

Mail Call

Drug legalization good idea

EDITOR:

I simply must comment on Jeffrey Farmer's article concerning the legalization of drugs which appeared in the Jan. 29 issue of *The Battalion*. FINALLY! For the first time I opened my eyes to an insightful article written in more than the common third-grade intellectualism typical of newspaper journalism.

Jeff has it right. Legalizing drugs by using a rational policy is the only answer to the many problems caused by drugs and drug addiction. I'm sure many people won't be able to see past their own self-righteous noses and begin to understand that this policy would actually decrease the amount of drugs used in the United States as well as put an end to the rampant growth of organized crime associated with drug trafficking.

Maybe a generation, at the most, will experiment with this legalized drug use, but as they begin to realize, at or near the age of 40, that their lack of brain cell tissue prevents them from being competitive in the work force and that time lost in drug rehabilitation is time lost on the corporate ladder, drug use will diminish (for good).

And, maybe, people won't be praised for admitting they have a problem with drug addiction, as they are now. Perhaps they will, instead, be praised for never starting at all.

This is the only rational way to control drug use in a free market society. Let's put an end to the police-state tactics being used so widely in recent years, and let's be true to the capitalistic heritage that so many Americans have fought and died for. Any constraint on freedom, regardless of the intention, can only damage our society as demonstrated by the recent and unfortunate self-defeating "war on drugs."

Jack A. Reynolds '90

Protesting is cool, man

EDITOR:

Three cheers and a whoop! The age of activism has reached the backward A&M campus at last. We're finally taking a cue from some of our enlightened comrades on campuses around the country and speaking out against injustice everywhere. Not only have we hosted protests against architectural uniformity (Students Against Apartheid's spray painted outhouse), we've also seen the Medicine Tribe object to government employment, the scourge of free thinkers around the world.

A list of coming attractions may include blowing up the College of Veterinary Medicine to achieve animal rights (UC-Davis), turkey "liberators" from the Poultry Science Center (both coasts), flag burnings to protest the blatantly American imperialist militarism which the Corps personifies, or perhaps a good old-fashioned love-fest on the MSC lawn to protest blind traditions.

These are just a sampling of the tried and true campus activities which would make even the godfather of protest, Abbey Hoffman, shed a tear of joy.

I wake up every morning and thank God (and Madelyn Murray O'Hare, of course) that we're finally on our way to world class university status.

Still, we've got a long way to go before we reach the cosmopolitan, socially aware level which our brethren in Austin and around the country began striving for in the late '60s.

If we all work and protest together, we can resurrect that wondrous Age of Aquarius whose renaissance we've awaited for so long. Peace, brothers.

Larry Cox
Grad student

Band offers different music

EDITOR:

Your assignment for today is to read and memorize the following: "Hunkpapa" by Throwing Muses is brilliant, contrary to what you may have read before. In her review of the new album on Thursday, Suzanne Hochstetter labeled the band as having a warped concept of what music is.

She gave a rather scathing review to a band that, like much of what we play at KANM, works to go beyond lyrical content and musical hooks to create a mood in their music.

Kristin Hersh, the band's lead singer and song writer describes what they do by saying "Great music isn't rational, it's mad with its own loveliness." That kind of music is a staple for us at the station and accordingly, Suzanne's review of the band's latest album "hit home."

Throwing Muses and most alternative American bands have traditionally had trouble bypassing the commercialism in today's music industry. As a result of American disinterest in the band, their first two records were released overseas only, on 4 AD records, a label that defines itself by making the unique and unavailable, available. I'm not a drug addict or a pseudo-intellect, but I feel that "Hunkpapa," Throwing Muses' fourth album, is probably their best yet. It's a matter of opinion, but the band's sour vocals and edgy guitar provide a great alternative to the sickeningly sweet pop music that you'll hear elsewhere.

Alex Luke '90
KANM Station Manager

Frat ad not endearing

EDITOR:

I saw an advertisement in your paper on Jan. 20 depicting a female wearing, apparently, nothing but a long-neck scarf, a bracelet and high heels with the caption "Phi Kappa Tau Presents The Stripper Party — Spring Rush '89."

All I have to say is that no matter what connotation is behind this ad, it is a disfavor to anyone who saw it. I may not know much about rush parties or fraternities, but even if I did, I cannot see how this type of advertising would endear me or anyone else to a fraternity. It is no wonder that fraternities have had difficulty being recognized by Texas A&M University when this is the image they are projecting!

Lorrie Fincher
Secretary, Computing Services Center

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.



Texas A&M exercises no control over newspaper

It's not something new — a letter or a phone call criticizing a story in *The Battalion* or a column on the opinion page. It is something we have come to expect as members of a newspaper staff. But many of the complaints are based on a misunderstanding of what *The Battalion* is and the role it serves on the Texas A&M campus.

The Battalion is a part of Texas A&M Student Publications, which is a division of the Department of Journalism. The Student Publications Board is made up of administrators, faculty and students appointed by the provost.

The board makes financial policy decisions and nominates editors for *The Battalion* and *The Aggieland*.

From there, the editors have complete authority and responsibility for editorial and news content.

The Battalion is not a University publication, but a student publication.

Our printing presses are in the University Printing Center, where Student Publications pays the press people who run the machines. Student Publications also pays the salaries of those people who work for *The Battalion* — not only the editorial staff but also those who work in advertising and production.

The Battalion is a self-supporting entity. It does not receive any appropriations from the state.

The Battalion also is not a publication of the journalism department. Student Publications offices are housed in the same building as the journalism department, but operate separately.



Becky Weisenfels
Editor

There are historically two types of student newspapers. A laboratory newspaper's only function is to publish the work of students in journalism classes, and as such is subject to editorial control by faculty who teach the classes.

The Battalion is not a laboratory newspaper.

The Battalion is a student-run newspaper. Even though the journalism professors give us access to news stories written for their classes, we have editorial control over those stories.

Unlike a lab newspaper, *The Battalion* is not published as a showcase for journalism classwork.

Administrators and faculty have no editorial or news control. The newspaper is protected by the First Amendment, and this protection has been strengthened by numerous Supreme Court cases.

The Battalion has a coordinator who deals with the business and production side of the newspaper. The coordinator also serves, with the head of the journalism department, as an unofficial adviser to the paper when asked about editorial content.

Battalion staff members sometimes do ask for editorial advice from the coordinator or the journalism department head — and that is exactly what we get, advice. We then choose whether to follow it or not.

What this all means is that *The Battalion* staff really is in a unique position. Unlike editors at private universities, we are not subject to editorial control by the journalism department or any A&M officials because they are representatives of the state and the state is forbidden by the Constitution from control of newspaper content.

In addition, unlike a commercial newspaper, we do not have "owners" or "publishers" to whom we must answer.

When I stand back and consider the freedom we have, a freedom we probably never enjoy again as journalists, it is almost overwhelming. I, as well as the staff members, understand the tremendous responsibility placed on our shoulders since we are the only ones responsible for what goes in the paper.

Sometimes in hindsight we realize that we should have done things differently. A word that was misinterpreted or a story that was written poorly haunts us long after it was published.

But what's past is past and all we can do is keep working and trying to fulfill our responsibility to provide the Texas A&M community with news and editorial opinions.

Becky Weisenfels is a senior journalism major and editor of *The Battalion*.

Gorbachev faces tough times in effort to change U.S.S.R.

About three years ago the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, introduced glasnost and perestroika. These reforms encouraged openness and economic reconstruction. Looking beyond what the Western press tells us, or what image the Soviet government wishes to convey, the effectiveness of these programs, and particularly the tenure of their leader, must be further examined.

For Gorbachev, the easy rounds of perestroika are over. He must force his vision of change on one of the world's largest, least flexible societies — with full knowledge that none of his predecessors, even those who tried, could make it respond. What people clearly want is concrete evidence: shorter lines to buy food; imported consumer products; and greater production of better quality, lower priced autos, appliances and other durable goods.

Unrest and disappointment are clearly evident throughout the Soviet Union. The Soviet republics, particularly the Baltic states, are growing increasingly restless. In mid-November, for example, Estonia's parliament as-

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serted the freedom to reject laws enacted by the national government. Lithuania is moving toward a similar position. Again, because perestroika is long on promise and short on performance, it is unable to provide better life for Soviet citizens.

With the increased unrest comes the question of Gorbachev's survival. The dissension may be expressed throughout one of his earliest programs, glasnost. In a display of irony, this reform has been a tool for both supporters and opponents.

In an act to quiet opposition and strengthen his position, Gorbachev held the 19th Communist Party Convention. The summer meeting of top party members was an opportunity for Gorbachev to transfer power from the Communist Party to the government, and provide endorsement of sweeping economic reform. Conflicting interpreta-

tions of the Convention's result make it difficult to declare Gorbachev a clear winner.

Gorbachev's recent gambit of global diplomacy may be motivated by domestic unrest. His foreign visitors included West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and French President Francois Mitterand. Traveling abroad, the Soviet leader has visited with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, Ronald Reagan and George Bush. When in trouble at home, become statesman.

It is difficult to accurately predict the fate of Mr. Gorbachev. What is clear, however, is the longevity and lasting effect of his programs.

Perestroika, being in a very volatile predicament, will have to be dealt with by Gorbachev's successors. Adam Ulmer, director of Harvard's Russian Research Center assesses the situation clearly. Gorbachev died tomorrow, it would be the end of perestroika.

Lee Anderson is a senior political science major and a guest columnist for *The Battalion*.

The Battalion

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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.

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