

Opinion

The Battalion

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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.

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The missing link

Researcher Judith Reisman has completed a three-volume, 1,600-page report that describes and analyzes hundreds of issues of *Playboy*, *Penthouse* and *Hustler* to determine the effects sexual portrayal of children in the magazines have on readers. The study is considered the most extensive ever done on the subject and also is one of the biggest wastes of government money since the \$600 toilet seat.

Funded by the Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Reisman's study cost \$734,371 — nearly 33 percent more than the commission's original appropriation of \$500,000. The office initially appropriated the money in 1984 and granted Reisman three extensions.

But the study drew no conclusions and has been criticized by a peer-review group as not adhering to the grant proposal. The report did not suggest a link between the cartoons and child abuse, as was originally intended.

In fact, it failed to explain what significance, if any, these findings had in relation to its purpose. Even the office funding the project has not rushed out to embrace its results.

The study analyzed 2,016 cartoons that depicted children and 3,988 pictures, including advertisements, that showed anyone "from fetal development through age 17."

Some of the study's "conclusions" include:

- Eighty-five percent of the children depicted in the magazines were white, 3 percent black, 1 percent Jewish, 1 percent Asian, 1 percent Hispanic and 8 percent unspecified. The study never explained what happened to the other 1 percent.

- "About one-third of the presentations of the principal child involved direct eye contact with the camera/reader, and about one-fourth had the child gazing offstage or at someone with the whites visible. About one-sixth had eyes cast downward or closed, with the sclera and iris hidden, and in about the same number of cases the eyes were hidden or otherwise eluded classification."

- The report questioned "the numerous illegal or illicit images" of Santa Claus and other fantasy characters.

Reisman was paid almost \$750,000 of the taxpayers' money to look at more than 550 issues of the "three top-selling erotic/pornographic magazines" but produced no results.

Funding such a costly and useless study puts the Justice Department on a level of fiscal responsibility equal to that of the Pentagon. Reisman, for her part, should stop wasting federal funds with her ambiguous studies and return to her previous vocation — writing songs for "Captain Kangaroo."

WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE READ PLAYBOY?

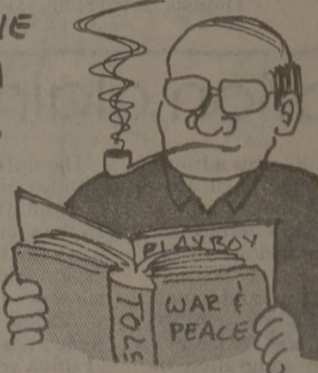
ADOLESCENTS WHO HAVE TO STEAL IT. THEY CAN'T READ THE ARTICLES.



HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO BUY IT AT 2 a.m. AT A TRUCK STOP. THEY DON'T BOTHER WITH THE ARTICLES.



ADULTS WHO HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION TO A P.O. BOX. THEY'LL NEVER ADMIT THEY DON'T READ THE ARTICLES.



JUDITH REISMAN, WHOM THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT PAID MORE THAN \$1000⁰⁰ AN ISSUE TO NOT LOOK AT THE ARTICLES.



Teaching of family values not a social miracle cure

Did members of the Reagan administration ever go to school? How about some politicians, columnists or teachers who seem to think that the teaching of values in schools will remedy much of what ails the nation? My school-day recollections say otherwise. I was taught values.



Richard Cohen

The day began with a prayer. We pledged allegiance to the flag and sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee," including the more religious of the verses. Once a week we had assemblies that began with a color guard (I carried the flag) and more singing of patriotic songs. The boys wore ties, the girls white blouses and blue skirts, and we were segregated by sex to be taught shop or cooking.

We were given no classes in sex education. We were told to shun drugs be-

cause they were always addictive and usually fatal, an admonition that included marijuana. Patriotism was drilled into us and we had a class called "civics" in which we learned, among other things, about the communist menace and the wonders of our own democracy. We were graded for conduct, neatness and even citizenship. We were taught, as I said, values.

And yet we were the generation that first turned to drugs in a big way, that broke all kinds of barriers when it came to sex, that provided the foot soldiers for the army that secured abortion as a right, that overturned laws banning the sale of contraceptives in various states, that lived together without benefit of marriage and that now contribute to those awful statistics on divorce and extramarital sex.

None of this is necessarily proof that teaching values is worthless. The best that can be said for my anecdotal evidence is that teaching values did not make a significant difference — that greater, countervailing forces were at work. For instance, it may make us all feel warm and nostalgic to talk about the traditional family, but it was economic factors — not a lack of values — that sent women out of the home to work. You cannot set values down on the table at dinner time.

Nonetheless, from the four corners of the land comes a cry for the teaching of values. No one is quite sure what that would mean in a pluralistic society, but we all seem to want it. We believe somehow that the teaching of values will set right much of what ails us. Among other things, we want prayer in the schools, as if words alone are a remedy. We forget, for instance, that many of the pregnant teenagers of our recent but brief concern were mostly raised as churchgoers — or by churchgoers.

The same thing holds for the drug problem. Drugs are a problem, but for the addict, not the only one. So is helplessness, despair, poverty — a bleak fu-

ture in which the instant gratification drugs (or a child) may amount to only gratification. Nancy Reagan recently extended the American dream to these children in a sincere and moving television speech, but their lives present contradictory lessons on a daily basis.

Eras take names, sometimes from popular culture (Jazz), sometimes from economic conditions (the Depression). Ours should be called the Placebo Generation. To fight everything from drug to premarital pregnancies, we chose antiquated weapons and battle on a field of nostalgia. For the economic and social forces that are ripping the family apart, that have helped produce both the feminist revolution and the disintegration of the poor family, we prescribe the nostrums of yesterday instead of programs that could meet the needs of today.

Surely values are important. They define fine who we are as a people. But if values are not in consonance with the times, they become neglected and wither. Our appalling divorce rate (the world's highest) was not produced because we, of all the world's peoples, had values, but by economic and social circumstances that rendered those values less relevant. Many of the married couples of yesteryear would have divorced if women had had recourse to the law and the job market. Our country is undergoing these and other changes, yet government policy ignores the underlying causes and instead exhorts people to act as if there were no problems.

My generation was taught values — values we still cherish. We want to get married, but many of us don't. We want to supervise our kids, but often we can't. We want a drug-free environment, but we create one in which a white powder sometimes provides the only high. A society that talks one way and acts another is obligated to answer a question from the very kids we want taught values: What, exactly, are our own?

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Fur industry clothed in cruelty

The bell has tolled for the luxury fur industry, a contemptible business constituting a major moral stigma on the face of Western civilization. While the trade endures, society is not entitled to any sense of collective self-respect.

Richard Adams
Guest Columnist

All that has prevented universal condemnation is, first, that most people are too busy earning their own livings to notice what is involved and, secondly, the greed and dishonesty of those controlling the so-called industry.

The furriers, however, are no more to blame than prostitutes (which is what they are; to prostitute being "to surrender to an infamous use"). There remains a demand, so these men supply it, being the sort of people who could not make so much money in any decent way.

The public is the real culprit. When we stop buying, the animals will stop being tortured to death.

A favorite weapon of the fur industry, the leghold trap, invented during the first half of the 19th century, has inflicted unsurpassed carnage and agony on fur-bearing animals.

More than a century later, however, the number of fur-bearing animals trapped in these torture-machines has greatly increased. A conservative estimate of the total annual figure for Canada and the United States is 20 million — far more than the number of Jews murdered by the Nazis.

If such a comparison seems tasteless or inappropriate, remember that the question under consideration is not "Can these animals reason or articulate?" The question is, "Can they suffer?" There can never have been any greater suffering.

To understand what an animal endures while struggling in a leghold trap is to be filled with horror, and with shame for the human species as a whole. The pain alone, of course, is terrible. The animal is held for 24 hours, 48 hours or even longer, by spring-locked metal jaws crushing a broken leg (or

even the pelvis). In addition, there is the torment of hunger and the worse torment of thirst.

The blood attracts flies and predators. The shock, constraint and panic terror, acting upon the instincts of a wild animal, are most distressing to contemplate.

Some trapped animals bite off their own legs in order to escape — sever flesh, sinew and bone. The pain involved does not differ from that felt by a human being. Such animals are known to trappers as "wringers." To forestall wringing-off, some traps are not pegged down, but attached to a grapnel on a wire. As long as the animal can limp about, dragging the grapnel, it will not bite off its paw. It cannot go far and the trapper will find it.

Many people have said to me, "Don't tell me: I don't want to know." Yet we are all collectively responsible.

In Canada and in most of the United States, anyone can become a trapper. Children, adolescents and adults alike can enroll in training courses. Traps can be bought over the counter.

The fur industry exists not for any human need, such as hunger or pharmacology, but solely for luxury, vanity and adornment. There is not even any valid argument for protection against cold. In 1981 I made a voyage through the Antarctic in temperatures often reaching 40 degrees below zero. No one — passengers or crew — wore fur garments.

There recently has been much Canadian propaganda about fur constituting the livelihood of indigenous people. In fact, the great majority of trans-At-

lantic trappers are part-time amateurs. But even conceding some truth to the claim, why should we be obliged on that account to buy fur? If someone says his livelihood is selling onions, you have no moral obligation to buy them. The slave trade, in its day, was the livelihood of thousands. What moral justification can there be for a man who lives by the infliction of agony or misery on his fellow creatures?

The fur industry has been unable to advance any valid or convincing justification of this institution.

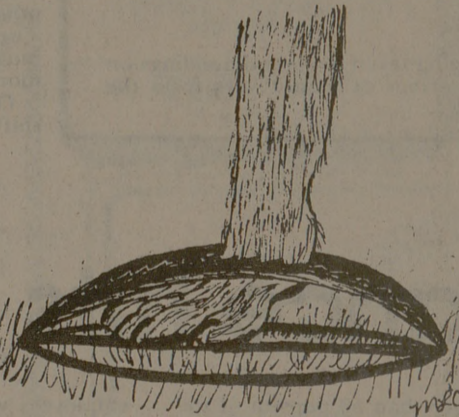
The past two centuries have seen the destruction of many evils: black slavery, child labor factories, public execution, flogging and restriction of the vote to males.

The destruction of the obsolete and discredited fur industry, which consists, in essence, of the barbarous exploitation of warm-blooded, sentient mammals for no better reason than vanity and adornment, lies in the logic of social and moral progress.

When the majority of people realize the truth and no longer want to buy or wear fur, the evil will end. The process — as with smoking — will be gradual, but we should see a great change by the end of the century.

In the words of Pope John Paul II, speaking in 1984, "It is necessary and urgent . . . to abandon inconsiderate forms of domination, capture and custody with respect to all creatures." In no sphere is the necessity and urgency greater than that of the fur industry.

Richard Adams is the bestselling author of *Watership Down* and *The Girl in the Swing*.



Mail Call

What senior privileges?

EDITOR:

Senior. Derived from the Latin "senex," meaning old. Webster's Dictionary defines this term as "above others in rank or length of service" or "having precedence in making certain decisions." In the Orient, the seniors of the population are treated with dignity and respect. In fact, being a senior in most any society today can be marked with a sense of accomplishment and responsibility . . . except at Texas A&M.

I can remember, as a freshman, dreaming of the day when I could invoke my senior privileges by sitting at a reasonable level (second deck) and between the 30-yard lines for home football games. Nothing less, ticket wise, was given on the first day. Ticket distribution certainly has taken a turn for the worse.

A senior at A&M will not be difficult to find this weekend. Just look inside the ten yard lines. We'll be the ones sitting down during the game, wearing our hats during the yells and standing on the timber during the war hymn so we can see what is happening in the middle of the field!

Steve Luckemeyer '86
Gordon Sefolk '87
Rhonda McMurry '87
Tami Preston '86

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 classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

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