

Opinion

It's time for our Regents to abide by the law

Texas A&M is an institution of higher learning, but A&M's Board of Regents has yet to learn some simple facts about working for the public.



Richard Williams

The Board is searching for a new president to take the place of Dr. Frank Vandiver who is retiring in September. The Board has a list of serious candidates for the position, and *The Battalion* is hunting for this list. The Board seems to be searching for ways to make sure the public that it's working for does not get this information.

The Battalion has filed several requests for the names of individuals the Board has interviewed. The Board has denied *The Battalion's* requests.

The Board also has refused to follow the law and request an opinion from the Texas Attorney General in regard to any of *The Battalion's* requests — despite the fact that the law clearly states the Board must request such an opinion within ten days.

The Board knows *The Battalion* can't take A&M to court over this issue. The Board also knows that by the time *The Battalion's* request that the Attorney General look into the situation is fulfilled the Board will have already decided, in secret, the next president of A&M.

Why the need to keep the public in the dark? Bill Presnal, the executive secretary of the Board of Regents, simply says the Board feels the request does not fall under the provision of the Open Records Act.

Why won't the University follow the law and request an opinion from the Attorney General? Presnal simply says the

question must be answered by James B. Bond, A&M's deputy chancellor for legal and external affairs. Bond has not returned any of *The Battalion's* calls to his office.

One of the reasons the law was enacted was to keep public bodies from dealing under the table with issues like this one. I'm not going to charge the Board with dealing under the table, but I am going to question the Board as to why they feel the public does not have a right to know who the Board is seriously considering for the position of president.

Every faculty member and student at A&M will be affected by the person picked to fill the position. But the Board has decided that the faculty and students at A&M do not need to know what type of person the Board is seriously considering.

The faculty and staff of A&M need to know before the decision is made whom

is being seriously considered. The faculty and staff has a right to know if the Board is considering an individual whom is known to suppress the academic freedom of faculty and students. It is important to be able to voice such concerns before the decision is final.

The Board has released a list of those who are "candidates" for the position. However, the list of 54 names that has been released includes the names of 18 people (over 25 percent) who have said they are not candidates for the position. The list also contains the names of two individuals who have said they did not know they were on the list until *The Battalion* informed them.

I'm sure these people are really serious candidates.

The Board has said it will not compile a list of finalists for the position. Why? Because the Attorney General has already said such a list is subject to open records.

Yet the Board has decided to inter-

view only certain candidates for the position. Clearly the Board is not considering those it is not interviewing. This should mean that the list of candidates should include only those that are seriously considered — not those who were seriously considered.

The Board has clearly shown it does not intend to follow the law in regard to open records. By this action, the Board has only added to the belief that A&M will continue to fight long and decided, issues.

A&M has continued to fight in dead battles in the courts more than once. The University has spent the sands of taxpayers' dollars on lost, faulty, causes. It is time the Board decides to grow up and follow the law. A&M is not the big bully on the block that doesn't have to give a damn about the law says.

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Who needs a prix fixe around here anyway?

While browsing through a restaurant directory, I suggested to the blonde that we might try a place that was newly listed.



Mike Royko

She asked if it was expensive and I said that it had a "prix fixe" dinner.

"A what?" she said.

I repeated, "prix fixe."

"How is it spelled?"

I spelled it aloud, and again said: "prix fixe."

"You're not pronouncing it correctly," she said.

Why not? I'm pronouncing it exactly the way it's spelled.

"No, no. If you say it that way it sounds, well, it sounds obscene."

I said it again: prix fixe, the way it is spelled. And she may be right. It did sound like it might be a phrase describing some sort of male surgical procedure.

"The proper pronunciation," the blonde said, flouting her refined upbringing, "is pree feeks."

Then why isn't it spelled pree feeks?

"Because it is French. And in French, pree feeks is spelled prix fixe."

How stupid of me. I had forgot that the first rule of the French language is that almost nothing is pronounced the way it's spelled. When the French invented their language, they rigged it that way just to make the rest of us feel inferior. They also thought that if they had a language that was almost impossible to learn, the Germans might not invade them.

"Pree feeks," the blonde said. "It simple means fixed price."

I already knew that much. The question is, why do newspaper and magazine restaurant listings in the United States, where most of us speak one form of English or another, insist on using "prix fixe," which is pronounced "pree feeks," and means "fixed price" instead of "fixed price," which means "fixed price" and is pronounced "fixed price."

Amnesia is that the vast majority of nounce do not know how to pronounce even, fixe. And a great many what it means.

Why, if you went into some restaurants in Arkansas or Tennessee and asked if they had a prix fixe dinner — pronouncing it the way it is spelled — it's likely that the waiter would bellow, "ya' low-down preevert," and hit you with a catfish.

The Chicago newspaper where I work is no exception, I'm sorry to say. We have prix fixes scattered all throughout our restaurant listings. I asked a few copy editors, who are experts in such matters, why we don't just say "fixed price." They weren't sure.

One of them said that he thought we did it when reviewing French restaurants.

If so, we're being inconsistent. We may even be discriminating.

For example, when we list a German restaurant, we don't say "fester preis," which is German for fixed price.

Fester preis. It has a pleasant, homey ring. It sounds like the name of somebody who lives deep in the Ozarks. "Howdy, I'm Fester Preis and this here is my brother Lester Preis and my uncle Chester Preis."

In our listings for Chinese restaurants, we don't write "Gu din jia ge," which I was told by a Chinese acquaintance means fixed price. Of course, he might have been pulling my leg. For all I know, it means: "The person who wrote this column is a geek." But I'll take his word for it.

I was going to include the Greek version of "fixed price," but Sam Sianis, who owns Billy Goat's tavern, said: "Feex price? You crazy? In Greek joints, we no got feex price. We charge what we can get."

Another copy editor told me that "prix fixe" is used so widely that it has become the accepted, common meaning for "fixed price."

That didn't make sense to me, either. I've never picked up the financial pages and read a story that said:

"Three steel companies have been accused by the antitrust division of the Justice Department of prix fixeing. The companies engaged in the fixe, sources say, drive up the prix of steel."

Years ago, when Chicago was strictly a meat-and-potatoes town, we didn't have such linguistic problems.

I suppose that as we became more sophisticated, this was the prix we paid.

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The trouble with Hanoi Jane

A woman and a man were arguing about Jane Fonda.

She said, "Jane Fonda was just doing what she believed was the right thing to do. The war was wrong and if it hadn't been for all the protestors it might have gone on even longer and cost even more lives."

He said, "The protestors in the streets were one thing; Jane Fonda was another."

"She was hosted by our enemy. She was photographed with an enemy aircraft gun. She broadcast on our enemy's radio to American servicemen. She called them 'warcriminals.'"

"Who knows how much her appearance in Hanoi strengthened the will of our enemy, and how much her appearance broke the will of our men?"

"She should have been tried for treason."

"Hanoi Jane," they called her, this

wealthy star of movies. This aerobics queen.

And now, she says she wants to apologize for what she did during the Vietnam war.

She said she was sorry. She said she used bad judgment. She said she will have to live with her mistakes.

Did the fact she can't film a new movie in several New England towns, because of the protests against her, have anything to do with this sudden apology?

I thought about a friend of mine, Orson C. Swindle, when I read of Hanoi Jane's turnaround.

Orson Swindle is assistant secretary for economic development in the Department of Commerce in Washington. After he graduated from Georgia Tech, Orson went into the Marine Corps and became a pilot.

He was shipped out to Vietnam in 1965. He finished his tour of duty and was ready to go home, but he volunteered for one last flight.

That was November 1966. He was shot down and taken prisoner by the North Vietnamese.

He was beaten and otherwise tortured. He was a prisoner for four years before his family learned he was dead. He remained a prisoner of war for over seven years. He was released the North Vietnamese in March 1973.

Seven years. Think of it.

I called Orson in Washington when I read Hanoi Jane's comments. I was surprised at anything he said.

"I have a lot of resentment toward her," he began. "She is despised. When I was in prison I heard her antics and I heard her tapes."

"Her brainwashed comments were absurd and she continues to be responsive to me. I think she apologized because she's trying to go into those communities that have protested against her, and they should protest. She should be an unwelcome person wherever she goes."

If Hanoi Jane wants to apologize to somebody, she ought to go to the knees in Washington and get down on the names engraved upon it.

Only then might she have a speck of credibility.

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BLOOM COUNTY
by Berke Breathed

BRINGING IN A WOMAN IS DANGEROUS! DANGEROUS, I SAY!!

I TELL YA, THERE'S A CONSPIRATORIAL AIR AROUND FEMALES...

LIKE THOSE SUSPICIOUSLY VAGUE TV ADS FOR WOMEN'S STUFF... WHERE THEY NEVER QUITE EXPLAIN WHAT THOSE THINGS ARE!!

YEAH, LIKE WHAT'S "FEMININE PROTECTION"? A CHARTREUSE FLAME THROWER?