passing.

Both tests serve a purpose in education reform. But while the TECAT is little more than a feeble attempt to purge incompetence from schools, the ExCET is a final quality check before teachers leave the academic factory, ensuring that the educators themselves are properly educated.

The Battalion Editorial Board

## India's independence sparked development

It is not easy for a Westerner to understand, much less appreciate, the sprawling, diverse, elusive and wondrous country that is India. Few nations hold such a power to shock and enthrall. It is an ancient land where wisdom made its home, where spirituality, religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points.

India, once a rich and prosperous nation, fell prey to incessant foreign invasions, and its people were impeded in their quest for progress. During the period of industrial revolution, when the Western world flourished with scientific discoveries, India was struggling to gain independence. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi on August 15, 1947, India became an independent country after 200 years of British rule.

Before India became independent, there was not much industrial growth or stimulation for scientific pursuit. A dozen or so universities, mainly established by the British, functioned primarily as institutions giving courses and preparing people for clerical jobs. Research in the pure sciences was nurtured against heavy odds.

The export of raw materials and import of finished goods in the days of pre-independence was more a rule than an exception. However, what appeared to have motivated the small scientific

community before 1947 was the spirit-of-freedom movement led by Gandhi and the desires to show the powers that were that while we might be a subjugated nation politically, intellectually we certainly were not inferior.

Today, India is better known in the Western world than it has ever been for its scientific and technological achievements. With the aid of Western blueprints, independent India launched a series of ambitious development programs and has achieved spectacular successes in building a large industrial infrastructure.

India has to its credit such achievements as self-sufficiency in grain supply and a substantial substitution of domestic production for imports in basic sectors. It is one of the "pioneers" in the Third World, with respect to science and technology. It has entered the "Space Age" having launched indigenously designed satellites. India has now achieved a status among the most advanced nuclear nations and plans to generate 10,000 megawatts of atomic power by the turn of the century.

India's viability derives from a common commitment to democracy shared by all its distinctly separate states.

Lately, this commitment to nationhood and progress is being torn by Sikh terrorism, political assassinations and religious feuds. The breakup into small, weakened states is being encouraged by some communists, but Indians have heard it all before. Punjab is an example of this malady of regionalism and religious fanaticism that has beset India. No state can exist alone as a viable unit, and all fare better only in a confederation under one leadership.

President John F. Kennedy said, "No thoughtful citizen can fail to see our stake in the survival of free government in India . . . should India fall prey to internal disorder or disillusionment among either its masses or leaders and become absorbed in the communist system, the Free World would suffer an incalculable blow."

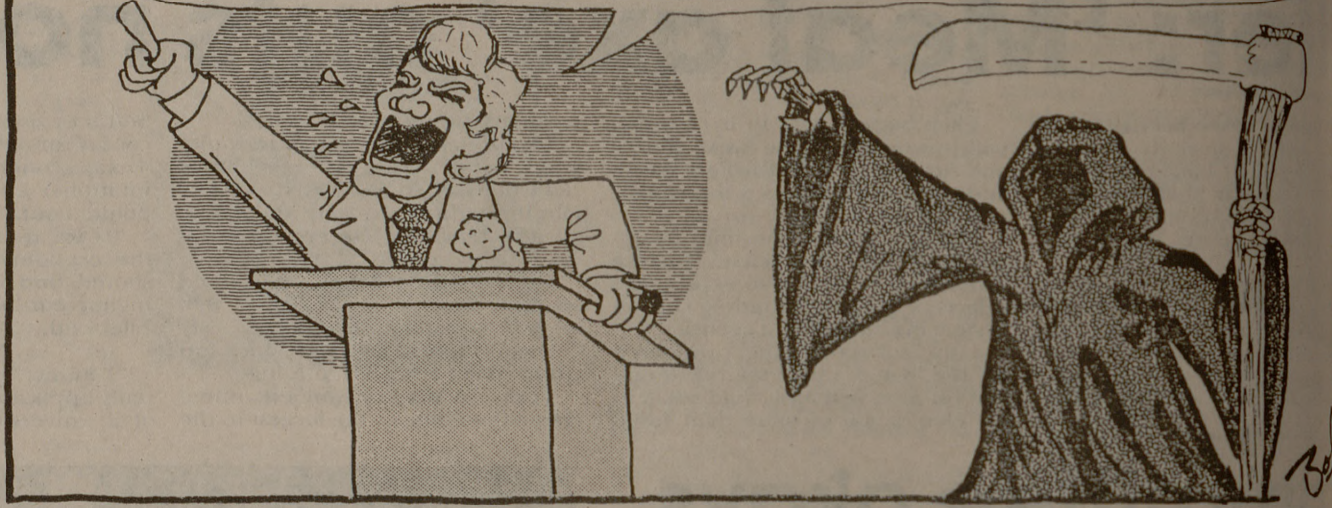
Beyond question, India shares the same ideals of democracy, liberty and freedom which made America a great nation.

**Jagannath Valluri is a graduate research assistant in the Department of Forest Science.**

### Jagannath Valluri

Guest Columnist

**AIDS HAS BEEN SENT BY GOD  
PURGE THE WORLD OF THOSE WHO  
THREATEN THE STABILITY OF OUR LIVES:  
HOMOSEXUALS, PROSTITUTES, COMMUNISTS,  
AND ALL THE OTHER UNDESIRABLES!**



## President doesn't do drugs or common sense, either

A bemused observer from another planet, having seen the drug panic triggered by the tragic death of two ballplayers, would note that both the Reagan administration and the congressional Democrats have reacted in characteristic fashion. The Democrats want to spend money and the president wants to put on a show.



Richard Cohen

Of the two, the president wins the silly award hands down. He and Vice President George Bush have volunteered to undergo drug testing. This takes considerably less courage on their parts than volunteering for an I.Q. test, although their willingness to take one test tells us something about what the results of the other would be. If there is one thing we know about both Reagan and Bush, it is that they do not do drugs.

But neither do they do common sense. Reagan says he is setting an example for other federal government employees. But, of course, he isn't. The reason for that is that he does not do drugs and lots of government employees do. Most of them, for sure, smoke marijuana which — unless they are air-traffic controllers or something similar — ought to be their own business. If the government does not test for wine, beer or Amaretto liqueur, it should not be all that interested in marijuana.

If Reagan's and Bush's drug tests prove anything it is that the administration has lost its head over the nation's drug problem. The real crisis is not in the federal government among workers of any kind, but among kids on the street. Just how testing the president, the vice-president or, even, the secretary of state is going to put a dent into the drug traffic in, say Harlem or Fort Pierce, Fla., is something the administration does not explain. The panic, after all, is over cocaine and its derivative, crack.

For a while cocaine was the preferred drug of the affluent, but there is reason to believe it no longer is. The affluent are not dumb — that is why they

are affluent. The verdict on coke is now in: It's highly addictive, sometimes fatal and may cause heart disease as well. The affluent are beginning to want no part of it.

So like long hair for men, cocaine and crack are becoming downwardly mobile. Like heroin before it, coke seems destined to find its home in the ghetto and when that happens you can bet that neither the Democratic Congress nor the Reagan White House is going to be much concerned.

It seems that every president since McKinley has declared war on drugs — and every one of them has lost. The Reagan administration, of course, has been at war with drugs since its inception. As with Vietnam, victory after victory has been declared, democracy restored to Florida, search-and-destroy missions launched in distant Bolivia — and yet another crisis is upon us.

For its show, the administration is willing to spend maybe \$100 million. The Democrats, who know a thing or two about spending money, are talking one or two billion dollars — and surely they are closer to the mark. Drug-treatment centers are bursting and have long waiting lists and probably there is not a police department in the country that has the manpower to put drug pushers in jail — not that there is jail space for them anyway.

But slow down. This drug "crisis" is no sudden thing. It has been with us a long time and may, in fact, be abating

among certain groups. If money is spent, it ought to be spent wisely, with some thought. If pushers are to be jailed wholesale, then what are the prisons to hold them? And, if stiff penalties have failed in the past, why does anyone think they will bring success now?

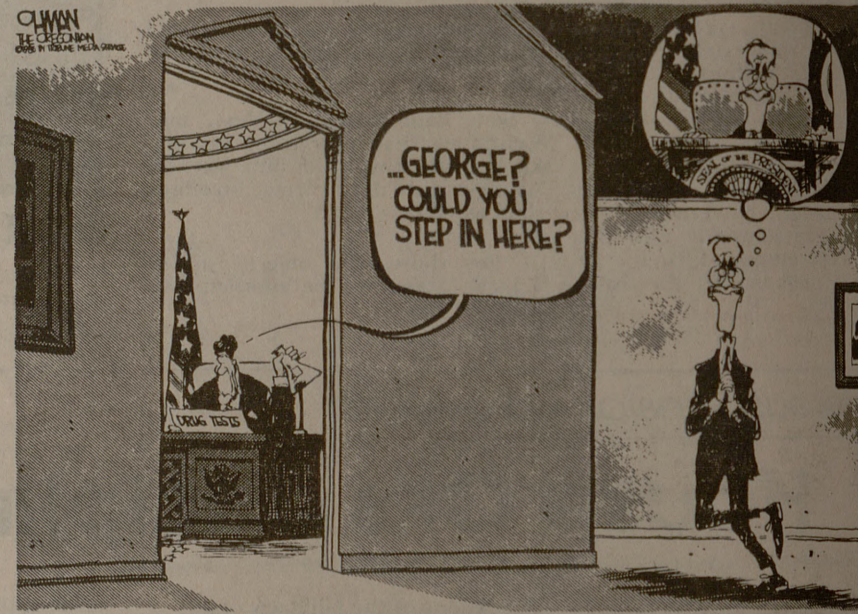
As for the president, he appears to be the beneficial uses of public role models. But he is not a model for your average crack addict and neither, for that matter, is the average government worker. A drug program will not in any way ameliorate the drug problem. It will only provide living for civil-liberties lawyers.

Drugs like cocaine and crack are a serious problem — both to society and people addicted. There is enormous cost involved — and enormous. Drugs destroy the people who use them and the destruction can spread, ripples in a pond, to family members and friends.

The president and Congress are in thinking that government has an obligation to solve the drug-abuse problem if it can. But it would be the worst cruelty if, either with outlandish stunts or by hastily spending more worthless programs, both Congress and the president thought something had been accomplished.

The government seems hooked on nonsense programs that make politicians feel good. Where's the rest of that?

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## Mail Call

### Then as now

EDITOR:

Hats off on *The Battalion's* editorial "A cow most sacred." If Gib Lewis' plan is adopted Texas A&M will be forced to make drastic cuts in all areas, and we can forget about our aim to achieve world-class status. Keep writing about this; the students must be informed about potential consequences to them.

Loren Steffy is right on the mark in "Liberals not only violators of free speech on campus." When I was an undergraduate, late 1960s and early 1970s, the radicals did the same thing they are trying to do today — then they were self-appointed "liberals," and today they are "conservatives." Tolerance and free expression are the most important aspects of any university, and must be protected for all opinions.

Terry Anderson

### Some bad traits

EDITOR:

After reading the Aug. 7 issue of *The Battalion*, I came to a conclusion. I completely agree with the letter by M.J. Shively. However, Pallmeyer has a good excuse. You see,

he doesn't know any pretty girls. Poor Pallmeyer doesn't know any girls.

By the way, about his editorial on fruit pies. First, I think he better stay away from the *Battalion* cafeteria. Second, he's a dimwitted little jerk, isn't he?

Let's see, Pallmeyer would rather go to Vietnam than eat. Sorry, I can't buy that. Also, he would eat a "pie from hell" but he wouldn't give it to the world's most sadistic killer since Hitler. If he tries to deny it, I'll quote him: "I keep eating them."

I am sorry for these remarks. Usually I do not enjoy pointing out a person's bad (in Pallmeyer's case only) traits. However, I have no trouble at all believing that Pallmeyer can not kick a football or fly a kite. What a waste of an A-gie!

M.C. Brooks '90

EDITOR'S NOTE: Moammar Ghadhafi hardly can be considered "the world's most sadistic killer since Hitler." The front runners for this title would be Mao Tse-Tung and Josef Stalin.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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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