

Censorship not the answer to unfavorable publicity

A book is considered a threat to the values of a certain segment of society. A person (or people) in a high position call for it to be censored. The book is banned and removed.

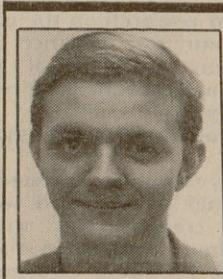
Is this the story of Salman Rushdie and the "Satanic Verses"? Possibly, but it also could be the scene at dozens of counties around the United States of America.

In this decade, many school boards have banned books that they've deemed unfit for students to read. A Minnesota school board censored four books from its libraries, including "Are You There, God?" by Judy Blume. A New York school board removed 11 books from their libraries, including "The Naked Ape" by Desmond Morris, "Slaughterhouse-Five" by Kurt Vonnegut Jr., and "Black Boy" by Richard Wright.

In one of the most severe cases of American censorship, the state of Alabama ordered 45 textbooks pulled from the shelves after a federal judge declared the books promoted "secular humanism." It's ironic that some of the same people who are condemning the Ayatollah Khomeini for censorship are guilty of it themselves.

Khomeini has no right to condemn a man to death for something he's written. And school boards have little if no right to censor what school children have access to. The book made some Muslims take a look at their beliefs and practices and re-evaluate them. The reaction to the book should make us re-evaluate ours.

I was recently talking politics with a friend of mine, Mark Bonnen, when the discussion turned to the subject of Salman Rushdie and his book "Satanic Verses."



Timm Doolen
Columnist

I said that I thought the situation was awful. Terrorists are effectively censoring a book world-wide.

Mark sharply disagreed and said that, although at least one man's life is seriously threatened, the underlying message is a positive one.

I wondered what could possibly be positive about Iranian terrorists threatening to take a man's life because of something he wrote?

Mark thought the situation was a sign that "literature is still alive as a form of expression." It's been a long time since a piece of literature has brought out such emotions throughout the world. It's amazing that in 1989, one novel can create so much controversy that Salman Rushdie is now almost a household name.

If the Muslims who are offended by the book truly have faith in their religion, why do they consider a mere book a threat to their religion?

Some Muslims claim the book is blasphemous and sacrilegious to the Islamic religion. So what? If those Muslims can't take some constructive criticism, then they should re-examine their beliefs, not threaten a man with execution. The excerpts of the book that I have read are very critical of the Islamic religion. But the offended Muslims should boycott and denounce the book if they feel necessary, not call for the author's assassination.

Out of a sense of fairness it should be noted that many Muslims deplored the call for assassination, including Naguib Mahfouz, the first Arab to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. It is the Muslims who side with Khomeini that I take odds with.

Last year "The Last Temptation of Christ" was boycotted in numerous cities around the nation. Though I didn't agree with the boycotters' statement, their methods were far superior to the ones currently employed by the ayatollah.

With "Satanic Verses" as well as "The Last Temptation of Christ," the actions of the protesters brought more attention to the issue than the book or film itself. In both cases the extent of the protest helped not only to increase the sales of the film or book, but also to discredit the cause of the protesters. By using a death threat, Khomeini discredited himself and his followers far worse than the the book could have discredited them.

Due to the actions of some Iranian Muslims, Salman Rushdie gained instant fame, at a price. The hopes and aspirations of many young writers now are to get a book or written work banned by somebody. The whole commotion has prompted me to begin writing a new book.

It's called "Khomeini Sucks Eggs."

Timm Doolen is a sophomore computer science major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Greeks support A&M

EDITOR:

On Feb. 21, I attended an A&M women's basketball game. I was there at the request of Alpha Delta Pi, whose members asked me to announce the winners of a banner contest and attend the opening roll call as part of their Playday activities.

Although I had worked all day, I felt it was important to attend because of my position as adviser to the Texas A&M Interfraternity Council.

After I announced the winners, some of the Greek students began to leave the stands. Here is where ugliness reared its head. No, I'm not talking about the fraternities leaving. I'm talking about the woman in the stands who provided me with this comment: "Next time, tell your kiddie-troopers to stay for the whole game!"

Dear "concerned" lady:

Thank you for your feedback — but no thank you. I am proud that these Greek students attended at least half of the game.

Yes, many left at halftime. But is this not an institution of higher education? Lord forbid they chose to attend half a game and then went to study. I guess they should not have attended at all, huh?

Members of the Interfraternity Council are making concerted efforts to better our organizations, create better members of society, and to be good A&M. We have problems, but we are going to meet them head-on. We are even going to deal with societal issues such as sexism, racism, alcoholism, drug abuse, and even AIDS.

As for our place at A&M, well, we are here to stay. We even promise to accept "constructive" feedback such as yours.

Maybe it is time we start to offer fraternities and sororities reconciliation — a reconciliation that will make Texas A&M a better place to be.

As for me being the Greek adviser here at Texas A&M — well, I offer you no apologies.

Charles Goodman
Adviser for Texas A&M Interfraternity Council

English amendment bad idea

EDITOR:

Once again Timm Doolen has taken pen in hand and boldly ventured forth into the land of ideological intransigence and woeful ignorance.

Leading his "reasonable" straw man down the slippery slope of logic, he "reasonably" concludes that a Constitutional amendment is needed to save the Republic from the ravages of kowtowing to the Hispanic hordes. Stating that "official English merely means that the acts and duties of government will be carried out in English, except for special circumstances," he proposes to ban the use of bilingual ballots and education in the current special circumstances in the southwestern states. His contention that bilingual ballots will lead to a Tower of Babel in the voting booths is as absurd as his notion that government officials will all be forced to learn Spanish (and therefore by his logic French, Swahili, etc.).

He also thinks that the "Texas heritage is inseparably entrenched in the English language" in this country filled with "Anglo culture." I'm sure the few people in this country of German, African, Hispanic, or Russian ancestry will thank Timm for correcting their misconceptions by pointing out their true English heritage.

The six remaining Indians will no doubt thank him, too.

Perhaps Timm could do something useful, like teach English, rather than trying to deny people voting and education because they are not enough like him.

Steven Baum
Department of Oceanography

The show's on me

EDITOR:

This is in response to Clay Salisbury's Feb. 23 letter concerning the fine arts.

Mr. Salisbury, when I read your letter, I wasn't sure if I was more angry or embarrassed for your gross display of ignorance. How many plays have you seen in your life?

How much literature have you studied?

Your simple-minded attitude about the arts is the very thing that Texas A&M is trying to overcome.

If you find your wife and the Dixie Chicken to be examples of fine art, that's fine. Just don't thrust your ignorance upon the rest of us.

This weekend the Aggie Players' production of Hedda Gabler opens in Rudder Forum. I will leave a complementary pair of tickets at the box office so that you and your "work of art" may attend. With any luck, seeing a classic of modern literature on stage will help pry open your mind.

We have framed your letter and hung it in the theater arts office so that future theater arts majors will see what we have had to overcome.

David Roberto '92
Accompanied by seven signatures

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.

prevent the president from picking somebody who couldn't do the job he was picked to do. It was not created to allow the Senate to pick the candidates. If you want to pick the candidates for an appointed office, run for president or governor. Otherwise, it's not your job.

The Senate has taken this "holier than thou" attitude one time too many. Half of them probably have some pretty damning skeletons in their own closets.

I'd like to see any of them make the vow that they won't take a drink while they hold their job.

Maybe we should start requiring all congressmen to be confirmed by the president before they can take office. I wonder how long it would take before that right would be abused.

Steve Masters is a senior journalism major and a senior staff writer for The Battalion.

Congress continues abusing cabinet confirmation powers

When I look back on the history of this great nation, I wonder where we would be without the two unifiers that tie all Americans together — greed and lust for power.

The U.S. Congress has shown all these things in recent years. (And you thought your congressman was some untouchable pillar of strength you couldn't come near.) Hey, these guys are just like you and me — cheap and power hungry, but they get free postage and plane trips. So what's their deal with acting like they're such good guys?

Remember just about a month ago when they were trying their hardest to pass a pay raise for themselves, but then had to back away from it because it made them look really greedy?

If everybody had the chance to raise their pay by a simple vote, I think there would be several companies operating in the red.

Like you wouldn't vote for it in the name of the financial stability of your employer. Give me a break. These guys are out for the buck, just like we are.

Now the confirmation committee in the Senate voted against recommending former Sen. John Tower for Secretary of Defense. What's the big deal? So he boozes it up a little bit. So he digs the babes. I wonder how many Congressmen do the same thing every weekend.

What do these guys want — a pre-

acher or somebody? I'd much rather take my chances with Tower. At least he admits he's a goof.

I don't see any ring on his finger. Let him come and go as he pleases. The question shouldn't be, "Is this guy a moral sleaze?" The question should be, "Can he do his job?" Besides, Tower basically has the defense industry in his back pocket, so I would think he would be perfect man for the job.

Now he's been hounded into making the statement that if approved he will never take a drink while he holds that job. Sounds remotely like the statement Gary Hart made confidently to reporters: "Go ahead and follow me around. You'll be bored." Let's see some of those whining Congressmen make the same pledge about drinking.

Are we saying we actually expect our government to be responsible? Come on! I think a guy coming off a three-day drunk would remember more of what he did than Reagan remembered about any three days.

I think this problem lies in the attitude of the Congress. It goes back a little further than the Tower confirmation though. It all started in Fall 1986 with attempted confirmation of Robert Bork.

The Senate kicked him out before he could get in the door, and they suddenly realized they had been wasting this valuable power they've had.

After Bork was history, Reagan nominated some ex-hippie named Douglas Ginsburg. He didn't even come before a vote because somebody found out (OH MY GOD!) he smoked pot in college.

Think about it. This guy went to college in the '60s. How could he NOT smoke pot in college? A better question would be what drugs didn't he do? I'd worry more about him having an Angel Dust flashback than him being a stoner.

This secret power slowly became apparent to the state congresses. They found it recently when they whined and complained about appointments to the Board of Regents of the state's two largest schools. Gov. Bill Clements' nominations to the University of Texas Board was heavily criticized for not including any members of a minority group.

This criticism caused one candidate to withdraw his name, and Clements nominated a minority in his place. Similar criticism was hinted at if he didn't pick a member of a minority group for the A&M Board. Clements picked a Hispanic, Raul Fernandez, and people complained that he wasn't the right minority.

Get real, people. The confirmation power of the Senate was designed to

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.

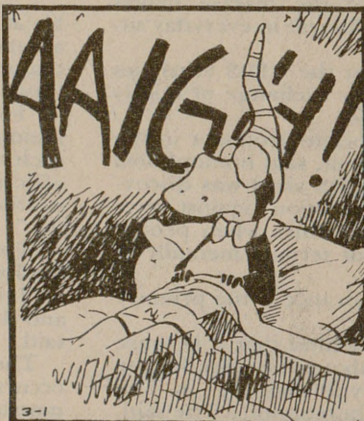
The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

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, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

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