Opinion

The Battalion

Thursday, Oct. 13, 1988

Tougher penalties only way to soften criminal behavior

Not long ago, a mayor of an Arizona town made a rather controversial statement concerning punishment for drug users. The mayor proposed that people who get convicted of the pos-ession or use of drugs be executed. Period.

Although the mayor's idea may be a bit extreme, he's on the right track. As a nation we need to start imposing harsher penalties on those who break the law. In fact, our entire concept of what constitutes appropriate punishment needs to undergo some radical changes if we are to bring crime under control.

to significantly decrease the amount of crime in this country -emphasizing morals and good conduct in schools, increasing the role of law enforcement and providing more funding for rehabilitation of criminals. But perhaps the simplest and most cost effective method of reducing crime is to increase the penalties for breaking the law.

When a person breaks a law, he must be punished in such a way that discourages him from ever breaking the law again. This punishment could take a number of forms — anything from a fine to an execution. If these penalties are severe enough, crime will be drastically curtailed.

Most people — and most criminals, for that matter — weigh the costs and benefits of performing a particular ac-tion before they proceed further. If the expected benefits of committing an act outweigh the perceived costs, the individual will probably carry out that act.

And that is the fundamental problem with our criminal justice system as it is today. The minor penalties that our government imposes upon the few criminals who get convicted are simply not enough of a deterrent to prevent crime. For example, when criminals are weighing the costs and benefits involved in robbing a bank, the decision they have to make is often not a difficult one. The benefits, if the criminals are successful, include enough money to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. The costs, if they are arrested and convicted, consist of a few years in prison that has practically all the comforts of home.

From this example alone, it is clear that we have to be tougher on criminals. If the punishment for crime goes up, so enough point, they will outweigh the is dropped on a regular basis. The prisbenefits of committing crime, and crimi- oners would be free to create their own lism major and columnist for The Batnal activity will drastically decline.



This increase in punishment need not be complicated — it can be quite simple. In fact, there are a number of easy, noncostly steps that can be taken.

The first thing that could be done is Actually, there are a number of ways to abolish parole. For those who are unfamiliar with parole, the process goes something like this: After convicted criminals have served part of their prison term (if they have to serve one), they go before a parole board. This board, which usually consists of people with little or no experience in criminal justice, determines which criminals will be freed and which will continue to serve their sentences. In effect, these laymen have the real power to determine a convicted criminal's sentence. The person who originally determined the length of this sentence — the judge - does not.

> Abolishing parole would definitely act as a deterrent to criminal activity. When many career criminals realize that their chances of getting out of prison on parole no longer exist, they may re-evaluate their choice of crime as a way of life.

Advocates of parole will put forward the argument that parole is necessary to prevent prison overcrowding. Abolish parole, they will say, and there will soon be no more room in prisons. While the abolition of parole would temporarily increase the number of prisoners, in the long run (along with additional measures) it will decrease crime and eventually even lessen prison crowding.

Another thing that could be done is to make prison conditions worse for repeat offenders — that's right, worse. After all, prisons are not supposed to be fun. Prisoners are not entitled to television, books, or any other luxuries. What they are entitled to is food, water and a place to sleep.

Special prisons could be created for repeat offenders of major crimes (rape, murder, armed robbery, etc.) These will the expected costs of breaking the prisons could be nothing more than law. If these costs increase to a high walled areas into which food and water

laws as they see fit. It should not be difficult to imagine how terrible such a place would be -a walled-in area full of murderers, drug pushers and bank rob-bers who are free to do anything they wish except escape. If criminals were faced with being put in such a facility with no chance of parole, many of them might decide to change vocations.

First-time offenders would not be placed in such facilities, but in corrective institutions where rehabilitation would be stressed. It would be made quite clear to these criminals, however, that if they were to be convicted of another major crime at any time in the future, they would be placed in the punitive facility for the length of their sentence.

An increase in the use of capital punishment would also bring about a decrease in crime. Criminals who have already been convicted of two major offenses (and thus have served their time in the punitive facility and have been released) could be manditorily executed upon conviction for a third serious offense. This would serve the dual purpose of eradicating career criminals who have no hope of being rehabilitated, and deterring other law breakers from committing major crimes.

If the simple steps that have been outlined above were to be followed by our government, crime in this country would decrease substantially. Criminals would face a completely different set of circumstances than they do now when weighing the pros and cons of committing a major crime.

They would have to consider that, if convicted and sentenced, they would not be paroled - their entire sentence would have to be served. Criminals who have already been convicted of a major crime would face a punitive facility filled with murderers and thieves who are free to roam at will. And criminals who have been convicted of two such crimes would face a mandatory execution if they committed a third major offense.

The only question that remains is why we don't start cracking down on criminals. The answer that presents itself is that this country's leaders are not putting enough emphasis on reducing crime. But we can't put all of the blame on our elected officials. Ultimately, the responsibility is ours. If we want to do something to bring crime under control we can let our voices be heard.

Lately, however, it's been awfully, awfully quiet.

Dean Sueltenfuss is a junior journa-

-Mail Call

Page

Women will be force in Church EDITOR:

Bravo! I was very pleased to read Anthony Wilson's article in the Oa. II on women in the priesthood.

The Vatican's refusal to permit the ordination of women in the Catholic Church is truly sexist. If the pope continues to deny women in the church privilege, he is eventually going to threaten the membership in the Catholic Church in the United States. After all, the United States has traditionally be in extending rights to women, as compared to the rest of the world.

As far as I can see, we will continue to do so in the near future. In this age, where women are more and more becoming a force to reckon within business world, as well as in the church, the American women are not going around and wait for the pope to approve of their ordination. If they feelth have the gift of the priesthood, they will find a way to express that gift, even means leaving the Catholic Church.

I will say, however, that even when a church ordains women, the cessiting sexism does not necessarily follow.

My mother is a priest in the Anglican church. She will still, at times, run situations in which she is not regarded as equal in abilities to the male pries church. This is unfortunate.

However, just as women have slowly worked their way in to the working are women slowly working their way into the upper level offices within the hierarchy of the Anglican church. It simply is that first big step which needs taken.

Elizabeth Merriam '91

That Morton — what a cutup! EDITOR:

In regard to Dean Sueltenfuss' Oct. 6 column concerning "The Morton Downey Jr. Show," granted the show is not for everyone. It is not for those deep intellectual stimulation, but for those who desire unique entertainment deviation from the mindless drivel that is network television.

Maybe it's Morton's genuine conservative values that Dean dislikes?Im enjoy the show for Morton's ability to get people to say what they really the not what they think they should say. And besides, it's HILARIOUS! Jason Druebert '92

Texan insulted by stereotype EDITOR:

I found Suna Purser's Oct. 11 column highly insulting.

Please, Suna, give us "good ole boys" and girls a little credit. By the war depicted a "typical" Texan's speech, you'd think we were all illiterate.

And by the way, it's articles such as yours that keep the stereotype of Te strong in other states.

Would you believe that a person can be born in Texas and grow up to be perfectly normal, open-minded, intelligent, literate individual? No, probat since you seem to believe so strongly in the power of hypocrisy.

After all, you demonstrated for us exactly what you blamed Texansol You bad-mouthed us for our bias, while doing the same thing yourself.

Did you REALLY think that native Texans would read your article, su see the light, and say, "YEAH! SHE'S EXACTLY RIGHT!"?

Give me a break. Ba tha way, therr arrr 49 uther states an' 120 uther km too chooz frum!

Kellie R.Garrett '92

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

society and laws, and to enforce these talion.

and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must classification, address and telephone number of the writer

Baby years the beginning of the end of life as you know

The conversation started out so innocently.

A friend and I were talking about the impending arrival of his sister's baby. He was talking about the things he would do with his nephew-to-come (He's already decided it's going to be a boy). Then he said the dreaded phrase.

"I want babies."

So another soul was lost to baby-days — he finally hit that fateful age when "I want babes" changes to "I want babies." That age when The Waltons becomes actual entertainment and you identify more with Ward and June than with Wally and the Beave.

We're talking about babies - those little things that cry, feel squishy, cry, spit up, cry, wet themselves and cry. Don't get me wrong - I would not mind having children one day. But right now I still have things to live for.

Marriage is one thing, but after you have children, things really change.

You have to quit wearing trendy clothes and shop exclusively by catalog (or buy from one of those shopper channels on TV). You can only wear clothes in combinations of brown, black or blue (and only in polyester or any other stretch fabric that looks tacky). Your hair has to be cut in one of the preferred mother-father styles.

And what about cars? Cars have to match your clothes - brown, black or blue. Station wagons are the preferred parental mode of transportation. They have to have vinyl seats for easy clean up when the little critters make a mess. That means that after you have kids, you're doomed to have car seats that burn the back of your legs for the rest of your life.

You can try to get plush car seats my mom did. And I got bubble gum all over the back of them (dark blue seats with white blobs).

And let's talk about vacations. Like to party? Like to have fun? Forget it.



When you have kids, you have to take vacations like the Brady Bunch. Ever notice how the Brady Bunch always went on educational vacations? That's what you have to do. And no, you cannot pass Fort Lauderdale off as educational (oh, honey, the kids can learn how to do tequila shots).

Instead, your family visits national forests (spend the day observing pine needles) or goes camping (portable potties and mix-'n'-eat food)

normal food. If it isn't advertised by recipes (a true sign of deterioration).

OLIVER ?

A WORD PLEASE.

OLIVER'S

Baldnes. ResEARCY

CENTER

some cartoon character or doesn't come with a plastic prize, then they don't want scout camp that you thought w it (then again, that doesn't sound too bad).

Want to watch TV? You get a choice Sesame Street, Mr. Roger's Neighborhood or the Electric Company. After one week of watching dancing numbers and a big yellow bird that talks, you'll start losing it.

Music? After kids, something happens to your music sensibilities. Maybe it comes from listening to one-too-many replays of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,' but you begin to think of Lawrence Welk as high entertainment. Wayne Newton becomes the guru of tunetown. And Liberace -let's talk ecstasy for the ol' eardrums.

You start to enjoy neighborhood fish fries and guys named Ed who sell insurance. You call the mailman by name and buy dishtowels for fun. You watch cook-And after you have kids, you can't eat ing shows and actually write down the

You have to relearn everythin never need because now you're MOTHER (or FATHER). This how to put up a tent, how to coo stew and how to go to the bath the woods.

You have to chauffer kids tod ies and to the swimming pool. to watch "Snoopy Come Home" 20,000 times. Tonka toys will! yard and Lincoln Logs will a carpet.

But despite knowing that kids a pain in the patoot, the day when we'll need the tax bre there goes the neighborhood.

Becky Weisenfels is a senior, lism major, managing editor umnist for The Battalion.

THIS IS WORSE

THAN WHEN I PUT THE SPRINKLER

TOO NEAR YOUR

MAZDA, RIGHT

The Battalion

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