

Opinion

The Battalion

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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.

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O-press-ive behavior

The South African government recently slammed its door on the world by barring the press from reporting on security-force actions, treatment of detainees and various anti-apartheid activities — but its reasoning doesn't justify its means.

The Citizen, a Johannesburg daily newspaper that supports the government, said the decision to cut off all communication with the press is the result of an imminent revolutionary uprising in South Africa.

President P.W. Botha said the measures were taken in hopes of countering a planned campaign of terrorism by the outlawed African National Congress and its supporters.

But Botha's unconvincing warning, which can hardly be called legitimate, does not justify censorship of the public's right to know.

The public's eye is the greatest check of political power, and when the public is uninformed, its eye blinded by oppression, the opportunity for corruption is unlimited.

The less the people are made aware of a problem through the media, the more potential there is for atrocities to be committed, unopposed by the unknowing.

Indeed, the people — of South Africa and the world — have a right to know exactly why the press has been stripped of its responsibilities in South Africa. Taking away even more freedoms from an already deprived majority only allows unrest to fester. If Botha is trying to quell uprisings in his country, he should start by easing restrictions on human rights, not strengthening them.

Botha's explanation for the crackdown is little more than a facade. A more likely explanation for banning the press is that he doesn't have any intention of moving South Africa toward equality.

Mail Call

A basic right

EDITOR:

I am angry about not being able to obtain a copy of *The Battalion* each day. Because a portion of my mandatory "student service fee" is expended on the newspaper, I feel I have the right to complain.

Today I was in the Commons at 1 p.m., and there were no copies of the paper in sight. I thought that possibly the paper was a little late in getting published. After getting out of class at 4:30 p.m., I dropped back by and again found nothing. I checked the O&M Building and one of the covered sheds around campus. The only thing I found was another student wandering around the shed looking for the newspaper. He told me the Memorial Student Center did not have any copies either.

Because this has occurred repeatedly, I am led to believe *The Battalion* is being distributed very poorly. If 36,000 students are paying for the paper, there should be plenty of issues available because every student does not read the newspaper.

Charles Burnett '90

Editor's note: About \$1 for each student goes to *The Battalion*, or about .00625 cents per issue. Nonetheless, you are entitled to a copy.

Refuge reality

EDITOR:

Loren Steffy's opinion of oil development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska leads one to believe that any form of oil development in the Arctic would result in irreparable damage to the environment, decimating thousands of caribou, polar bears, wolves and a vast variety of other wildlife; all because of our lust for oil.

This notion flies in the face of reality. These same arguments were made in opposition to the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The wildlife catastrophe that was predicted by the environmental extremists did not occur. If Steffy had ever been to Prudhoe Bay, as I have many times, he would note the abundance of caribou, arctic foxes and a whole host of other wildlife peacefully coexisting with drilling rigs and other oil field development. Caribou cross under elevated pipelines just as easily as they cross dry river beds. It is hard for some people to believe, but oil field development and wildlife can coexist.

The key to successful development of environmentally sensitive areas is proper guidelines and regulations. On their own, the oil companies in Alaska probably would not have developed those fields the way they did. With reasonable restrictions on their activities, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge can be a producing oil field and a wildlife refuge. To view the wildlife refuge and oil development issue as an either/or situation is too simplistic and irrational. It is possible to have your cake and eat it too.

James A. White

Editor's note: The column acknowledged the accomplishments at Prudhoe Bay. However, those involved with planning the oil field in the Arctic refuge — including oil developers, Interior Department officials and environmentalists — agree that the situation could not be duplicated in the refuge. As the column pointed out, initial studies have found that the narrower coastal plain and larger wildlife population would make it impossible for even exploratory wells to be drilled without irreparable damage to the environment.

Have faith

EDITOR:

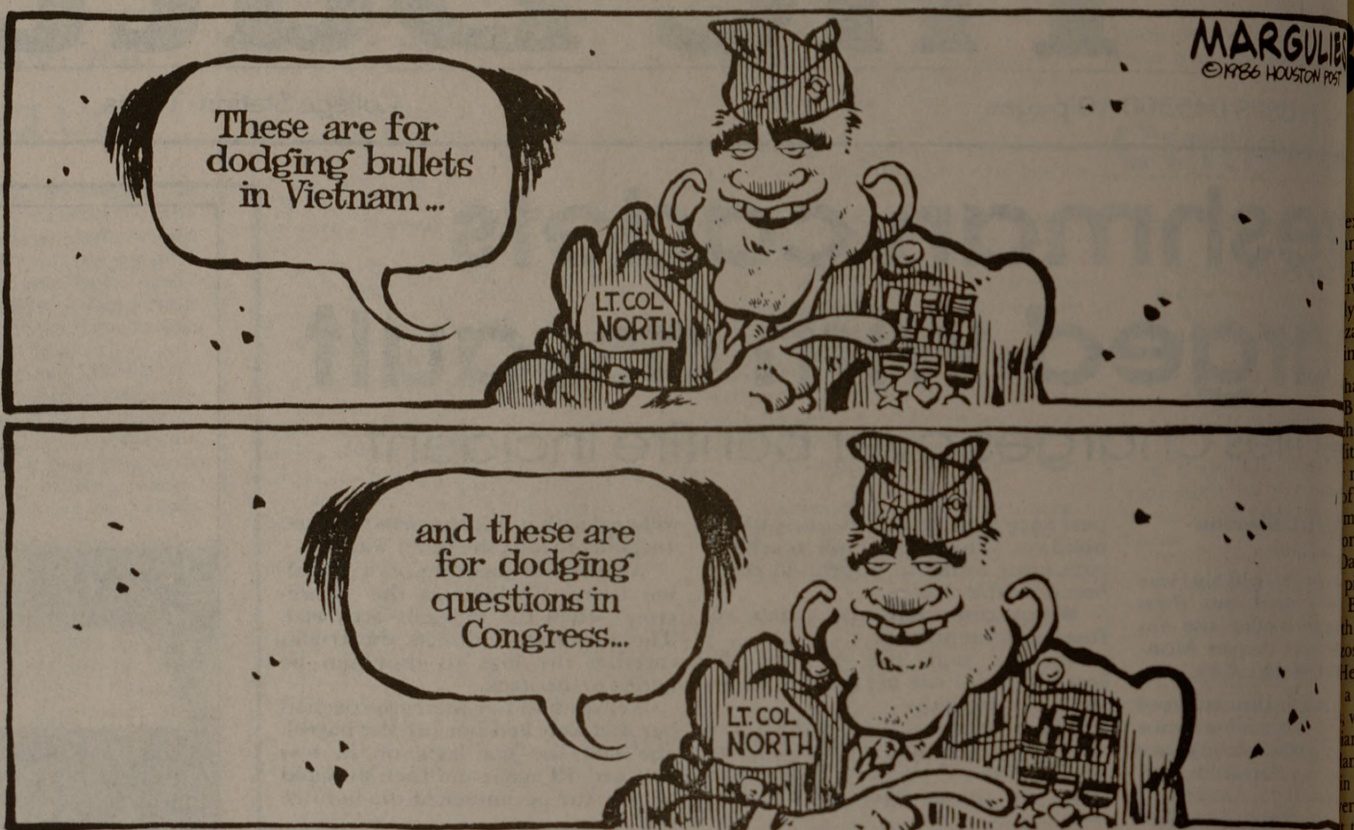
I agree with most of Mike Sullivan's column on December 10, entitled, "Why do donations make people feel satisfied?" One concept I drew from the column is that you can get to heaven by doing good works — in other words, helping and giving to others.

It is obvious you believe in God, but you need to correct a misconception too many people have today. Please read Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith . . . not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

The good-works part of life you are talking about will come naturally and willingly after you accept God in your life.

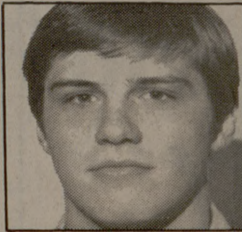
Vincent Scalercio

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.



Don't bother the graduates with reality, give 'em cliché

Despite the clichés about them being "one of the most important days of our lives," graduation ceremonies are little more than a boring waste of time. It is a show for the parents, not a day of exaltation for the graduates. It is a day when parents can see their children dressed in one of the silliest outfits known to man, which is supposed to symbolize the completion of an education. No educated person would dress like this willingly.



Loren Steffy

Likewise, graduation speeches, while masquerading as some great statement on the role of education in our society, tend to be dull reiterations of what to look forward to in the "Real World."

I expected a similar fare at Saturday's commencement address by Dr. Percy A. Pierre, the president of Prairie View A&M University. But rather than the traditional speech that goes something like: "Today you take a part of Texas A&M with you into the Real World. Don't forget to send a part of your Real World income back to Texas A&M," Pierre actually said something worth listening to. Naturally, few people did.

Perhaps it was because everyone simply wanted to get out of their ridiculous attire and get on with dinner. Perhaps it was the plush seating that caused graduates to shift from one buttock to the other every five minutes to avoid numb-

ness. But more than likely, it was because Pierre said the one word A&M students don't like to hear — minorities.

A dull rumble filled G. Rollie White Coliseum as Pierre pointed out the importance of minority education in Texas. After the ceremony, I overheard several people saying that the speech was not "appropriate" for a graduation address.

It is, apparently, more appropriate that a graduation speaker spout some meaningless drivel about how hard students worked to attain their degrees and how wonderful it is that we are all Aggies. We were there to be launched into the Real World, but it wasn't appropriate to discuss a Real-World problem affecting the school we were leaving.

What was even more inappropriate was that on what was supposed to be a praise-the-school-and-pass-the-platter event, the few who were listening were forced to come to terms with a dark spot — black, brown, pick your color — in the future of A&M. We aspire to and desire the much-ballyhooed "world-class university" status, yet we hope to overlook the role minorities must play in attaining such status.

At this summer's graduation ceremonies, Board of Regents Chairman David Eller lashed out at the State Legislature for proposing cuts in higher education. The unofficial reviews of Saturday's ceremony deemed Pierre's lashing out at lawmakers for proposing to merge several state universities "inappropriate." Eller's complaints at the end of the summer were called "courageous."

What was inappropriate about Pierre's speech was the audience's response. By denying him the courtesy of listening — or even ignoring — what he had to say, graduates-to-be proved Pierre's point. When it comes to hearing about poor quality of minority education in our state, we don't care.

Pierre's speech wasn't riveting or revealing. And the audience's response supersedes any effort by other universities to recruit minority students. The programs designed to lure minorities to our institutions are so much the problem as our attitude toward them once they get here. There are incidents of discrimination between students, between students and students — but the real problem stems more from apathy than anything else.

Pierre wasn't oblivious to the response his speech got. He knew it was a lost cause even before he started. Discussing minority education attracts A&M students as effectively as Clint Eastwood. He labeled inappropriate because of the usual graduation-day pep talk.

But after all, it was graduation. We had just completed four years of expanding education and personal growth. We didn't want to be candid about the Real World. We didn't want to confront and come to terms with reality as our parents watched. A little mindless drivel and clichés was all we wanted to hear.

Loren Steffy is a journalism student and editor for *The Battalion*.

Pink flamingos and tires add a humble touch of class

I have a little get-away place here in this North Georgia mountain resort. It's nothing spectacular, but it fits my needs.



Lewis Grizzard

There's a couple of bedrooms, a loft where I have a typewriter, a screened-in porch and a deck where I can stand and watch the magnificence of a thunderstorm rolling over the peaks as it makes its way from North Carolina.

Somebody, one of my neighbors, I would guess, further added to my mountain home by putting two plastic, pink flamingos in my front yard, along with a tire that had been painted white. A harmless prank, and one I appreciated.

I am certain there are those who are not aware of the significance of having pink, plastic flamingos and a white tire in one's yard.

Allow me to elaborate: Plastic, pink flamingos and painted tires are the ultimate in what may now be referred to as "Southern tackiness." And in case there are those who do

not know what the term "tacky" means, well, it means "tacky," as in polyester leisure suits, watching professional wrestling matches and believing they are not fake, and wearing white cowgirl boots with a short, red-leather skirt while popping chewing gum.

Yet, as tacky as plastic, pink flamingos and painted tires might be, a lot of poor Southerners once decorated their yards with the same, and they were good and honest and hard working people doing their best with the resources available to them.

They bought the flamingos from Sears and Roebuck and then painted old tires white and used them as flower pots, and the people would ride past and say, "Lord, don't Ruby Ann Kilgore know how to make a place look like somebody lives there."

Growing up, I had relatives who put flamingos and tires in their yards, and I had friends who did the same thing. And I love them and they loved me, and that is why I am taking it personally that the people who run Big Canoe have asked I remove the flamingos and the tire in my yard.

They consider it "unbecoming." What they really mean is they don't want anything "tacky" on their mountain.

I can hear them now: "Gee, pink flamingos and tires in the yard. There goes the neighborhood."

I probably would have more objects from my front yard even without somebody insisting on it. Now, however, this thing has become a matter of pride.

If I remove my flamingos and tires, am I not turning my back on my heritage? Am I not spitting in the face of those who reared me and loved me and fed me?

I am, indeed, and here's a tip to those who are looking down their noses at a major part of my culture:

Push me too far, and not only will I leave the flamingos and tires in the front of my house and have them painted with those immortal words held sacred by many a Southerner: "See Rock City."

I am not a man to be trifled with.
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