

Opinion

Just when you thought it was safe to be religious

Just when you think the world is safe for rational thought, the Vatican has to go and declare that using condoms to guard against AIDS is "morally unacceptable."



Sue Krenek

My first reaction was disbelief. My second reaction was disbelief. So were the third and fourth. Reaction in the newsroom ranged from "you're kidding" to "you're kidding."

After all, AIDS is not some minor inconvenience. Flirting with AIDS is flirting with death. So when *Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's daily newspaper, says in an editorial that condom use can't be condoned, it comes as some-

thing of a shock. It's quite a change of pace from the endless safe sex campaigns to which we've all been exposed.

And it seems at first like a jarring misstep, a retreat from facing up to the facts of a deadly disease whose cure eludes us. It seems as if the Roman Catholic Church is saying it would rather have people die than have them ignore the church's traditional ban on artificial birth control. Death before immortality, as the case may be.

That, of course, is not what the church is asking. The editorial hardly suggested that Catholics take their chances of contracting AIDS. But the church refuses to condone any sexual activity outside marriage, and therefore its solution to the AIDS problem is not safe sex but abstinence. As the editorial said:

"The only effective means is preven-

tion, avoiding the cause of contagion, which, in 95 percent of cases, amounts to abstaining from sexual practices outside marriage and the consumption of drugs."

The church is in a difficult position on this one because of its traditional opposition to artificial birth control. That opposition makes it impossible for the Catholic Church to deal with something like AIDS.

The church's insistence that premarital and extramarital sex are wrong is not unusual. That insistence has surfaced in other sects in connection with other issues, most notably sex education. Religious leaders have been notorious for their opposition to sex education on the grounds that information equals encouragement and is therefore bad.

This is the same kind of logic by which some have argued that we

shouldn't spend money trying to find a cure for AIDS since its victims contracted the disease by "sinning."

But whether the church likes to admit it or not, people — even unmarried people — have hormones. Although premarital and extramarital sex may be "wrong," they happen. Preaching abstinence is idealistic but doesn't address reality. Some people will not abstain. Some of those will get AIDS.

And the church's insistence on abstinence ignores the fact that fidelity is not a given in any marriage. When *Osservatore Romano* says AIDS can be prevented by avoiding sex outside marriage, it is only half right: Monogamy prevents AIDS, but only if both partners are completely faithful all the time.

In effect, the church is asking its faithful to stake their lives on the unyielding fidelity of their spouses. It's

hard enough to deal with the fact that sexual indiscretion could lead to AIDS. Now the church apparently wants one who is married to accept that usual indiscretion that is not his own lead to death.

Other denominations, while believing that extramarital sex is a sin, do not expect the faithful to die for such a sin. Enough of a grip on reality to recognize the risk, they can at least look the way when people talk about safe sex.

For the Roman Catholic Church to look the other way, it would have to ignore its ban on artificial birth control. And while overlooking one religious principle in the face of a life-threatening epidemic may be possible, overlooking two is not. Catholicism has put itself into a corner and is now confronted with a situation its doctrine not solve.

Sue Krenek is a senior journalist and editor of The Battalion.

Mail Call

Out in left field

EDITOR:

I just can't stand it when people who don't understand put their noses where they don't belong! Especially when it comes to the Corps of Cadets and, more directly, the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band. As a member of the band, I know how "sacred" our drill field is. Like thousands before me, many hours of sweat, hard work and tears went into that drill field. Every day we work our damndest during football season so that you — the students — can have pride in saying, "Yeah! That's our nationally famous band!" Come rain, snow or sunshine, the Aggie Band never misses a practice. There's an old saying: "What happens when it rains?" "The Aggie Band gets wet!" We weren't given the name "noble men of Kyle" for nothing. We earned it, and it all began on our drill field.

Tell me something. If you worked hours on, and put sweat and tears into, a piece of art, would you just let someone walk over it? No, you'd protect it, and that's exactly what we do. That's exactly what is our piece of art, and every "Corps Turd" on this campus knows exactly what it means to the band. And to think that they would walk on it, a drunken one at that — well, let's just say they'd get what they deserve.

That drill field is for the band and the band only, and I'll be damned if any "Corps Turd" is going to walk on it as long as I'm a member of the Fightin' Texas Aggie Band. So show us some respect, and STAY OFF THE DRILL FIELD!

Andrew Myers '91

Scorn the porn

EDITOR:

I am writing this letter in reference to *The Battalion's* future advertisements for Playboy. Since this issue caused such uproar eight years ago, it is not reasonable to repeat the same mistake. Recently, programs were held addressing the problems of rape and pornography. If we want to create this "rape-free environment," why is *The Battalion* supporting a magazine that has exploited so many women? Is the representation of this school in Playboy going to help make us a "world-class university?" Certainly not. It is more like throwing dirt on A&M's good name. Women can get their picture in a pornographic magazine without the advocacy of A&M, if they choose to do so. The bottom line is that Texas A&M is a conservative school and should not be associated with this sort of sexist indignity.

Melanie Rembert '90
accompanied by 12 signatures

But they do care

EDITOR:

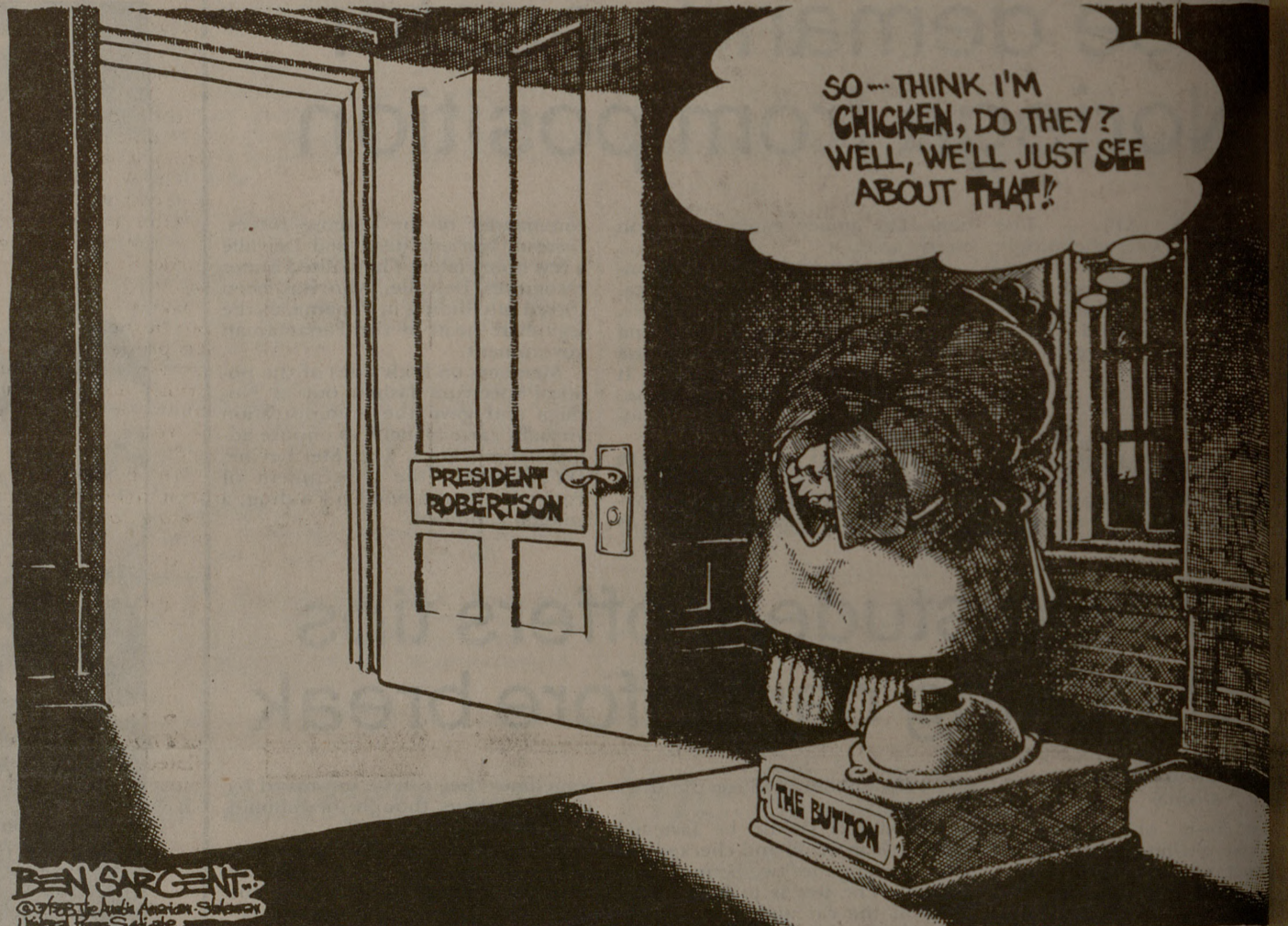
In the March 8 article titled "Finals compromise fails to pass Faculty Senate," Student Senate speaker Jay Hays was quoted as stating, "I think the faculty and administration just don't care what we think." As fellow students, we do not feel that this statement is wholly correct.

Dr. Fulling, instigator of the Faculty Senate finals plan, is concerned with the opinions of the student body. In the last few weeks, several open discussions of various finals plans occurred in the time before Fulling's class. The plan of the Student Senate received general disapproval by the class, with some specific objections. Many students appreciated having the last final on Tuesday (Fulling plan) rather than on Thursday (Student Senate plan).

One student presented the problem of forfeiture of nonrefundable airplane tickets due to later than anticipated finals. Spring plans made in consideration of the original schedule could remain unaltered under the Fulling proposal. The Fulling amendment received wholehearted support from the class. We feel that Dr. Fulling did consider the opinions of students before making his proposal.

Charlie Barron '90
accompanied by 3 signatures

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



The moral for criminal car cretins one should only drive sixty-five

I don't think it was such a good idea to raise the speed limit on stretches of interstate and rural areas to 65.



Lewis Grizzard

The reason is when people get behind the wheel of a car, they immediately develop a criminal mind.

Most of us won't steal, kill, deal in drugs or make a tape of a movie we rented, which would get us on the FBI most wanted list.

But when we get into our cars, we might as well be Bonnie or Clyde.

In the first place, I'd guess 90 percent of the nation's drivers speed, which is against the law.

If the speed limit signs say "55," hardly anybody goes 55. We figure we've got a cushion there someplace and if we don't push it up to say, 65, the cops aren't bothering us.

So we drive 65. When we're feeling our wild oats, we go up to 70.

Others, of course, go even faster if they have one of those machines that makes chirping noises when there is police radar around.

They call these things "fuzzbusters." You can go 120 if you want to it you own one of those things. When the chirping starts, you simply slow down.

It doesn't take a criminal mind to operate one of those things? Of course it does.

What's the difference between a fuzzbuster and a lookout?

I'll go in the bank and take the money and shoot the security guard," criminal No. 1 says, "and you look out for the cops."

"What should I do if I see one?" criminal No. 2 asks.

"Make a chirping noise."

There are all sorts of other ways people break the law when they drive.

For instance, nobody really comes to a full stop at a stop sign if they're in a hurry and there are no other cars around.

Stopping completely at a stop sign could cost you a half second. With the

precious amount of time saved, you could learn to speak French.

Other drivers don't wait their turn at four-way stops. They also make lane changes, neglect to make turn signals, speed up through caution lights, tailgate and put stickers on their bumpers.

Throw in those who still drive, and we've got a nation full of people who make driving terribly dangerous to your well-being as well as to yours.

And now, we go and make even more of a crap shoot by raising speed limit to 65 on rural interstate highways.

Nobody will go over 65, of course. They'll go 75 and 80 through the bushes and we'll soon get the auto death rate back up there where it belongs.

Also, Farmer Brown will never get the answer to that ageless question: did the chicken cross the road?

Some fool who thought he was smart and Petty ran over it.

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The Battalion

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BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

