

Opinion

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Loren Steffy, Editor
Marybeth Rohsner, Managing Editor
Mike Sullivan, Opinion Page Editor
Jens Koepke, City Editor
Jeanne Isenberg, Sue Krenek, News Editors
Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor
Tom Ownbey, Photo Editor

Editorial Policy

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 \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Our address: The Battalion, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

Follow the lead

By publishing student evaluations of professors, the College of Business Administration is setting a long overdue precedent in the class-selection process. Although the plan has some rough spots, it is an effective means of making evaluations available to students.

Current grade-distribution reports already are available to students in all colleges, but finding out how many A's and F's a professor gives does not necessarily reflect the instructor's abilities to teach. The final grade for a course is not as important as how that grade is determined.

Finding out other students' impressions of a professor is essential in determining which instructor to select. The present method of determining teacher effectiveness is to ask friends who already have had the class — which usually gives students an inaccurate and biased view.

Publishing course evaluations will give students access to a wide range of student impressions. It can help students and professors alike avoid personality conflicts and disagreements that, while they don't necessarily reflect a professor's inability to teach, do inhibit the learning process.

The plan still has some problems. Professors must give their consent before evaluations can be printed, and each semester the permission must be renewed. Although instructors' uncertainty about the business college's plan is understandable, students should have access to evaluations of all professors. If professors truly are concerned with teaching, they should be concerned with how students perceive their effectiveness.

But getting permission from professors to print evaluations may result in a tendency to publish only positive evaluations, defeating the purpose of the entire plan.

Despite these flaws, the business college's idea is a step in the right direction and is one that other colleges in the University should follow.

After all, if students are going to brave increasing tuition costs to come to Texas A&M, they at least have a right to know what they'll be getting for their money.

High court gives women a chance

In 1979, Diane Joyce applied for a promotion. Since 1970, she had worked for Santa Clara County (Calif.) at a variety of jobs, even doing a stint on a road-repair crew. Now she wanted to be a road dispatcher, and along with other county employees she took an oral exam. She placed third, but got the promotion anyway. The reason: She's a woman.



Richard Cohen

With the force of about 10 on the Richter scale, Justice Antonin Scalia dissented. His words came down to a ringing insistence that we all get judged as individuals and not as members of groups we happen to be born into. That is the American Way — a way, incidentally, that has enabled me, the grandson of impoverished immigrants, to tell you what I think of the Supreme Court's decision. I think it's terrific.

Why? Because the Supreme Court deals with real life, not just legal abstractions. In real life, the job category that Joyce sought, skilled-craft worker, consisted of 238 positions. Of these, not one was held by a woman. In all the higher job classifications, a similar situation prevailed throughout the county government. That's why Santa Clara County entered into an affirmative-action program. It did so voluntarily, not because it was sued. It wanted to right a situation that was, on the face of it, just plain wrong.

And how about Joyce herself? On paper, she is just another applicant. But in real life, she was a woman who was hassled on the job. When she volunteered to work on road-repair crews (so that she might later be promoted), she had to complain before being given work clothes, as men routinely are. And when she applied for promotion for road dispatcher, one of the men who tested her called her a "rebel-rousing, skirt-wearing person."

Affirmative-action cases are never easy. They all must be judged on their merits and they all must strike a balance between individual rights and the obligation to ensure a non-discriminatory society. The Santa Clara case is no exception. There is no doubt that the man who brought the suit, Paul Johnson, is a victim. (He was eventually promoted anyway.) He was told to play by the

rules, that merit would be rewarded, but when the time came for his reward, he was shunted aside. It did not matter that he scored a bit higher than Joyce on the oral exam. He was born the wrong sex.

But if Johnson was injured because of membership in a group, so was Joyce. Given the crack uttered by one of her superiors and the harassment she had already suffered, who can believe that she was judged solely on merit — that the oral test was in any way "scientific?" And if both applicants were, in essence, equally qualified, doesn't the county have the right to choose one of them to enunciate a beneficial public policy? All things being approximately equal, the county decided to do something about inequality.

Sometimes numbers speak for themselves. If Santa Clara had 238 men in a job classification and no women, then something is happening. Maybe women are being discriminated against. Maybe they see the numbers and don't bother to apply for the jobs. Maybe because they see certain jobs as "male" and others as "female" they get the message and voluntarily segregate themselves.

Whatever the reason, something has to be done to break the pattern — to show little girls what women can do. Job segregation, which helps account for

In 1979, Paul Johnson, an employee of the Santa Clara County Transportation Agency, was competing with co-worker Diane Joyce for a promotion to road dispatcher, a position traditionally filled by men.



Paula Vogrin

Johnson had three years more seniority than Joyce and scored slightly better on a test.

Because no woman held one of the 238 road dispatcher positions, Joyce was

why women on the average earn less than men, is neither good public policy nor good economics. Questions of equality aside, the nation can ill-afford to have half its brains shunted into the steno pool.

Scalia's brakeman's flag should not go entirely unheeded, however. His warning that affirmative action has been converted "into a powerful engine of racism and sexism" is not judicial Chicken Littleism. Affirmative action seems inconsistent with the American ethic. There is a danger of institutionalizing it past the point where any public good is done.

Eventually, the government must level the playing field. But as long as counties like Santa Clara have clerical work forces that are 76 percent female but administrative work forces that are 93 percent male, that time has not yet come.

In theory, Johnson lost to Joyce because he was discriminated against. Simple. But, in reality, she prevailed because women — and maybe Joyce herself — have always been discriminated against. The court did not reject that most American of all precepts: "All men are created equal." It reaffirmed it. All it's saying now is treat people equally on the job.

Copyright 1986, Washington Post Writers Group

High court decision will hurt future of American women

selected. Johnson complained of reverse discrimination and took his case to court.

Eight years and many court dates later, the Supreme Court handed down a decision, but not the one Johnson had been hoping for.

The Supreme Court's 6-3 ruling in the Johnson case allows employers to promote women over arguably more-qualified men. The ruling is intended to redress historical job discrimination but has the potential to make it more difficult for women to succeed in positions traditionally held by men.

The court's intentions are admirable — equality in the workplace is an important goal — but the court's solution is a giant step in the wrong direction.

I don't deny that women in the workplace are still victims of discrimination, especially in manual-labor jobs like construction. How often do you see a female foreman? For that matter, how often do you see a female plumber, electrician, or oilfield roustabout? Not every day, to be sure. Women with adequate knowledge and qualifications should be accepted in these fields without hesitation. But these fields aren't the only ones guilty of discrimination. Although their numbers are increasing, female presidents, vice presidents, CEOs and supervisors are still minorities in large corporations.

Something needs to be done to remedy these situations, but the solution issued by the Supreme Court is not the answer.

It may seem surprising that I disagree with the court's ruling. After all, I am one of the people it is intended to benefit. But I cannot accept a decision that allows for promotion of a person on the basis of sex instead of individual skills and qualifications.

The court's decision will make it harder for women who have rightfully attained positions usually held by men to succeed. Co-workers will say she was promoted simply because she is a woman. It will be harder for a woman in this position to gain the respect of her superiors, not to mention her subordinates.

I would not accept a promotion

granted on the basis of my sex, especially if I knew there was someone male or female, more qualified for the job. I would be insulted at the fact my superiors knew I did not possess skills for the job, but promoted me anyway just to up the number of women holding a certain type of position.

I agree with Justice Antonin Scalia in his dissenting opinion. He berated the majority's ruling. He implied that the majority was making a political decision, supporting elected politicians seeking to accommodate special interest groups as well as corporate governmental employers who find it easier to hire less-qualified workers to fight discrimination lawsuits.

He said the irony of the decision is that people like Paul Johnson — dominantly unknown, unaffluent, unorganized — are suffering an injustice at the hands of a court fond of thinking itself the champion of the politically potent.

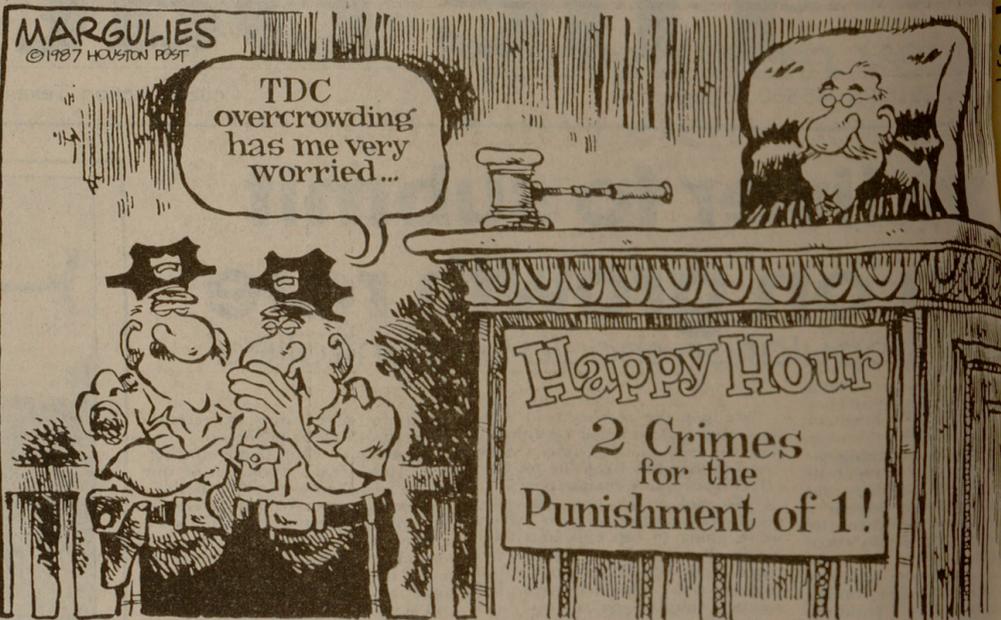
The United States adheres to a principle of non-discrimination which is the basis of our civil rights laws. This principle holds that employment decisions should not be made on the basis of race or sex. The court's ruling upholds this principle, encouraging employers to promote women because they are women, not because they are qualified for the job.

In its decision, the court ruled that affirmative-action plans (hiring women and minorities to increase their numbers in the workforce) are permissible when women as well as racial minorities are underrepresented proportionally. A "manifest imbalance" in "traditionally segregated job categories."

Hiring women to satisfy a "manifest imbalance" in "traditionally segregated job categories" is not the answer to discrimination.

If America wants to achieve a workplace truly free of discrimination, employers must make employment decisions based on the skills and qualifications of individuals, not on their sexual classification. It is the only way to bring about a society of equal opportunity for both males and females.

Paula Vogrin is a senior journalist, major and a columnist for The Battalion.



Mail Call

Highway 6 to Russia

EDITOR:

Let's all give three cheers for Karl Pallmeyer's latest column on self-esteem. Just when I think he has made it to the zenith on the stupidity spectrum, Pallmeyer proves me wrong time and time again.

I have yet to figure out the relationship between the right-wing's war on drugs and self-esteem. Would it make a difference if the left wing was in office? If you are going to put out a fire, then aim for the base of the flame. Drugs are the fuel of low self-esteem. Take away the fuel and there is no fire.

Also, Pallmeyer, you are contradicting yourself when you state how self-esteem must come from the self and then write a column such as this one. A person's self comes from how they are perceived by others. People will eventually gain some esteem if others, journalists included, would stop pounding these crybaby ideas into the back of their minds. Here again, take away the fuel and there is no fire.

Here is another question for you, Pallmeyer. When did you become such an expert on people's religious beliefs? It is a shame, though, that they banned "The Wizard of Oz." We all know that was your favorite book. Correct me if I am wrong, but wasn't one of the first freedoms in the development of this country's existence a freedom from religious persecution?

Pardon me if I make a suggestion. Why don't you write a positive column for once? I have an idea. Why don't you and your protégé, Mike Sullivan, pack your parachutes and bail out somewhere over Moscow and stay there to observe

things for a while? That way, when you get back, you will have something positive to write about life in America... if you ever get back.

Ken Heckman '88

Another biased opinion?

EDITOR:

Time and time again, Mike Sullivan has devoted parts of his columns to the behavior of cadets at Texas A&M. In his famous Corps abolition column, he stated the conduct of members of the Corps was giving A&M a bad name around the world. Sullivan conveys a similar message in his April 1 column. Only a few weeks ago the same Mike Sullivan dismissed the incidents at Waller "E" ramp as being typical, if not normal, of today's college students. This leads me to believe Sullivan's brand of journalism is very biased and very yellow.

Aaron P. Kiker '88

Editor's note: The April 1 column had nothing to do with A&M's image around the world. It dealt with a commonly held misconception among Aggies about A&M's past.

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.